

**The Struggle for Ascendancy:
John Ruskin, Albert Smith and the Alpine Aesthetic.**

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Studies

October 2008.

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Submitted by **Darren Bevin**, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Studies, October 2008.

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(signature)D. Bevin.....

Acknowledgements

I wish to firstly thank my supervisor Professor Rick Rylance for his patience and advice throughout. His support has been invaluable. I would also like to thank the Department of English at the University of Exeter (particularly Dr Joe Kember and Dr John Plunkett). Additional thanks go to the University's Special Collections Unit, especially Dr Jessica Gardner.

Further afield, I wish to thank Professor Stephen Wildman and Diane Tyler from the Ruskin Centre at Lancaster University and Professor Roger Meyenburg from the University Centre 'Cesar Ritz' in Switzerland for initially inspiring the research. Additional thanks go to my mum, brother and Lyndsay for all their support.

Abstract

The thesis explores the work of two disparate figures, John Ruskin (1819-1900) and Albert Smith (1816-1860) who, together, helped transform the way the Alps were perceived in the mid nineteenth century. Both esteemed the Alps in their own way, although Ruskin's cultural aestheticism contrasting markedly to the popular showmanship of Smith. Nevertheless, both Ruskin's five-volumed Modern Painters (1843-1860), and Smith's theatrical shows describing his ascent of Mont Blanc (1852-1858), contributed significantly to the growing popularity of the landscape resulting in the Alpine Club (1857) and the birth of modern tourism in the region.

This work examines in detail the work and interests of both characters. This includes Ruskin's drawings, art theory (especially in relation to his admiration of Turner), geological interests, religious convictions, and poetry. These reveal his desire to centre ideas of the sublime around his scientific interest in the area and the legacy of his Evangelical upbringing. The thesis investigates the tension between these elements. Smith's climb of Mont Blanc (1851) and his subsequent shows highlighted his desire to thrill and entertain. For him, presentation of the Alps was a matter of showmanship and the thesis investigates his success, tracing its roots in elements of Victorian popular entertainment. Both Smith's shows, and works like Of Mountain Beauty (Volume IV of Modern Painters (1856)), inspired many to explore the landscape for themselves. For Ruskin, this led to a decline in his interest in the Alps following the development of the rail network and the expansion of popular tourist sites, including his beloved Chamonix. For Smith, the public's increasing familiarity with the region, and the popularity of other stories of Alpine ascents

by members of the Alpine Club, led to a decline in interest in his shows by the end of the 1850s.

Due to their interest in the region, the Romantic appreciation of the Alps in the early nineteenth century associated with theories of the sublime became a much more diverse phenomenon illustrating a number of key features of Victorian culture, including: the relationship of 'high' and 'popular' culture; the increasing influence of mass tourism; and the ways in which major figures in Victorian Britain explored and utilised foreign destinations. The thesis will also, from time to time, examine the relationship between cultural and visual forms and key elements in Victorian intellectual controversy, including the relationship of religion and science.

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Introduction

‘When we look at a landscape, we do not see what is there, but largely what we think is there’ (Macfarlane 18). In Mountains of the Mind (2003), Robert MacFarlane makes this assertion, arguing that the interpretation of landscape forms depends on our personal memory and experience, and that of a collective cultural memory. We project qualities onto landscapes that are not necessarily a part of the natural scene. Mountainous landscapes are no exception and can often be the source of especially wide-ranging responses from the sublime and the awe-inspired to the fearful and depressed. In the mid nineteenth century, a range of mountains spanning eight hundred miles from the Austrian border to southern France and running through parts of Switzerland, Italy and Germany became increasingly open to the British public. They travelled in growing numbers to experience an Alpine environment that they had read about in poetry or prose or seen in popular entertainment. They brought to the Alps an awareness of how others had previously experienced these mountains, and their expectations, and codes of behaviour, were shaped by pioneering contemporaries and their predecessors.

This thesis will explore changes in attitudes and outlooks towards the Alps at a critical period in the mid nineteenth century when, for some, John Ruskin and Albert Smith seemed to fight for ascendancy over how the Alps should be seen and experienced. Both had close connections with the environment throughout their lives, making regular trips to the mountains and then conveying their experience to audiences back in Britain. I will argue that it is their experiences that, to a significant degree, changed how the British public viewed the Alps. Before their work, the Alpine mountains were, on the whole, seen from a distance. Very few visited the region; fewer still actually climbed the mountains.

And when they did make a climb the focus was on Mont Blanc (due to its spectacular height) and then mainly with a view to conduct scientific observations. Otherwise, the Alps were a thoroughfare through to Italy as part of the Grand Tour, and also an increasingly important venue for artistic creation – by painters such as Turner, and poets such as Byron and Shelley. But these responses came from the valley floor below or no higher than the Mer de Glace, the glacier above Chamonix.

Both Ruskin and Smith actively encouraged a greater interaction with the landscape through their writing and popular shows respectively. Although neither had any initial conception of how influential their work would be, their output coincided with greater accessibility to the region through a new rail network that allowed cheaper and quicker modes of travel. Smith specifically encouraged tourists to visit the Alps, especially Chamonix at the base of Mont Blanc, in his book The Story of Mont Blanc (1853). By contrast, Ruskin enjoyed the private sanctity of the region, wishing only those to visit who had similar aesthetic, scientific and spiritual interests to his own. These tensions will be explored in detail in the thesis.

Ruskin's conception of the Alps was informed by both his geological interests and his religious upbringing. In his writing on the Alpine mountains, he attempted to rationalise the sublime elements of the landscape that had fascinated the previous generation of Romantic poets by focusing on why such forms in nature produce these responses. For Ruskin, the basis of all thoughts, feelings and attempts to convey these through art must begin by close observation of the Alpine landscape. Nevertheless, for him these observations were not neutral but informed by an understanding that the mountains were ideal examples of the beauty of God's creation. Such ideas are explored by Ruskin,

particularly in Modern Painters which include his exploration of the qualities of Turner's landscape painting. Additionally, Ruskin used his own sketches and paintings to illustrate the qualities in nature and discover how they should be captured. By contrast, for Smith, the Alps offered an opportunity to capitalise on interest in the foreign and the exotic that had been amplified by the Great Exhibition of 1851 but came at a moment before most could afford the time and money to explore destinations abroad. Like Ruskin, Smith gave his own interpretation of how the Alps might be seen and experienced, but here it was through his spectacular shows, performed in London before mass audiences, that dramatised his own climb of Mont Blanc in 1851. Through the illusions of dioramas that attempted to capture the sensation of ascending the highest peak in Europe, Smith conveys the mountains for the first time to a large, popular audience as sites of hazard, danger, exotic and excitement.

John Ruskin's lifelong association with the Alps extended, in the 1850s, to explore the possibility of living in the region around Chamonix. In his book How the English Made the Alps (2000), Jim Ring describes how the mountains became in this period 'a unique visual, cultural, geological and natural phenomenon wed to European history' (9), and his remark is helpful in setting a scale for Ruskin's interests. Before first visiting the Alps in 1833, he had travelled with his family to the mountains of Scotland, North Wales, and the Lake District. Although particular features of these landscapes engaged his curiosity, including the rocks he examined and collected on the mountainside, they held no comparison with the strong impact made by the European mountains in scale, beauty and scientific interest. Subsequently, he made many trips to the Alps to write, draw and observe the landscape resulting in works that included passages and chapters on this environment. In particular, he developed theories of landscape art and drawing from nature which became crucial to his developing aesthetic outlook. The most famous expression of these

was Modern Painters published in five volumes between 1843 and 1860, and of these Modern Painters Vol. IV (1856) entitled Of Mountain Beauty best illustrates Ruskin's appreciation of this landscape. The work begins by discussing Turner's ability to capture imaginatively both the detail and the sublimity of the landscape, before generalising on how specific features of the landscape such as the crests and precipices should be conveyed through art. The result was a grand theory of observation and representation in art that had wide significance. The book ends with a celebratory final chapter 'The Mountain Glory' that became identified as a key text among those celebrating his love of the Alps, from contemporaries such as the alpinist and writer Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) to present day commentators. Other important texts by Ruskin with Alpine themes include The Elements of Drawing (1857), Lectures on Landscape (1871) and Deucalion: Collected Studies of the Lapse of Waves, and Life of Stones (1879). These books suggest an interest in the region well into the 1870s but, by this time, it was the Alps of yesteryear, without the tourists and mountaineers who increasingly populated the region in the mid century, which was of chief interest to Ruskin as he continued to write about the geology of the region and the way to draw the landscape that ignored this new invasion.

Albert Smith's association with the Alps was also long-lasting having read, like Ruskin, narratives as a child about expeditions to high altitude. Described as 'one of the greatest showmen of the nineteenth century' (Fitzsimons, The Baron 13), Smith (1816-1860) originally entered into medical practice before turning to journalism. He was one of the earliest writers for Punch in the early 1840s producing work inspired by his previous occupation. These included 'The Physiology of the London Medical Student' (1841) and 'Curiosities of Medical Experience' (1842) published in volumes one and two of Punch respectively. In addition, he wrote novels including The Adventures of Mr Ledbury and his

Friend, Jack Johnson (1844) and The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole (1848), both of which contained escapades in the Alps inspired by Smith's own travels in the region (see section 1.4). The novels are of little literary merit, and are relatively unknown, although they do reveal an interest in the dangers and thrills of high altitude. Of more significance in light of his later success was his interest in visual entertainment beginning as a child when he made moving panoramas of the Alps, and in later life when 'The Overland Mail' (1850-1) which included stories and accompanying dioramas set in Egypt. These formed a precursor to his Mont Blanc shows first performed at the Egyptian Hall, London in 1852 running, with regular updates, until 1858. It is these shows – their nature, intentions, sources and impacts – that will be the focus of this study of his work.

This thesis will undertake a close examination of the ideas and work of both men, and will give an account of the ways they wanted an audience to visualise and conceptualise the Alps. It will juxtapose them to bring out their different ways of translating their experiences at different stages in their lives. Both were born in the 1810s and spent the 1820s reading stories by scientists and explorers in the Alps. In the 1830s, both went to the Alps for the first time and attempted (unsuccessfully) to convey their experiences in literary ways, through poetry (Ruskin) and fiction (Smith). Only later, and especially in the 1850s, did both come in prominence as interpreters of the region. Smith died in 1860 before he could see the full effect of the influence of his shows, whilst Ruskin lived on to find his enthusiasm for the region wane, although by then there were many others offering their own ideas on the region. By focusing exclusively on the Alps at a pivotal time in the 1850s, this research draws upon a range of primary and secondary sources that have not been studied together. It incorporates Ruskin's interests in both art and geology, the history of mountain narratives in which both Ruskin and Smith

participated, and the impact of the popular Mont Blanc shows in London. Placed together in the mid nineteenth century, they illustrate and enable the changing perception of the Alps from objects of distant sublime and aesthetic wonder to a landscape better known and understood, but also more widely used and populated and thus (to Ruskin's regret at least) changed.

The research draws extensively upon primary sources to illustrate the points made. Ruskin was prolific in his writing. The thorough thirty-nine volumes of The Works of John Ruskin (ed. Cook and Wedderburn) provide excellent coverage of his work with constructive introductions and detailed notes. It is the standard Cook and Wedderburn edition of Ruskin's works that are frequently referred to in this research. The main focus of this thesis lies on the five volumes of Modern Painters, although there is extensive use of other publications including Of King's Treasuries (1865), Queen of the Air (1869) and Deucalion (1879) in addition to his letters, poetry and his autobiography, Praeterita (1886). This has been supplemented by other primary sources by Ruskin including The Diaries of John Ruskin (ed. Evans and Whitehouse) and Ruskin in Italy (ed. Shapiro).

The literature on Ruskin is vast. Here it has been vital to focus almost exclusively on works that detail his relations with the Alps, although this in itself provides an enormous range. It includes Ruskin's studies in geology and art, and particularly his appreciation of Turner. Major secondary sources used include Dinah Birch's Ruskin on Turner (1990), John Hayman's John Ruskin and Switzerland (1990), George Landow's The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin (1971), Paul Walton's The Drawings of John Ruskin (1972), and Robert Hewison's John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye (1976), in addition to his excellent publication to coincide with an exhibition at Tate Britain: Ruskin, Turner

and the Pre-Raphaelites (2000). Particular reference must also be made to the thorough and detailed introductions by E.T. Cook to the series of volumes of Ruskin's works used in this study. Nevertheless, whilst invaluable in themselves, it was necessary to place this research on Ruskin in conjunction with other events and activities occurring in the Alps and documented elsewhere including geological research by Forbes, studies of the beginnings of tourism in the Alps, the establishment of the Alpine Club (1857), and, of course, the popular appropriation of the Alps by Albert Smith. All these issues are frequently discussed in Ruskin's own work.

For Albert Smith, the primary sources are less abundant and have had far less scholarly examination. Perhaps the most revealing work about him is his own The Story of Mont Blanc (1853), written, in part, as a defence against those who accused him of exploiting the region. Other primary sources include his fictional work, not least the two novels that incorporate the Alps into their storylines: The Adventures of Mr Ledbury and his Friend, Jack Johnson (1844) and The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole (1848). The popularity of the shows ensured that they were covered by the newspaper press, particular as Smith remorselessly publicised and promoted the beginning of each season of shows. This research will examine the variety of responses to his performances including those in The Illustrated London News, The Times, and The Daily News.

Secondary sources on Smith are scarce and usually insubstantial, although there are signs that this may change, exemplified in the recent article by Jerry White: 'Unsentimental Traveller: The London Novels of Albert Smith' from a 2007 edition of The London Journal. His shows are mentioned briefly in such works as Altick's The Shows of London (1978) and more recently in Peter Hansen's persuasive article 'Albert Smith, the Alpine

Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain' (1995), and Simon Schama's Landscape and Memory (1996). Schama however notes that 'there is as yet no major study of Albert Smith, one of the most extraordinary of all Victorians' (620) and this remains true a decade later. Two slight works on him are Fitzsimons' popular biography The Baron of Piccadilly (1967) and Monroe Thorington's Mont Blanc Sideshow: The Life and Times of Albert Smith (1934), although the latter relies very heavily on extended quotes from reports of the shows from the 1850's, especially from The Illustrated London News. It is from these first hand reports, and from Smith's own The Story of Mont Blanc (1853), that one perhaps gets a better understanding of the shows and their popularity than from the commentary that surrounds them. Meanwhile, Judith Flanders's Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain (2006) provides a useful examination of popular entertainment in Britain and the origins of Thomas Cook's excursions around the country, although some of her research on Smith is inaccurate (the dates for his shows, for example, are incorrect).

The cultural history of mountains has recently been explored in Robert MacFarlane's fascinating Mountains of the Mind (2003), though the scope of the book, which includes a much larger time frame and numerous mountain ranges, means that characters like Smith and Ruskin, in addition to the general changes that occurred in the Alps in the 1850s, are mentioned but briefly. More detail on this subject is to be found in Jim Ring's How the British made the Alps (2000). These books, and further modern investigations into Alpine history in works such as Fleming's Killing Dragons (2001), are supplemented by alpine histories from the first half of the twentieth-century by key figures such as Arnold Lunn, Ronald Clark and Gavin de Beer who produced a range of studies of the early and mid-Victorian period that tended to focus on figures such as Saussure, Forbes, Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, and Ruskin as key figures who pre-dated the Alpine

Climbers. These are valuable as such, but it should be noted that they focus on the higher, more intellectual end of the spectrum of encounters with Alpine experience. Albert Smith is not, for them, a key figure.

Research on Smith is therefore scant and what exists, with few exceptions, is brief with a tendency to inaccuracy. Scholarly research on Ruskin's affiliation with the Alps has centred on his art and art theory, and to a lesser extent his geological interests, whilst ignoring his involvement in the growing popularity of the Alpine landscape in the 1850s. The main focus of my study will be on the period from the publication of the first volume of Ruskin's Modern Painters in 1843 to what is generally acknowledged to be the end of the 'Golden Age of Mountaineering' in 1865. During this period, Ruskin also published the fourth volume of Modern Painters entitled Of Mountain Beauty (1856), a detailed and passionate celebration of the Alps that followed many further, dedicated months studying the environment. Within this time frame, Smith climbed Mont Blanc in 1851 and his immensely popular show 'The Ascent of Mont Blanc' made its debut in 1852.

My research will naturally examine the period before the 1840s coinciding with early trips made by Ruskin and Smith to the Alps in the 1830s. Earlier attitudes to the Alps will also be explored, particularly in the first chapter, including their association with ideas of the picturesque and the sublime, and also their representation in the works of poets like Byron and Wordsworth. Furthermore, reference will be made to those explorers who made the first recorded explorations high into the Alps, including the geologist Horace de Saussure (1749-1799), the person who is perhaps the strongest link between the two disparate characters of Ruskin and Smith; both admired his work. The year 1865 sees the end of this study. By this time Smith had been dead for five years and Ruskin's enthusiasm

for the Alps had waned towards the end of the 1850s. By extending the research into the 1860s, however, there is an opportunity to explore the effects of this increase in popularity due in no small manner to the efforts of Ruskin and Smith, no matter how much the former deplored it. This will be examined through an analysis of early Alpine narratives by members of the Alpine Club (1857) and the first tours of the Alps by Thomas Cook in 1863 (chapter four).

1. Ruskin and Smith's Early Alpine Inspirations

1.1 John Ruskin and the Alpine Aesthetic

This opening section aims to give an overview of Ruskin's attachment to the Alpine mountains and examine why they had such a powerful hold on his imagination. They were for him the most beautiful, stimulating and appealing natural landscape that occupied his thoughts for weeks and even months at a time. His enthusiasm for the mountains is clearly evident in the rapturous descriptions that appear in many of his works and which contributed to public interest in the area far beyond his expectations and desires as many began to travel to the Alps to seek the sights he had described and drawn in his books.

Ruskin spent his early years reading about the Alps in geological texts and poetry, some of which contained illustrations of the Alpine scene. Works included Horace de Saussure's Voyages dans les Alpes and Samuel Rogers's Italy (containing engravings of J.M.W. Turner's paintings). These will be discussed later. Following his appreciation of these texts, he undertook many trips to the Alps exploring, observing, analysing and writing about the environment. From 1833 to 1888, he travelled to Chamonix alone fourteen times (De Beer, Travellers in Switzerland 474-8), and in his autobiography describes the place as one of the 'centres of my life's thought' (Praeterita 156). Only from the late 1850s, coinciding with his loss of religious faith, does there seem to be a sense that the appeal of the Alpine aesthetic weakens. In his biography, Batchelor observes that in 1858 Ruskin found even the St. Gotthard Pass 'dull' (161), despite his extravagant praise for it in the

past, derived in part from Turner's vivid painting of the scene. Nevertheless from the early 1840s until the late 1850s his enthusiasm was undiminished.

In The Victorian Mountaineers, Ronald Clark provides a useful overview of Ruskin's relationship with the Alps:

As he travelled through them, year after year, observing, recording, questioning, sketching, enquiring ever more deeply into their geological structure and their purpose in life, Ruskin began to build up in his own mind a picture of the mountains in which they formed a background not merely to one particular set of experiments but to all worthwhile existence. It was this many-sidedness of his approach which was of such importance (35).

Ruskin's approach and attitude to the Alps is both important and complex; it embodies theories and arguments about geology, natural theology, and the theory of beauty and the sublime. He argued that mountainous landscapes were simultaneously an appropriate source for artistic representation and a clue to spiritual and moral development. Unsurprisingly, given the complexity of his interests and the development of his views, his position on the Alps was not consistent. Ruskin's approach to experiencing them and transferring this vision to the medium of art altered significantly during the seventeen years between the publication of the first and final volumes of Modern Painters (1843-60). These works in particular contain thoughts and detailed analysis of natural scenery with particular emphasis on the Alpine mountains and explore the ways in which it should be seen, appreciated and represented in art. Reference to specific mountains is made, based to a

large degree on numerous trips made to the Alps. Detailed studies are made of mountainous environments both in their natural state and in their artistic representation.

The first two sections of this chapter will examine Ruskin's ideas and attitudes to the Alps themselves before exploring their importance in art in chapter two. The nature of his key ideas on the importance of the relation between nature and art is best illustrated from the late work The Eagle's Nest (1872), where he asserts that: 'There is nothing that I tell you with more eager desire that you should believe – nothing with wider ground in my experience for requiring you to believe, than this, that you will never love art well, till you love what she mirrors better' (Lectures on Landscape, ... 152-3). Here, Ruskin is referring specifically to his own artistic methodology for painting landscape, but he continually encourages others to adopt the same approach, particularly in Modern Painters and The Elements of Drawing. In the preface to the fifth (and final) volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin again succinctly expresses the primacy of external nature over artistic invention: 'In the main aim and principle of the book, there is no variation, from its first syllable to its last. It declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God; and tests all work of man by concurrence with, or subjection to that' (Modern Painters V 9). In one sense this quote is enigmatic. The phrase 'eternal beauty' is problematic when one considers Ruskin's changing religious beliefs (explored in section 1.2). Nevertheless, what is clear in Modern Painters as a whole is that it is the mountainous environment of the Alps that is essentially under discussion here. Despite the religious credo, the quotation stresses the importance of external nature first and foremost over subjective interpretation. And, while Modern Painters does explore the Alps as objects of aesthetic, intellectual, moral and spiritual value, there is also an empirical emphasis concerning the physical structure and make-up of the

geology of the region. Until the end of the 1850s this scientific interest rarely conflicted with his theological convictions. Subsequently, there is a clear tension.

Ruskin's methodology for the Modern Painters series is laid down in his preface to the second edition of volume one. Here he clearly defines his intention to examine in detail the natural source before extrapolating any meaning that might be derived from it:

... I shall endeavour to investigate and arrange the facts of nature with scientific accuracy ... This foundation once securely laid, I shall proceed, in the second portion of this work, to analyse and demonstrate the nature of the emotions of the Beautiful and Sublime; to examine the particular characters of every kind of scenery; and to bring to light, as far as may be in my power, that faultless, ceaseless, inconceivable, inexhaustible loveliness, which God has stamped upon all things, if man will only receive them as He gives them. Finally, I shall endeavour to trace the operation of this on the hearts and minds of men ... (Modern Painters I 48).

This passage identifies Ruskin's own conception of the process from empirical and 'scientific' observation through the aesthetic emotions the object provokes, to the intellectual, moral and spiritual significance that might be adduced. The process is sequential and entirely interdependent, and, significantly, feelings of the beautiful and the sublime are only part of the process of internalising natural scenery and making it meaningful. Therefore, one can argue that the emotional response to nature conveyed in Romantic poetry and novels, and ideas on the sublime and picturesque, were unsatisfactory for Ruskin, not least in their prioritisation of subjectivity over the external source itself.

The influence of eighteenth-century theories of the sublime and their influence on the depiction of vertiginous landscapes by Romantic writers coloured Ruskin's initial conception of the Alps. These included works such as Sir Walter Scott's depiction of the Scottish Highlands in his 'Waverley' novels and Byron's portrayal of Alpine sublimity in poems such as Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1812-18) and Manfred (1817). Ruskin's father was an admirer of both, particularly Byron, and read aloud from both authors to his wife and son. When young Ruskin glimpsed the Alps for the first time in 1833 whilst travelling around Europe, his response is expressed both in his poem 'The Alps from Schaffhausen' composed at the time ('... that rosy line of light, / Of unimaginable height, -' (31-32)) and recollected in Praeterita, his autobiography, in which similar terms are used:

There was no thought in any of us for a moment of their [sic] being clouds. They were clear as crystal, sharp on the pure horizon sky, and already tinged with rose by the sinking sun. Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed, - the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us; not more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death (115).

In the sentiments expressed and the language used, one can see how a familiarity with Romantic authors influenced the young Ruskin. His impression echoes the description of the Alps in the third canto of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage published less than twenty years earlier:

... Above me are the Alps,

The palaces of nature, whose vast walls

Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche – the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How earth may pierce to heaven, yet leave vain man below (590-598).

Both Ruskin and Byron enthuse over the scale and sublimity of the mountain range and attempt to convey this to the reader's imagination. The Alps are seen as sacred and unassailable reaching to the clouds and beyond. For the young Ruskin, the imaginative and emotional hold that they have was of much more importance than an accurate description of their structure.

Ideas of the sublime from the previous century influenced most encounters with the Alps in the early to mid-Victorian era. In order to gain a clearer understanding of Ruskin's response, it is necessary to examine the interest in theories of the sublime and their relation to beauty pertaining to the Alps, which arguably began in the late seventeenth century. In his study of the evolution of these ideas, Samuel Monk in The Sublime admits to the difficulty of giving a single definition of the word 'sublime' due to its fluctuating meanings in the 1700s (233). Nevertheless, he does conclude his study by stating that this concept 'naturally expressed high admiration, and usually implied a strong emotional effect, which, in the latter years of the century, frequently turned on terror' (233). The mixed nature of the affects, and the often paradoxical meanings to be derived from them, are frequently evident. Thus, the aesthetician and playwright John Dennis used the oxymoronic terms 'delightful

Horror’ and ‘terrible Joy’ in 1688 to describe his visit to the Alps (Nicolson 279). According to Nicolson in Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: ‘At the same moment that his [Dennis’s] Reason condemned the shapelessness and confusion, he felt an enlargement of spirit [that] Beauty had never produced and, responding to the “extravagancies” of Nature, expressed his sensations in a language of extravagance and hyperbole’ (279). The language used by Dennis is not an emotional response to something perceived as aesthetically beautiful, but nor is there repulsion. It was, in fact, a typical reaction to mountain scenery during the eighteenth century; he does not describe spontaneous fright or terror, but rather an oxymoronic juxtaposition of emotions (as in ‘terrible Joy’) that would later be analysed in such works as Edmund Burke’s A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757). Nicolson credits Dennis with being the first Englishman to differentiate critically between the sublime and the beautiful (272), but what is perhaps more significant is his association of the sublime with external nature. Nicolson defines the final years of the seventeenth century as the period where the concept of the sublime divided into the ‘natural’ and the ‘rhetorical’ (29-30). The former was conceived as a new concept and, as the name suggests, originates with nature itself whilst the already established ‘rhetorical’ sublime (dating back to the theories of Longinus, the Greek rhetorician of the first century AD) results from works of art and literature.

On the other hand, Monk argues that it was Joseph Addison in his article ‘The Pleasures of the Imagination’ (which appeared in the Spectator in 1712) who first clearly distinguished between the sublime and the beautiful by not allowing his study to be governed by extravagant terminology when describing the extremities of nature (Monk 54). Based on his own experiences in the Alps, Addison writes that:

... we are not struck with the Novelty or Beauty of the Sight, but with that rude kind of Magnificence which appears in many of these stupendous Works of Nature. Our imagination loves to be filled with an Object, or to grasp at anything that is too big for its Capacity. We are flung into a pleasing Astonishment at such unbounded Views, and feel a delightful Stillness and Amazement in the Soul at the Apprehension of them... (qtd. in Zink 27-28)

Despite discrepancies between the emotional exuberance of Dennis's writing and the more analytical approach by Addison, both are in agreement in their appreciation of vast, untamed, natural beauty. During the eighteenth century, sites like the Alps would gradually increase in their aesthetic attraction (McFarlane 15). For both Addison and Dennis however there is also a strong emphasis on the internal or psychological impact of nature and especially its power over the imagination and the emotions. Critics like Landow and de Bolla argue that this became increasingly crucial in the latter half of the eighteenth century whilst, concurrently, the religious basis of the sublime (to which both Dennis and Addison adhered) diminished in influential works like Burke's Enquiry.

In The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin, Landow comments that:

...notions associated with the sublime affected the older, neoclassical theories of beauty. Under the influence of the sublime, writers on aesthetics came to believe that beauty was a matter of emotion and not reason, and that moreover, it should be described in terms of an emotional reaction and not in terms of qualities residing in the perceived object (186).

The point is illustrated in Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry where he focuses almost entirely on the psychological impact and affect of the sublime and beautiful. In an introductory passage on the former Burke writes:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling (36).

Despite later attempting to specify material sources that can evoke sublime responses by asserting, for instance, that 'greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of the sublime' (66), Burke's interest centres on the affect that the source conjures, a trend identified by Ashfield and de Bolla: 'Interest in the object – say mountainous scenery - ... diminishes as writers become increasingly preoccupied with the discursive production of sublimity' (Ashfield 14). The dominance of emotional subjectivity over natural objects clearly stands in opposition to Ruskin's ideas concerning the treatment of landscape in Modern Painters. Ruskin's concern over this subjectivist emphasis was the lack of appreciation it implied for the natural objects that produced these responses. To this he added a crucial related argument: that the solipsism of mainstream theories of sublimity threatened to detach God as Creator of these objects from the process. He believed that Burke's assessment of the characteristics that provoked sublime feeling was too narrow. As Batchelor points out, for Ruskin 'Sublimity expresses the effect of greatness, including great beauty, on the

temperament' (57), but the key element remained the nature of the original 'greatness' in the object itself which provoked sublime emotions.

In Praeterita, Ruskin describes his 1842 European tour which formed the basis for the first volume of Modern Painters. He writes about a crucial experience drawing trees in the forests of Fontainebleau:

... the beautiful lines insisted on being traced, - without weariness. More and more beautiful they became as each rose out of the rest, and took its place in the air. With wonder increasing every instant, I saw that they 'composed' themselves, by finer laws than any known of men. At last the tree was there, and everything that I had thought about trees, nowhere (314).

In the passage, these discrete elements compose a natural harmony, a key point in his natural theology and, indeed, aesthetic theory. The quote also reveals the growing importance of nature as an external object in itself. Rather than relying on pre-conceived ideas of nature derived from art, literature or earlier aesthetic theory, Ruskin sees first the singular object in front of him and uses this as the basis for study and from which to extrapolate larger ideas. In Ruskin's God, Michael Wheeler emphasizes 'the cardinal importance of eyesight' (22) for Ruskin, exemplified in a revealing passage from volume three of Modern Painters where Ruskin states: 'Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion, - all in one' (333). Further evidence of Ruskin's stress on observation in his experience of Alpine scenery can be found in his diary extract of 28th June 1844, written in Chamonix at the base of Mont Blanc: 'For an hour before, the aiguilles had appeared as

dark masses against a sky looking as transparent as clear sea, edged at their summits with fleeces of cloud breaking into glorious spray and foam of white fire' (Praeterita 330). It was upon such 'constant watchfulness' as this, Ruskin notes, that statements in Modern Painters were based (Praeterita 285).

Ruskin's detailed geological and botanical perspective on Alpine nature is crucial and will be examined alongside his theological beliefs in chapter 1.2 below. However the emphasis here is on the importance of the act of observation itself rather than the conclusions drawn from it. Landow claims that Ruskin granted little importance to nature outside of its interpretation in the human mind (214). However, I would argue that the detailed observation of nature itself was of at least equal importance. Ruskin's trips to the Alps, particularly in the 1840s, were geared towards scientific investigation. Following his revelation while drawing the trees at Fontainebleau in 1842, Praeterita records the period spent in Chamonix where 'I did not even draw much, - the things I now saw were beyond drawing, - but took to careful botany, while the month's time set apart for the rocks of Chamouni [sic] was spent in merely finding out what was to be done, and where' (315). Ruskin gives his main aim for travelling to Chamonix that year as 'examining the Mont Blanc rocks accurately' (Praeterita 312), and previously he had spent a week tracing a geological map of the Alpine area that he desired to visit (Cook 124-5). As David Zink points out in the preface to his thesis The Beauty of the Alps: A Study of the Victorian Mountain Aesthetic, 'Ruskin's strong geological interests, for a time without effect upon his faith, represent an empirical tendency, which, ... led him to an appreciation of alpine beauty in terms of more purely objective elements such as line, mass and color' (ii).

For Ruskin, one can only evaluate nature subjectively after close empirical study. In the first volume of Modern Painters, he also emphasizes the types of responses that he feels should be experienced when he warns that: ‘All high or noble emotion or thought is ... rendered physically impossible while the mind exults in what is very likely a strictly sensual pleasure’ (102). It is likely that Ruskin is thinking of Burke here, having referred to his Enquiry a few pages earlier. Ruskin was concerned by the implications of mere sensuality latent in Burke and other sublime theorists. Adam Phillips (in his introduction to Burke’s Enquiry) notes the secular content and language pervading Burke’s study: ‘... with its relatively cursory references to Christianity, we find the beginnings of a secular language for profound human experience: in rudimentary form, an erotic empiricism’ (Burke ix). For Ruskin, there was a need to purge these emotions that had become associated with the sublime, at the same time establishing a religious imperative according to his evangelical upbringing.

Ruskin’s effort to check the implications of mere sensationalism or, indeed, sensuality is to be found in his chapter on ‘Of the Sublime’ which ends part one of Modern Painters I. (Closing the volume in this way gives a sense of greater emphasis and importance.)

Beauty is not so often felt to be sublime; because in many kinds of purely material beauty there is some truth in Burke’s assertion that “littleness” is one of its elements. ... I take the widest possible ground of investigation, that sublimity is found wherever anything elevates the mind; that is, wherever it contemplates anything above itself, and perceives it to be so. ... the sublime is not distinct from what is beautiful ... (129-30).

It is important to note here that the origin of the sublime is in the object itself ('anything' is repeated twice) which is known to be different from oneself ('anything above' the mind). Henry Ladd makes the obvious but important point in his study of Ruskin's aesthetic that: '... the contemplation of the greatness of any idea, not the mere instinctive fear, ... constitutes the sublime experience' (134). Ruskin makes the case that the highest beauty is also sublime. The segregation of the two concepts of beauty and the sublime does not accord with his methodology that begins with his fascination with nature in all forms and sizes. His appreciation of nature ranges from the mountain structures themselves to a mineralogist's interest in small rocks. Ruskin challenges pre-existing ideas of the sublime espoused by Burke and others by arguing that all features of the natural environment can trigger a sublime reaction that, for Ruskin, is attributed to the object before subjective feeling. The danger, for him, is succumbing to mere sensations, including the sensation of being overwhelmed.

The logical process from the empirical study of nature to its human reception is described in Modern Painters in a language that both reflects the author's enthusiasm for nature and shows his conviction about the ways in which it should be perceived and understood. Once again, the language significantly refrains from adopting the sensational terminology associated with eighteenth-century conceptions of the sublime. An early review of the first volume of Modern Painters in the 9th December 1843 issue of the journal Britannia comments on just this feature of the work. For this reviewer, the book was 'calculated more than *any other* performance in the language to make men inquire into the nature of these sensations of the sublime, the touching and the delightful, and to lead them from doubt into knowledge, without feeling the length of a way so scattered over with the

flowers of an eloquent, forcible and imaginative style' (Modern Painters I xxxvii). As E.T. Cook (editor of Ruskin's works) points out, 'what impressed the critics was the closeness of the author's reasoning, his wealth of illustrative reference, and the force and beauty of the style' (Modern Painters I xxxv). Despite the controversial stance of elevating Turner's landscape art over everything that had gone before, the carefully argued and self-assured authority of the prose, as well as its impressive array of detail, received a favourable press, and shifted the grounds of debate from sensational generality to particular observation. As the Britannia reviewer says, it sponsored enquiry 'into the nature of these sensations', it did not leave them at face value.

In Modern Painters, Ruskin explores and re-evaluates the sublime traditionally associated with the Alpine environment and places the emphasis firmly on the natural environment itself before evaluating the effects of the mountain terrain in terms of its spiritual, moral and aesthetic qualities. He desired a movement away from the association of the Alps with the sensations that they evoked, towards a more multi-faceted, and above all detailed and specific understanding of the landscape. His work embodied concepts and ideas that transformed Victorian notions of the Alps leading to a greater appreciation of the environment and a desire to explore the sites described and illustrated in Modern Painters. This work, in part, is a celebration of the Alps as an exemplary natural site which, Ruskin believed, demonstrated the glory of God's creation. However, the tension between his geological curiosity and his strong Evangelical faith became problematic as time went on and he further examined and wrote about the landscape, as will be explored in the next section.

1.2 Ruskin, Science and Religion

In Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, Nicolson argues that in order to understand nineteenth-century ideas about mountains, and the processes of their formation, in terms of Creationist and evolutionary discourse, one needs to comprehend their ‘long history’ within theological discourse (94). This section will explore Ruskin’s perceptions of the Alps based upon his religious outlook and geological interests. Additionally, an examination will be made of earlier influential figures to place Ruskin within a continuing, contentious debate. From an essentially theological perspective, Thomas Burnet, Georges Buffon and William Buckland harmonised new hypotheses on the development of landscape with Creationist ideology, whilst Horace de Saussure and Charles Lyell emphasised a more empirical approach to understanding the earth’s structure and origins. In the case of Lyell, his research contested Creationist ideas and moved the scientific debate away from the perception of the world as designed by a deity.

From an early age, Ruskin had a strict religious education in particular from his mother. A devout Calvinist Evangelical, she had a firm, vigilant hold over her son’s spiritual learning in childhood and early adulthood (Wheeler 5). In Praeterita, Ruskin writes about the extent of the Biblical knowledge he acquired at an early age:

... I have ... with deeper gratitude to chronicle what I owe to my mother for the resolutely consistent lessons which so exercised me in the Scriptures as to make every word of them familiar to my ear in habitual music, - yet in that familiarity revered, as transcending all thought, and ordaining all conduct.

This she effected, not by her own sayings or personal authority; but simply by compelling me to read the book thoroughly, for myself. As soon as I was able to read with fluency, she began a course of Bible work with me, which never ceased till I went to Oxford (40).

The instruction, as Wheeler observes in Ruskin's God, consisted of reading aloud several chapters of the Bible daily and learning particular verses by heart (6). This had a direct bearing on his outlook on the Alps and his ideas in Modern Painters on how they should be regarded. From his childhood both parents had high expectations of his future calling above and beyond any specified vocation. In 1829, John James Ruskin wrote a disconcerting letter to his ten-year-old son, counselling him that:

You may be doomed to enlighten a People by your wisdom and to adorn an age by your Learning. It would be sinful in you to let the powers of your mind lie dormant through idleness or want of perseverance when they may at their maturity aid the cause of Truth and of Religion and enable you to become in many ways a Benefactor to the Human Race (Burd, The Ruskin Family Letters I 209-10).

These intangible concepts of 'truth' and 'religion' would later become fundamental categories that Ruskin would use in Modern Painters when discussing the Alpine aesthetic.

Running concurrently with his religious instruction, Ruskin had a settled interest in geology. Cook remarks that 'Geology and mineralogy, and not painting or literature, were

Ruskin's earliest love. ... The ambition of his boyhood was to connect his name, not with a system of art aestheticism, but a system of mineralogy' (Ruskin, Deucalion xix). This initial interest in the facts of science over an aesthetic appreciation of the landscape is exemplified in Praeterita where Ruskin recollects a vivid impression of the 'most exciting event' that occurred whilst ascending Snowdon in 1831. Rather than a Romantic response to the environment, the 'event' was 'the finding for the first time in my life a real "mineral" for myself, a piece of copper pyrites!' (96). His father wrote that 'From boyhood my son has been an artist, but he has been a geologist from infancy' (Cook, The Life of John Ruskin I 32). Although Ruskin in adulthood did not associate himself with the profession of geologist, mineralogist or any other category that connected with a particular scientific field, he early adopted an empirical, scientific approach to nature. Hewison remarks on how Ruskin would use a close examination of natural data to formulate ideas on its importance: 'the scientific practice current during Ruskin's early years was exactly suited to his temperament; it involved walking, drawing, collecting, listing, and its ultimate purpose was ... to reveal the glory of God in his Divine ordering of the universe' (John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye 20). So clearly, at this stage, there was no distinction for Ruskin between his faith and his geological enthusiasm.

Yet at the time when Ruskin was beginning to investigate the design and structure of the natural world, scientific investigation into the earth's history was challenging Creationist belief. On one side of the debate was the catastrophist theory and its prominent English exponent, the Reverend William Buckland. In his book Geology and Mineralogy Considered with Reference to Natural Theology (1837), Buckland asserted that the Earth's current state was the result of 'major geophysical revolutions' (MacFarlane 32) that had shaped the earth's surface, the last of these being the Old Testament Biblical Flood. With

regard to the argument that geological data provided evidence of a time before the Biblical Creation, Buckland argued, as his predecessors had done, that the six 'days' it took God to create the Earth in the Bible were symbolic rather than literal, and represented a much longer period of actual, secular time.

In the introductory chapter of his book, Buckland identifies key earlier figures who contributed to new interpretations of how the Earth arrived at its present geological structure. As Buckland was an influential figure on Ruskin and taught him geology at Oxford, it is worth examining how he arrives at his harmonization of religion and science. Buckland describes how '[s]ome have attempted to ascribe the formation of all the stratified rocks to the effects of the Mosaic deluge; an opinion which is irreconcilable with the enormous thickness and almost infinite subdivisions of those strata ...' (16). Here Buckland is referring to Thomas Burnet's The Sacred Theory of the Earth (1681), a key text in the history of thinking about mountains. Burnet claimed that in its original state, the earth was 'smooth, regular and uniform, without Mountains and without a Sea' (qtd. in Nicolson 203). He also asserted that the earth changed out of all recognition following the biblical Flood. The Earth would have been left as 'nothing but a Desart [sic], a great Ruin, a dead heap of Rubbish' if 'Fortune and Hopes of all Posterity' had not been assembled in the ark (qtd. in Nicolson 200). Burnet was important. He undertook the Grand Tour in 1671 in which he traversed the Alps, and his work has been claimed as making his generation 'mountain conscious' to an extent never before known in England (Nicolson 253), even though mountains continued to be widely regarded as aesthetically repellent for another century. Whilst in the mountains Burnet was convinced that this 'Multitude of vast Bodies thrown together in Confusion' could not be part of the symmetrical and proportional state of the earth as he envisaged it in its biblical beginnings. Burnet did not deny the autonomy

or the power of God in this transformation; nor did he contest the longevity of the earth. Nevertheless what is significant is that his text argues against the idea of an immutable world in favour of one that had been altered by cataclysmic events. As Nicolson points out: 'Burnet went back to early theology to discover an orthodox account that might be more consistent with the marked changes and mutability that had occurred in the structure of the earth since creation' (196).

Through Buckland, Burnet's ideas were still being discussed well into the nineteenth century in the context of catastrophist and uniformitarian debates (Nicolson 194). Burnet's association with the idea that the earth was prone to 'drastic tidal actions, global tsunamis, severe earthquakes' (McFarlane 32) which radically reconfigured the earth's surface was challenged by uniformitarians like James Hutton in the eighteenth century and later Charles Lyell, who asserted that, rather than the result of cataclysmic revolution, the earth was subject to the gradual process of localised changes which, cumulatively, were nonetheless profound and which could be both observed and described in the contemporary world.

Georges Buffon published his Natural History between 1749 and 1788 in which, in contrast to Burnet, he contested the age of the earth recorded in the Bible. Buffon argued that each biblical 'day' in the Creation of the earth was actually representative of a much longer time period. For example, following experiments with molten metals he concluded that the earth would have taken about 25,000 years to cool. This represented the first 'day'. The second 'day', when the earth received water, was estimated at 10,000 years; and so forth. As a result, the six 'days' of creation equated to roughly 75,000 years. As MacFarlane notes: '... by turning each biblical day into an epoch of indefinite time, he

[Buffon] created the space and time necessary for geologists to begin their work of disinterring an authentic history for the earth, while at the same time staying within the bounds of respect for the scriptures' (31).

Buckland to some extent adopted Buffon's theory, though with modifications to ensure that there was no discrepancy with scripture:

Still there is, I believe, no sound critical, or theological objection, to the interpretation of the word 'day', as meaning a long period; but there will be no necessity for such extension, in order to reconcile the text of Genesis with physical appearances, if it can be shown that the time indicated by the phenomena of Geology may be found in the undefined interval, following the announcement of the first verse.

In my inaugural lecture, published at Oxford, 1820, ... I have stated my opinion of the hypothesis, which supports the word 'beginning', as applied by Moses in the first verse of the book of Genesis, to express an undefined period of time, which was antecedent to the last great cause that affected the surface of the earth, and to the creation of the present animal and vegetable inhabitants (Buckland 18).

Buckland's work aimed to ensure that geological data were harmonious with Creationist ideology. In addition to establishing his theory of the formation of the earth, he also discussed evidence of life 'preceding the Creation of our species' which in turn has replaced 'other races that had gone before' (581). His conviction that the Earth has

witnessed a series of mutually exclusive periods of time before the creation of man leads to the conclusion that this is evidence of God's 'Method and Design' and confirmation of a 'direct agency of creative interference' (586).

Buckland had a seminal influence in inspiring Ruskin to explore the relationship between religion and science (Batchelor 41), and subsequently Ruskin became a Fellow of the Geological Society in 1840. Nevertheless, although geological and theological perspectives pervade such works as Modern Painters, Ruskin refrains from deliberating in detail on any theoretical ideas concerning Creationism and does not expound upon the catastrophist theories of Buckland or any other geological theory concerning the evolution of the earth. In John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye, Robert Hewison makes the important point that 'Geological concerns are uppermost in Modern Painters IV (1856), where he makes his own classification and description of the materials of the earth. But the classification does not depend on an analysis of the structures in terms of their history; instead they are divided ... into their visual characteristics and shapes' (21-2). In the rare instances when Ruskin does look back to the Earth's origins, he uses his empirical research into the natural environment, particularly the structural qualities of the Alps, as evidence of the work of God who created a landscape similar to that of the present day as described in the Creationist philosophy of the Bible.

The methodological process of inferring a religious hypothesis from observed nature had credence in the eighteenth century and the influential, late eighteenth-century theologian William Paley 'inferred from evidences of design in nature the existence of a wise designer' (Van Huyssteens 603). Ladd argues that this view persists well into the nineteenth century even with the rapid growth in geological knowledge: 'The casuistry of

... early nineteenth century scientists accomplished the amazing feat of expanding the term nature to fit the growing scientific knowledge, while this kept unchanged its theological and ethical contours' (152). Likewise, in his essay 'Dispelling some myths about the split between theology and science', Welch is keen to dismiss the myth that a union between science and theology in the nineteenth century was impossible; rather, he suggests that 'the century was marked by a continuing process of theological accommodation ... to new scientific conceptions, notably in geology and in biology' (Richardson 32).

In Modern Painters V, Ruskin champions the concept that the Christian clerisy had held for centuries, that the earth emerged from chaos to form a topography similar to that of the present time. This view is expressed to accentuate the moral and spiritual orthodoxy of his work as, by the time of publication in 1860, Ruskin had publicly renounced his faith. In this final volume of Modern Painters he states that:

"His Hands prepared the dry lands." Up to that moment the earth had been *void*, for it had been *without form*. The command that the waters should be gathered was the command that the earth should be sculptured. The sea was not driven to his place in suddenly restrained rebellion, but withdrawn to his place in perfect and patient obedience. The dry land appeared, not in level sands, forsaken by the surges, which those surges might again claim for their own; but in range beyond range of swelling hill and iron rock, for ever to claim kindred with the firmament; and to be compared by the clouds of heaven (86-87).

This passage is striking as an example of Ruskin's use of art analogy (here sculpture) as a way of describing physical processes, and it is salient that he stresses the harmony ('kindred') of earthly and heavenly forms. The extract is characteristic of the confident Biblical tone and cadence manifest throughout Modern Painters despite Ruskin's increasing private doubts. In the passage quoted above, he is describing the moment when the earth's form, including its mountains, was structured. Here he describes the moment when the earth's form, including its mountains, was structured. The passage centres on a belief that the mountains were created at the dawn of Creation rather than evolving through time. This implicitly runs contrary to the geological evidence, and the theory that the earth's current form was the result of gradual alterations to its surface. The passage also demonstrates Ruskin's strict Christian upbringing and conviction, at least in his published works, that God was the Creator and designer. As Michael Wheeler observes, in earlier works like Modern Painters there is the 'belief in the wisdom of God the Father [that] informs Ruskin's Evangelical natural theology' (xv).

In his introduction to Ruskin's volume of geological work entitled Deucalion and Other Studies in Rocks and Stones, Cook makes the inaccurate assertion that 'he [Ruskin] was little interested in unknown ages and immeasurable forces' (xxiv). Although his writing concentrates on the aesthetic, moral and spiritual ideas connected with nature, Ruskin was not uninterested in the current debate that was arguing against the very fabric of Christian belief. His letters reveal a deep concern that the geological evidence was working against his Evangelical beliefs. Writing to Henry Acland (his old college companion and lifelong friend) in 1851, Ruskin complains that:

You speak to me of the flimsiness of your own faith. Mine, which was never strong, is being beaten into mere gold leaf, and flutters in weak rags from the letter of its old forms; but the only letters it can hold by at all are the old Evangelical formulae. If only the Geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful Hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses (qtd. in Batchelor 157).

The assertive confidence of Ruskin's prose in Modern Painters gives a clear and confident elucidation of Creationist doctrine running alongside an exploration of the region's appeal for him (their splendour is revelatory of God's creation). However this masks a lack of conviction in private concerning the continuing debate between science and religion and, in 1858, Ruskin renounced the Evangelical faith. Furthermore, as early as 1852, Ruskin wrote to his father that he was no longer convinced of the literal wording of the Bible, but would treat it metaphorically, though he continued to denounce agnosticism:

The higher class of thinkers [as opposed to scientific men], therefore, for the most part have given up the peculiarly Christian doctrines, and indeed nearly all thought of a future life, reason about death till they look upon it as no evil: and set themselves actively to improve this world and do as much good in it as they can. This is the kind of person I have become, ... No scientific difficulty can ever be cast in my teeth greater than at this moment I feel the geological difficulty: no moral difficulty greater than that which I now feel in the case of prophecies so obscure that they mean *anything*, like the oracles of old (Letters I 137-8).

The confidence of Ruskin's prose in Modern Painters therefore masks a lack of personal conviction concerning the continuing debate between science and religion. Cook's assertion that Ruskin lacked interest in geological history before man *is* however correct with regard to Ruskin's published works, for instance the introductory chapter to Deucalion. Here, Ruskin states that his work begins where theory ends and that:

I will endeavour in these following pages securely to show you, in what strength and beauty of form it [the Alps] has actually stood since man was man, and what subtle modifications of aspect, or majesties of contour, it still suffers from the rains that beat upon it, or owes to the snows that rest (113).

Ruskin nods in the direction of the importance of gradualist physical processes in the Alps, but there is an overall avoidance of investigating the mountains in the context of the geological 'big picture' concerning the longevity of the earth. In this passage Ruskin refers to the 'subtle modifications of aspect' which to some degree echoes the uniformitarian concepts of those like Charles Lyell, whose Principles of Geology (published in the early 1830s) asserted that the earth had been the subject of gradual erosion and localized calamities rather than transforming cataclysmic events. Laudén, in her article on 'The History of Geology, 1780-1840', summarises Lyell's uniformitarianism in three hypotheses (Olby 321): first, that the laws of nature have remained the same (law uniformitarianism); second, that the types of causes acting on the earth have stayed the same (kind uniformitarianism); finally, that the intensity of causes has remained constant (degree uniformitarianism). Therefore the study of the present in which these processes continue to be observable, is the key to the past. As a result there was now a potential stand-off in Ruskin's mind between belief and what he increasingly needed to acknowledge as

observable in the world around him. Yet his tactic seems to have been, in published work at least, to avoid the explicit collision of these increasingly antagonistic theories.

Ruskin had studied Principles of Geology and, as Batchelor points out, ‘the most advanced of Ruskin’s intellectual interests [at Oxford] ... was in geology’ (41). He agreed with Lyell’s methodological stance in geology whereby he insisted that an empirical examination of nature should determine conclusions rather than natural data being used to justify preconceived ideas. Ruskin needed no encouragement to engage in close scrutiny of relevant environments. Appropriately for him, James Secord quips in his introduction to Principles of Geology, that ‘Lyell had three pieces of advice for aspiring geologists, and had followed them at every opportunity: travel, travel, travel’ (Lyell xxi). In a letter on the construction of the Alps that appeared in the Reader in 1864, Ruskin declared that he had spent ‘eleven summers and two winters ... in researches among the Alps, directed solely to the question of their external form ...’ (Deucalion 548). Ruskin here refers to the period between 1844 and 1862 which formed the basis of much of his Alpine research, although as Cook points out: ‘By “solely” he [Ruskin] means that his geological researches were thus directed. It was not in Ruskin’s nature to devote himself at any time solely to any one subject ...’ (Deucalion xix).

Despite this methodological accord with Lyell and the new way of thinking he represented, Ruskin refrained from entering into a detailed debate on the research undertaken by the uniformitarians concerning the longevity of the earth, research that potentially implied a rejection of God. Nonetheless, his intentions for Deucalion, his geological analysis, if applied to ideas on the history of the world, suggest a link to the anti-Creationist influence of Lyell. In an uncommon reference to the issue in Of Mountain

Beauty, Ruskin excuses himself from making connections with the historical implications of the gradual forces he sees acting on the mountains: 'I cannot entangle the reader in the intricacy of the inquiries necessary for anything like a satisfactory solution of these questions' (Modern Painters IV 177). However he does step back from his intense study of the sculpture of the Alpine mountains to raise fundamental questions concerning their longevity: '... two questions arise of the deepest interest. From what first created forms were the mountains brought into their present condition? into what forms will they change in the course of ages?' (177). Ruskin continues this train of thought with a whole series of related questions that emphasise his own preoccupation with this scientific/religious debate. At this point in Of Mountain Beauty Ruskin has already established that there is 'the lapse of the longer years of decay which, in the sight of its Creator, distinguishes the mountain range from the moth and the worm' (176-7). Nevertheless he has a:

... strong conviction of the earth's having been brought from a state in which it was utterly uninhabitable into one fitted for man; - of its having been, when first inhabitable, more beautiful than it is now; and of its gradually tending to still greater inferiority of aspect, and unfitness for abode.

It has, indeed, been the endeavour of some geologists to prove that destruction and renovation are continually proceeding simultaneously in mountains as well as in organic creatures; that while existing eminences are being slowly lowered, others, in order to supply their place, are being slowly elevated; and that what is lost in beauty or healthiness in one spot is gained in another. But I cannot assent to such a conclusion. Evidence altogether

incontrovertible points to a state of the earth in which it could be tenanted only by lower animals, fitted for the circumstances under which they lived by peculiar organizations. From this state it is admitted gradually to have been brought into that in which we now see it; and the circumstances of the existing dispensation, whatever may be the date of its endurance, seem to me to point not less clearly to an end than to an origin; to a creation, when “the earth was without form and void,” and to a close, when it must either be renovated or destroyed (Modern Painters IV 177-8).

A prominent feature of this passage is the indication that the earth appears to have been ‘designed’ for inhabitation by the effort of some being, made clearer a little later when he writes ‘time and decay ... the instruments of His purpose’ (180). Secondly, there is a latent pessimism that pervades the text. Both ideas fit in with Christian narratives of design and Fall, but now in a more ‘scientific’ register. Thirdly, it is striking that Ruskin seems to deflect attention from the earth’s origins to an interest in its future, implicitly – if perhaps unintentionally – forestalling debate on the more pressing geological questions of the day.

The pessimistic tone of the passage quoted above may also derive from the fact that by the time of writing in the mid-1850s, Ruskin had experienced dramatic and alienating alterations in the Alpine landscape including ‘people building hotels on my picturesque [sic] places’ (Letters I 244) coinciding with a sudden surge in popularity in the region. (This concern is explored in depth in sections 4.2 and 4.3). Ruskin generally tended to separate geological research and theological discourse, maintaining that there was insufficient evidence to propose secure theories on the long history of the world, thus postponing disagreement between them. In The Ethics of the Dust (1866) he refers back to

the comment made above from Modern Painters IV (177-8) and adds ‘I feel more strongly, every day, that no evidence to be collected within historical periods can be accepted as any clue to the great tendencies of geological change’ (Sesame and Lilies, ... 357). Others, however were less circumspect. In The Theory of the Earth (1785-99), the uniformitarian advocate James Hutton came to exactly the opposite conclusion to the one proposed by Ruskin. His final summary in the last sentence of this work informs the reader that ‘the result therefore of our present enquiry is, that we find no vestige of a beginning, - no prospect of an end’ (qtd. in Olby 316). There was simply change, and change only. It was this kind of secular conjecture based on geological empiricism that troubled Ruskin deeply. He wanted to see the world as teleological and the present as part of an ordered – albeit at times gloomy – pattern. As the overarching pattern crumbled, he turned more vigorously to the details before him.

In Ruskin’s published studies of the Alps, the mountains are essentially described not in terms of their history but in terms of what can be seen by the trained eye. As Cook asserts, Ruskin ‘turned away from theory, conjecture, speculation, to what could certainly be known, seen, drawn and measured’ (Deucalion xxv). Ruskin focuses on what could be seen in the mountains giving the assurance that a detailed understanding of this environment provided evidence of God’s creation. In an appendix to Of Mountain Beauty, Ruskin writes that to obtain the results expressed in this work he ‘closed all geological books, and set myself, as far as I could, to see the Alps in a simple, thoughtless, and untheorising manner; but to *see* them, if it might be, thoroughly’ (Modern Painters IV 475). This concept of seeing in an ‘untheorising manner’ is crucial to Ruskin’s perception of the Alps and is explored by Hewison: ‘The principle of direct observation and resistance to speculation leads to an attitude to nature that rests upon externals. All you need to know

can be discovered by simply using your own eyes' (John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye 21). Yet the convenience of this, amid the larger controversies that were raging, is easy to grasp.

One figure who was central to these ideas, and who was one of the writers most influential on Ruskin's empiricist appreciation of the Alpine terrain, was Horace de Saussure. Saussure's publication, Voyages dans les Alpes (1779-96), was given to Ruskin on his fifteenth birthday and describes his expeditions through these mountains paying particular attention to recording their structure and composition. Cook describes the influence of this work: 'to the end of his [Ruskin's] working life [it] was almost kept at hand and frequently quoted and referred to' (Deucalion xix). In a way similar to Ruskin's, Saussure himself had a '...rare love of nature and developed an unusual capacity for observation' (Mathews, 19-20). He became Professor of Natural Theology at the Academy of Geneva, a position he held for twenty-five years, and devoted his life to geology and physical geography centring his scientific explorations on the Alps. According to Sonntag, Saussure's:

substantive contribution to the emergent science of geology did not take the form of broad theories. He tended to accept the view that current geological conditions were the result of catastrophic events such as the universal flood. His importance as a geologist is based upon the empirical data that he amassed during his numerous expeditions to study the structure of the mountains (29).

Whilst reaching similar conclusions to those of Buckland some decades later, Saussure's methodology had more in common with that of Lyell. Sonntag writes that Saussure's aim was to 'investigate the limitless laboratory of nature, scientifically with an open mind' (10-11), by examining an object's characteristics before establishing its significance.

Possibly even more important than Saussure's empirical emphasis was his reluctance to examine Alpine terrain merely to satisfy scientific curiosity, or to advance ideas in meteorology and geology. As Schama observes in Landscape and Memory: 'He [Ruskin] endorsed Saussure's reproaches against those who only gather the details of the Alps, flora and geology; who were only concerned with measurement and the relative scales of men and mountains, without pausing to contemplate the irreducible whole' (508). Ruskin's interest in Voyages dans les Alpes was due to Saussure's overall enthusiasm for the mountains in both scientific and aesthetic terms. Ruskin endorses Saussure's work in an appendix to Of Mountain Beauty, where he writes of how 'I found Saussure had gone to the Alps, as I desired to go myself, only to *look* at them, and describe them as they were, loving them heartily – loving them, the positive Alps, more than himself, or than science, or than any theories of science...' (Modern Painters IV 476). Robert Hewison raises an important issue in Ruskin's statement by focusing on the 'unscientific' word 'love' which serves a dual purpose by suggesting both observation and feeling (21). As explored in the previous chapter, the close observation of nature was only part of the process of envisaging the Alps in terms of their aesthetic and spiritual qualities: 'Truthful observation allows the sensual pleasure of the eye to lead to the truth of God; to try to do more than *see* truly, either by theoretical analysis or emotional self-identification, is mere egoism' (Hewison, John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye 21). It is difficult not to imagine that in Saussure Ruskin

found a kindred spirit: a profound attraction to and reverence for the environment, an empirical curiosity, but also an eagerness not lost in troubled speculation.

In the second chapter of his work on geology, mineralogy and natural theology entitled 'Consisting of Geological Discoveries with Sacred History', Buckland asserts that:

No reasonable man can doubt that all the phenomena of the natural world derive their origin from God; and no one who believes the Bible to be the word of God, has cause to fear any discrepancy between this, His word, and the results of any discoveries respecting the nature of His works (9).

In his intensive research into the environment of the Alps, Ruskin was having just such problems. His conviction of the gradual mutability of the Alpine mountains based upon close observation and experiment did not accord with Creationist belief. One can accuse Ruskin of refusing to tackle these issues directly in works like Modern Painters, despite their emphasis on how the Alpine topography reflects the power and agency of God. Nevertheless, one could also argue that Ruskin's interest lies elsewhere in exploring the relationship between the qualities inherent in the mountain and the current spiritual and moral condition of man, before examining how the Alpine aesthetic can be best expressed through art. The importance of this train of thought can be seen in Praeterita, where Ruskin, quoting from Ecclesiastes, confirms his aesthetic outlook: "He hath made everything beautiful, in his time," became for me thenceforward [from 1842] the interpretation of the bond between the human mind and all visible things' (315). As for Saussure, it was environmental immersion that resolved – or at least postponed – the great collision of ideas.

Nonetheless, throughout his life, Ruskin adhered to the conviction that art, architecture and poetry must have an ethical and religious orientation. As Zink points out ‘[a]side from the effect of this work upon aesthetic theory generally, Modern Painters made it clear to Victorians that mountains, particularly the Alps, would repay in moral and religious inspiration the man who sought a closer acquaintance with them’ (84) and in this he looked to geological observation for aid. Ruskin’s geological interest in the Alps was intense and thorough. Nevertheless, the impression from Modern Painters is that there was no conflict for him between his religious convictions and the uniformitarian theories of the earth’s evolution developing in the first half of the nineteenth century. For Ruskin, at this stage, geological evidence worked in tandem with his religious beliefs. Despite his depth of interest in, and knowledge of, certain scientific fields as exemplified by the geological and mineralogical specificity of chapters on the materials of mountains in Modern Painters IV (that include an analysis of crystalline variants), his natural theology plays an integral part in making assertions about geological theory. In the final chapter of Of Mountain Beauty, Ruskin asserts that ‘... mountains are the beginning and end of all natural scenery’ (418). From a theological perspective, this can be read as showing the perfection of God’s creation highlighting his omnipotence, and His control and design of the natural world. It also of course highlights an extravagant aesthetic commitment. The struggle for him was to keep those, and his scientific interests, in alignment.

1.3 Introducing Albert Smith

Born in 1816, in the same decade as Ruskin, Albert Smith also formed an attachment to the Alps through pictorial and textual descriptions long before he ever travelled to see them in person. With this in mind, it is worth charting the similarities between Smith and Ruskin before exploring their essentially contrasting views of the Alps. Smith too was influenced by Saussure's Voyages dans les Alpes though not to the same degree as Ruskin; Smith's interpretation of this work would also differ significantly. Both visited the Alps for the first time in the 1830s though Ruskin's appreciation extended to the whole range whilst Smith's admiration was considerably more focused and localized. As a result of their excursions, each attempted to portray the Alps initially in relatively unsuccessful formats. Whilst Ruskin endeavoured to convey his impressions through poetry, Smith incorporated them into his novels. However, during the 1840s both realised that these mediums could not appropriately convey their aspirations. Later, through texts like Of Mountain Beauty and the stage show 'Mr. Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc', each portrayed more effectively their different impressions of the Alps. In effect, these chronological similarities serve only to highlight the substantial differences between them and it is these, rather than any parallels, which are of significance when examining their perceptions of the Alps. They represent, as it were, divergent paths in nineteenth-century culture from a shared enthusiasm. As such they ask key questions concerning the experience of mountains, the understanding and interpretation of this experience, and the Victorian division between 'high' and 'popular' aesthetic culture.

In Deucalion: Collected Studies of the Lapse of Waves and Life of Stones (1875-1883), Ruskin cites a remark made by Leslie Stephen in the May 1871 edition of the Alpine

Journal. Stephen (the father of Virginia Woolf) had written: ‘...if the Alpine Club has done nothing else, it has taught us for the first time really to see the mountains’ (qtd. in Ruskin, Deucalion 103). The Alpine Club (of which Stephen was president between 1865 and 1868) had been established in December 1857. Eligibility as a member resulted either from successfully climbing some of the more challenging peaks or by making a contribution to art, science or literature on Alpine topics (Ring 63). Ruskin himself was a member between 1869 and 1882.

In Deucalion, Ruskin attacks Stephen’s remark by listing others who ‘occasionally had eyes’ for mountains, including Sir Walter Scott and Turner (103), implicitly also including himself. He then gives his own view of how mountains should be viewed and rebukes Stephen: ‘Believe me, gentlemen, your power of seeing mountains cannot be developed either by your vanity, your curiosity, or your love of muscular exercise’. ‘It depends’ he continues ‘on the cultivation of the instrument of sight itself, and of the soul that uses it. As soon as you can see mountains rightly, you will see hills also, and valleys, with considerable interest; and a great many things with which you are at present but poorly acquainted’ (108). Ruskin’s attack is aimed at those who, like Smith in the 1850s, failed to treat the Alps with the respect and reverence he felt they deserved. Smith, an early member of the Alpine Club, was treated rather disapprovingly by other members due in part to his popular shows on the ascent of Mont Blanc that were seen to ‘ludicrously exaggerate’ the dangers involved (Fitzsimons, The Baron 148). Smith portrayed, and to some extent popularised, the characteristics that Ruskin resented, for, by the end of the 1850s, the Alps were perceived by many as ‘The Playground of Europe’ (in the words of Stephen’s book on the Alps) and many were encouraged to visit sites such as Zermatt and Chamonix, thus turning them into, in Ruskin’s words, ‘the skeletons of the Alps’ (Deucalion 104). Smith’s

perception of the Alps, and the way he represented them to his audience radically differed from Ruskin's, and it encouraged an increasing number of people from wider backgrounds to explore the Alpine environment for themselves. The influx of mass tourism, encouraged by Smith and others in the Alpine Club, began, Ruskin felt, to betray the special aesthetic and spiritual value of the place, although one could argue that Ruskin's own widely-influential Of Mountain Beauty also did something to stimulate interest in the region.

Smith's interest centred not so much on the Alps as a whole but on their highest and most celebrated and infamous peak, Mont Blanc. He read his first book on the mountain at the age of ten (Fitzsimons 20). One perspective on the influence of the sublime during the earlier part of the previous century suggests that 'Most writers on the sublime before Burke agreed that the pleasant feelings of awe, delight and admiration were the result of contemplating mountain ranges, vast seas, and the other visual examples of natural sublimity' (Landow 194-5). However the texts read by Smith in the 1820s and 1830s, including the anonymously authored The Peasants of Chamouni and Saussure's Voyages dans les Alpes, reveal a movement away from an appeal centred solely on the contemplative. In these texts one can trace an interest in active engagement in ascending Mont Blanc itself, that began in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Initially the justification for the new approach lay in scientific investigation, as seen in the research undertaken by Saussure. However, from the 1820s, the appeal of Mont Blanc broadened into a threefold interest involving a desire to experience the sensations of danger, the prospect of achievement, and the rewarding views attained at high altitude. As MacFarlane points out, during the nineteenth century a 'willed and authentic fear came to usurp the more decorous pleasures of the sublime' (84-5). Initially, interest lay in Mont Blanc almost alone. Fitzsimons makes the point that, in the first half of the nineteenth century, 'the men

who made the ascent of Mont Blanc were not mountaineers in the modern [late nineteenth century] sense of the word, for they climbed no other mountains. They climbed Mont Blanc because it was the highest mountain in Europe: they saw no point in climbing anything smaller' (Fitzsimons, The Baron 32). A few, such as Saussure, undertook meteorological and other observations at high altitude throughout the Alpine range but, generally during the nineteenth century, scientific interest in the Alps shifted from observations at the summit to a more low-level geological interest in rocks following the assertion (by Lyell among others) that they held evidence of the longevity of the planet. But away from scientific concerns, it was the fear and risk in the ascent of Mont Blanc that appealed to Smith. The sensations evoked in the books he read centred on the hazards involved, and can be seen in three formative texts that influenced him: The Peasants of Chamouni, John Auldjo's narrative of his 1827 ascent, and Saussure's Voyages.

Described as '*the* Alpine book for two generations' (Schama 493), and as a combination of 'both a founding work of geology and one of the first wilderness books' (MacFarlane 48), Voyages dans les Alpes does not focus solely on scientific analysis but also charts Saussure's overall relationship with the mountains. In the previous section, Ruskin's enthusiasm for the book has been noted for he found it matched his own reverential 'love' for the location. The attraction of Voyages for both Smith and Ruskin stemmed from the author's conviction that the Alps could not simply be analysed scientifically. But from this they drew opposing conclusions.

Ruskin held that knowledge of the natural sciences was an integral part of comprehending the Alpine aesthetic. Smith, in contrast, had little interest in scientific studies. In Mont Blanc he discusses An Account of the Glaciers or Ice Alps in Savoy

(1744) by William Windham and Peter Martel, two early visitors to the Mer de Glace glacier above Chamonix. It contained, he writes, ‘the result of many accurate and clever thermometrical and barometrical observations. These we need not follow: but here and there an interesting paragraph can be picked out’ (Smith, Mont Blanc 80-1). The flickering level of interest, and magpie instincts, are typical. Smith goes on to discuss which of the two visitors actually dined next to a large rock at the edge of the Mer de Glace that has Windham’s inscription. Not only can one see a lack of interest in scientific data, exemplified in the dismissive use of ‘clever’, but also an emphasis on picturesque Alpine sites, with potential for a picnic, that may have a possible interest for his readership. His own Mont Blanc begins with a “Notice to Tourists” detailing the best maps of the area, the most suitable guides at Chamonix, a hotel guide, and the cost of the journey. It clearly targets the advance party of mass tourism in the area who would be motivated by things other than aesthetics or science.

Smith and Ruskin were drawn to Saussure’s Voyages for opposing reasons. Apart from the scientific scrutiny, Schama charts its appeal for Ruskin as a ‘candid record of human frailty’. ‘Unlike the modern mountaineering epics that he despised, it did not presume to be a chronicle of a superman engaged in a military campaign over the enemy – height’ (491). Saussure’s summary of his feelings on finally reaching the summit of Mont Blanc are typical:

... it did not even give me the pleasure that one might imagine. My keenest impression was one of joy at the cessation of all my troubles and anxieties; for the prolonged struggle, and the recollection of the sufferings this victory had cost me, produced rather a feeling of irritation. At the very instant that I

stood upon the most elevated point of the summit, I stamped my foot on it more with a sensation of anger than pleasure (qtd in Smith, Mont Blanc 129).

In comparison to later narratives by John Auldjo and Smith himself, there is in Saussure none of the triumphalism that Ruskin detested and which would become pervasive in writing about the Alps from the 1850s. Revealingly, Smith redefines Saussure's ascent in his chapter title 'De Saussure vanquishes Mont Blanc'. The very fact that Saussure has reached the summit is enough for Smith to champion this triumph over nature at its highest and to praise Saussure's ability to 'vanquish' the dangers and associated fears. But the very word jars with Saussure's own low-key reaction, even apparent petulance.

In one section of Voyages, Saussure discusses the chamois hunters of the Alps. Comparing his own experiences with that of the hunter, Saussure writes:

... it is these very dangers, this alternation of hope and fear, the continual agitation kept alive by these sensations in his heart, which excite the huntsman, just as they animate the gambler, the warrior, the sailor, and even to a certain point, the naturalist among the Alps whose life resembles closely in some respects that of the chamois hunter (qtd. in MacFarlane 71).

In some respects, it is possible to see why Smith found dramatic material to appropriate from Saussure's writing. Nevertheless, Saussure's main aim was to obtain scientific data from the higher altitudes, and in the process of achieving this he is aware of the risks and dangers involved. Significantly these act as a stimulus which makes the reward (in this case

the scientific data) more valuable, rather than acting as a deterrent to discourage exploration. It is not in itself a primary reason for attempting the climb. It is the desire and curiosity to explore the Alpine range that stimulates his adventures. One can see the overall fascination that the Alps had for him when he reminisces in Voyages about his early life:

From my childhood the mountains powerfully attracted me. I still remember the thrill which went through me when I first touched the summit of the Salève and could feast on the views stretched out before me. ... My curiosity and ardour, however, were but imperfectly satisfied by these moderate exploits. I longed to see at close quarters the great Alps which appeared in such majesty from the heights I had attained.

In 1760 I went alone and on foot to visit the glaciers of Chamonix, which were then rarely frequented, and were considered difficult and dangerous of approach. I returned the following year, and since then have let no year pass without serious expeditions, even long journeys in pursuit of mountain study. During this time I crossed the main chain of the Alps fourteen times by eight different routes, besides making sixteen excursions into the centre of the chain (qtd. in Mathews 23).

Jacques Balmat and Dr Michel-Gabriel Piccard were the first to climb the highest peak, Mont Blanc, in the summer of 1786; Saussure and a party of eight were next the following year. Although Saussure had had a long-standing desire to climb Mont Blanc (and offered a large reward to the person who first reached the summit (Ring 18)), his work does not reveal the emerging desire to appropriate and conquer the Alpine peaks as proof and

assertion of human courage and skill, but offers a respectful but passionate admiration. On arriving at the top of Mont Blanc, he writes: ‘...the aiguilles and the glaciers of all the environs of Mont Blanc, formed in my mind, all at once, the most ravishing and instructive spectacle’ (Saussure 709).

Sonntag argues that ‘...Saussure was a mountaineer by any standard. His first excursion to the low mountains around Geneva, in 1758, was followed by almost annual expeditions to the high Alps’ (28). However Saussure did not ascend the peaks of the high Alps (with the notable exception of Mont Blanc) which, according to the Alpine club, should be the objective of any genuine mountaineer. Nevertheless, as Freshfield asserts in his biography of Saussure, ‘[i]t was mainly through his practical example and his writing that the High Alps were brought within the scope of the new interest in natural scenery. ...De Saussure was the first true author of our modern passion for Alpine scenery, as well as the first systematic Alpine explorer’ (22-3). In the same era, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s novel Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse (1761) inspired an interest in the low level Alps. In her introduction to the novel, Judith H. McDowell remarks on how they are seen as both ‘the opposite of the formal and artificial gardens of the neo-classicists’ and ‘a reflection of, or response to, the emotional state of the man of feeling, the “sensitive soul,” for whom alone natural beauties exist’ (Rousseau 11). The novel inspired Byron and Shelley to follow in the footsteps of the eponymous character, though they are notably not mentioned in Smith’s Mont Blanc despite their poetry. Saussure, on the other hand, would inspire those like Smith who desired to venture higher. Smith took the emerging, multi-faceted popularity of the Alps and stripped it to its barest bones of excitement and adventure.

Smith's initial interest in Mont Blanc began when he was given The Peasants of Chamouni (1823) on his tenth birthday. It records an actual tragic event that occurred in the Alps but wraps it around with a fictitious account of a mother telling a story to her children. According to Fitzsimons, it 'made a deep impression on Smith. He read it again and again until he knew whole paragraphs by heart' (The Baron 20). The book was written anonymously but focuses for the main part on an actual attempt to ascend Mont Blanc in 1820 that is framed within a story of a mother (Mrs L.) narrating a story to her children concerning a European tour of Mrs L.'s friend, Mr A. As such it dramatises the fact that, after 1815, and the end of the Napoleonic Wars, many books on European travel had been published that were precursors to the travel guide book, and which passed on details and reflections to prospective travellers (Fitzsimons, The Baron 20). In 1829, John Murray's A Glance at Some of the Beauties and Sublimities of Switzerland: with Excursive Remarks on the Various Objects of Interest, Presented During a Tour through Its Picturesque Scenery began a series of handbooks on Switzerland and the Alps described as the 'first popular guidebook to the region' (Ring 8), a view endorsed by Smith himself (Smith, Mont Blanc 36-7).

The Peasants of Chamouni centres on one particular Alpine narrative rather than functioning as a guide to the region as a whole but the commercial purpose was evident. Although the advertisement for the first edition (1823) is somewhat misleading in its account of the author's intentions – 'it is with a view of delineating the romantic scenery in which the country [Switzerland] abounds, that the writer is induced to place this little book ...' (n. pag.) – the book was aimed at a popular vogue in the book market of the period. The text does begin in this fashion with a question and answer session between parent and child that gives instructional detail about the environment: 'vast chains of Alps, which are the

highest mountains in Europe; extensive regions of perpetual snow; and glaciers which are prodigious field of ice, resembling frozen seas ...' (Peasants 14). Nevertheless, the focus is essentially on the dramatic pinnacle of Mont Blanc. A picture is unrolled to the children giving an idea of the mountain. The story then moves to an expedition undertaken by Mr. A. in the Alps. On first perceiving Mont Blanc, 'towering above them all in respondent glory', they gaze 'at the sublime scene for some time in silence' (58). The focus of the story then narrows further to the story of the real-life attempt of a Russian, Dr. Joseph Hamel with two Englishmen, one Swiss and twelve local guides who tried to climb Mont Blanc in August 1820. As they near the summit, the snow gives way underneath them which results in three guides falling down a crevice to their deaths. The ending of the story centres on the wife and eight children of one of the deceased that gives the book its title. Mathews later cited this catastrophe as the first deaths to occur during an attempt made on the summit (222-3). The appeal of such a narrative for Smith was the juxtaposition of descriptions of imposing landscape accompanied with the associated dangers that actually denied them from reaching the summit. The nature of his interest is revealed in his retelling of the event in his own Mont Blanc. The beginning of Smith's version begins: 'we now arrive at the date of the terrible accident which threw such a frightful interest round the ascents of Mont Blanc' (140). 'Frightful interest' aptly signals Smith's relish for such accounts. To accentuate the drama of this chronicle further, Smith uses a report by Mr. Durnford, one of the Englishmen on the expedition. This first person narrative presents a more immediate and evocative description:

I was thrown instantly off my feet, but was still on my knees and endeavouring to regain my footing, when, in a few seconds, the snow on our right, which was of course above us, rushed into the gap thus suddenly

made, and completed the catastrophe by burying us all at once in its mass, and hurrying us downwards towards two crevasses about a furlong below us ... (Smith, Mont Blanc 146).

Whilst more conventional responses to the beauty and sublimity of Alpine scenery are evident in The Peasants of Chamouni, as seen in a passage describing the journey to Chamonix (for example: ‘...they traversed a valley, eighteen miles in length, environed by mountains of appalling height, and presenting an endless variety of aspects. These sublime scenes made a strong impression...’ (67-8)), it is the response to events on the mountain, and its ever-present danger, that have the most appeal for Smith.

The ostensible purpose of Dr. Hamel’s fatal ascent of Mont Blanc was to make ‘observations as to the effect of rarefied air’ achieved using ‘the loan of various scientific instruments’ (Mathews 224-5). However, in the narrative of John Auldjo’s 1827 ascent of Mont Blanc there is no such justification. He was a young man who had just completed a degree at Cambridge when he travelled to Chamonix to climb Mont Blanc. Later in 1854 he was a guest of honour at the opening night of Smith’s third season of his Mont Blanc shows (see section 3.1) (Fitzsimons, The Baron 131). In the preface to his account of his climb, Auldjo writes in the third person that:

At the time the author succeeded in achieving the ascent of Mont Blanc, he had no intention to publish any account of the enterprise; nor did he prepare any materials for appearing before the public in the character of a tourist; but on returning from the mountain, and while the impression produced by the scenes he had witnessed, and the perils he had escaped, was still fresh in his

remembrance, he committed to paper some memoranda of the particulars. ... On a subsequent perusal of the accounts given by those who had preceded him in the ascent, he found the appearances observed by each to differ in some degree from those noticed by the others, and none of them exactly to correspond with his impressions of what he had himself witnessed. It therefore appeared to him, that a work of circumstantial detail, but without any ambitious pretensions to scientific research, might still be acceptable to the public; and with that view he drew up the present narrative (n. pag.).

Auldjo's narrative ('... the best of all that I have read' according to Smith (Mont Blanc 3)) is justified by the views obtained during the ascent and from the summit rather than by any nobler purpose. On his ascent, the panorama is described conventionally-enough as 'the finest that could possibly be presented, embracing within its mighty grasp, mountains than there are none more sublime' (23). The views however are not attainable without the hazards that accompany the climb, which is the real centre of interest. Early in the ascent, Auldjo describes a path 'frequently so narrow, that we were under the necessity of advancing sideways, with our faces towards the rock because the ordinary breadth of a man's shoulder would have thrown the balance of his person over the edge of the precipice' (Auldjo 10). This path would be the same used by Smith fourteen years later in his own successful climb to the summit, and Smith described the same scene in his 'Ascent of Mont Blanc' shows in London, using the same evocative language and emphasizing the same dangers. A new set of conventions were being laid down.

Auldjo accentuates the risks involved by recounting Dr. Hamel's unsuccessful attempt deflecting attention from his own difficulties. MacFarlane in Mountains of the

Mind helpfully fills in the gaps that are strikingly missing from Auldjo's account. Auldjo suffered 'altitude sickness, hypothermia, snow-blindness and narcolepsy' on the ascent and 'heat-stroke, dyspepsia, loss of motor control and eventually total collapse' on the descent (MacFarlane 162). It was only through the efforts of his guides that he managed to reach the summit at all. However, according to Auldjo, nothing much occurred which affected his climb. Perhaps, as Schama points out, Auldjo is representative of the new 'muscular, quasi-military determination [which] had replaced the reveries and fatalistic spells of self-annihilation that had assailed the Romantic Generation' (494). Henceforth, mountaineering would increasingly be associated with assertions of masculinity and ideas of nationalism, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century as we shall see later. However, it is important in this earlier period not to ignore the impact that the scenery had, though significantly now seen from an elevated position. Auldjo describes his view of the Alps from near the summit of Mont Blanc as follows:

Gilded ... by the sun, and canopied by a sky almost black, they made a picture so grand and awful, that the mind could not behold it without fear and astonishment. The impression of so mighty a prospect cannot be conceived or retained (43).

Despite this verbal sketch in best romantic manner, the sketches and watercolours that accompany the text (including some by the author himself) capture and exaggerate the more dangerous aspects of the climb, including the scaling of various obstacles, rather than delineating the view. Thorington, in his article on Smith's shows, praises this inclusion: 'here at last was a fine picturebook which really gave one an idea what the Alps were like' (6). Certainly Auldjo's inclusion of 'lithographic embellishments, executed by artists of

the first eminence' (Auldjo preface) was crucial to the development of Smith's concept of his own show. Ruskin's emphasis on the importance of the eye had taken a new turn – towards the spectacular. Fitzsimons records that, Smith 'copied the most sensational views from Auldjo's book, and made them into a small moving panorama, so lurid and exaggerated in colour, that his little sister ... turned pale in fright' (The Baron 20), and Smith himself claimed it was the 'horrors' of the narrative itself that inspired the panoramas (Smith, Mont Blanc 3). Of all the works on Mont Blanc that Smith consulted before his own ascent and subsequent shows, it was Auldjo's work that was the most influential.



Fig: 1. John Auldjo: 'Crossing a Crevice' (1828).

In the same year that Auldjo climbed Mont Blanc, Smith was taken by his father to Vauxhall Gardens in London. The excursion would prove influential in establishing a medium in which he would eventually showcase the Alps. Under the original name of Spring Gardens, the public had been able to wander freely through the 'prettily contrived plantation, laid out with walks and arbours' from the 1660s (Wroth 286-7). During the eighteenth century, a shift in taste within the gardens is possibly best expressed by the character of Lydia Melford in Smollett's Humphry Clinker (1771) as '... exhibiting a wonderful assemblage of the most picturesque and striking objects, pavilions, lodges,

groves, grottoes, lawns, temples and cascades; porticoes, colonnades, and rotundos; adorned with pillars, statues, and painting' (124). Smith himself recalls this era from prints he has seen and contrasts the earlier picturesque and rural idyll with a contemporary impression: 'the Royal Property was surrounded by clumps of trees and pastures: shepherds smoked their pipes where the tall chimneys of Lambeth now pour out their dense encircling clouds, to blight or blacken every attempt at vegetation in the neighbourhood' (Smith, Gavarni in London 91). From 1822, Wroth describes how Vauxhall Gardens had 'completely assumed their nineteenth-century aspect and ... began to supply a constant succession of variety entertainments' (316). Exhibits were introduced that distorted the familiar such as the 'Heptaplasiesoptron' exhibition where 'on plates of glass ingeniously distributed[,] manifold reflections were produced of revolving pillars, palm-trees, twining serpents, coloured lamps and a fountain' (Wroth 318). In part of the garden, four cosmoramas were also established demonstrating an interest in the spectacular and the illusionary. Viewed through magnifying lenses, cosmoramas were less expensive to produce than large-scale panoramas in portraying predominantly landscape scenes to the public (see Oettermann 69).

There was an additional emphasis on the spectacular in the recreation of the Battle of Waterloo in 1827 when 'a thousand horse and foot soldiers engaged in ... action' (Wroth 319). This formed the climax of the show which Smith witnessed and the impression it left is seen when, over twenty years later in 1849, Smith edited a series of essays on life in London under the title Gavarni in London (due to the illustrations made by the French artist Paul Gavarni). In one essay, Smith recalls an evening at Vauxhall:

... the dazzling walk before the great supper-room, with its balloons, and flags, and long lines of radiant stars, festoons, and arches, burst upon me and took my breath away, with almost every other faculty. I could not speak. I heard nothing that was said to me; and if anyone had afterwards assured me that I entered the Garden upon my head instead of my heels I could scarcely have contradicted them. I have never experienced anything like the intensity of that feeling but once since; and that was when I caught the first sight of London by night from a great elevation during the balloon ascent last year which so nearly terminated in the destruction of all the party (92).

It is important here to note the association of the spectacular and the dangerous once more that is so crucial to the vicariousness of his appeal. Significantly, the intensity of feeling at this epochal moment does not stem from his first tour of the Alps and first sighting of Mont Blanc in 1838 but from the spectacle of popular entertainment. The evening at the Vauxhall Gardens saw Smith witness the recreation of the Battle of Waterloo where ‘...sharpshooters fired from behind the trees, the artillery wagon blew up and the buildings burst into flame’ (21-22). On a visit to the Waterloo battlefield at a later date, Smith is naively disillusioned because the site fails to recreate the image already established in his mind: ‘When I stood years afterwards on the real battle-field I was disappointed in its effect. I thought it ought to be a great deal more like Vauxhall’ (Smith, Gavarni in London 92). This interest in illusion and sensation anticipates his depiction of the Alps.

Smith’s essay on Vauxhall in Gavarni in London reveals a Dickensian relish for the illusory and the visually spectacular as an escape from everyday reality. As already seen, Smith perceived the Vauxhall of his day as surrounded by the ‘tall chimneys’ of

industrial London but providing, at least within the summer months, an escapist world of spectacle. Smith records how, in the morning after the show, he had gone to school where it was ‘all cold, and grey, and dreary – a rough foretaste of the many disenchantments that pleasures have since brought in their train’ (93). Following his autobiographical narrative, the focus of the essay contrasts the gardens in winter as ‘a dismal waste’ with the previous summer when:

the lamps were regarded – not as little glass vessels with smoky wicks and common oil within, but as terrestrial stars, lighted by fairy lights, and fitted only to shed their radiance round, as did the dazzling and tempting fruit of Aladdin’s subterranean garden. It is refreshing to know there was a period, up to which the Arabian Nights Entertainments had only been pictured with a magnificence depending upon the powers of the reader’s imagination; but that, after its arrival, the glories awaiting upon the careers of Nourreddin, Camaralzaman, Ali Baba, the Calendars, Prince Bahman, Cododad, and all the rest of our old friends, could be readily conjured up. The night-palaces so gorgeously lighted up – the wonderful music – and the dancing slaves, formed together so many Vauxhalls, peopled with *coryphées* and brass bands upon the twinkling banks of the Tigris instead of the Thames (95).

Smith’s conviction, here and elsewhere in his essay, is of the power of the effect that visual interpretation can have on an audience even if the representation does not closely represent either historical reality or a textual source, particularly if the entertainment centres on the exotically foreign and is accompanied with contemporary illusionary effects.

Smith's first and only trip to the Alps before his ascent was in 1838. It is described in his introduction to Mont Blanc. In general, the Alps received the same sort of treatment as his trip to Waterloo in that the reality did not live up to the expectations that had been instilled from earlier descriptions and depictions. On reaching the top on Montanvert, a relatively small peak above Chamonix overlooking the Mer de Glace, he complains that 'the story that the Mer de Glace resembles the sea suddenly frozen in a storm is all nonsense. From Montanvert, it looks rather like a magnified white ploughed field' (Smith, Mont Blanc 18-19). In part, this is a trick of position. From such an elevated viewpoint, a stormy sea would indeed resemble a ploughed field. Nonetheless, Smith's conception of the Alps is derived from the adventure stories of his youth. The division between an imagination occupied with tales of Alpine ascents and his actual observation initially leaves Smith disillusioned with the new Alpine aesthetic. Anything less than the evocative and sensational descriptions encased in sublime vocabulary by writers like Auldjo is, for Smith, unsatisfactory, and again counterpoints Ruskin's growing insistence on fidelity in observation and representation.

In marked contrast to Ruskin there is no evidence of an initial, captivating response in Smith's first sighting of the peaks. In fact, Fitzsimons' biography of Smith uses Ruskin's first impressions as a substitute (The Baron 29-30). Smith's own account of the history of climbs of Mont Blanc leading up to his own ascent (as recording in his book Mont Blanc) includes a diary of his 1838 tour. Instead of a description of the first sighting of the mountain, the narrative is dominated by a detailed discussion of food and wine. In an evident break from the conventions of many late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travellers to the Alps, Smith seems to have little appreciation of low-level Alpine aesthetics. Rather there is the immediate desire to challenge and conquer the highest peak

on offer. When looking out of a hotel window in Chamonix, Smith longs to climb Mont Blanc: ‘From long study of plans, and models, and narratives, I could trace every step of the route: and I do believe, if any stalwart companion had proposed it, with the recollection of what Jacques Balmat and Dr. Paccard [the first successful to climb Mont Blanc in 1786] had done alone, I should have been mad enough to have started on their traces’ (Smith, Mont Blanc 41-2). The only feature of the Alps that stimulates Smith is Mont Blanc itself. In one description he writes:

I went to the window; and the first view I had of the Mont Blanc range burst on me suddenly, through the mist – that wondrous breath-checking coup d’oeil which we all must rave about when we have seen it for the first time – which we sneer at others when it has become familiar to us (Smith, Mont Blanc 40-1).

Though the rest of the Alps may disappoint, the scale of Mont Blanc and the history and challenges associated with it had immediate appeal. Unlike Ruskin, Smith has no geological interest in their formation, nor does he consider their aesthetic beauty as a whole or their effect on man’s moral and spiritual wellbeing. Ruskin’s deference and reverence towards the Alps is replaced with a desire to conquer Mont Blanc, and this forms the key element in his shows of the 1850s that celebrate this achievement. The influences on Smith, including the narratives of Saussure, The Peasants of Chamouni, and Auldjo, in addition to the thrilling pictures contained in the latter, combined with his introduction to shows at the Vauxhall Gardens to produce a representation of Mont Blanc by Smith that dominated the consciousness of London society. The image of the Alps as awe inspiring and sublime inherited by Ruskin from the Romantic era, and adapted to accord with his own outlook,

found a rival in the perception popularised by Smith that the mountains were objects to be tamed and conquered, not admired and revered.

1.4 The Poetry of Ruskin and the Novels of Smith

By the end of the 1840s, both Ruskin and Smith had attempted to convey their enthusiasm for the Alps through poetry and the novel respectively, although both came to realise that they could best express their ideas and impressions in different ways, and subsequently turned to other media. Ruskin ceased all serious attempts to produce poems in 1845, shortly after the publication of the first volume of Modern Painters, claiming: ‘I perceived finally that I could express nothing I had to say, rightly in that manner’ (Cook 97). Nevertheless, his poetry on the Alps does provide an interesting predecessor to Modern Painters in its attempt to move away from the Romantic portrayal of Alpine sublimity, towards a detailed and close observation of nature, an examination of the geological history of the mountains, and careful attention to their religious inspiration. Many of his later poems including ‘A Walk in Chamouni’ (1843), ‘The Alps (Seen from Marengo)’ (1845) and ‘Mont Blanc Revisited’ (1845) were published privately in Poems (1850), arguably not only as a result of Ruskin’s reputation as a prose writer, but due to their own literary merits as ‘productions of an observant mind, a cultivated ear, and a facile pen’ (Ruskin, Poems xvii). Nevertheless they compare poorly with his prose writing on the Alpine landscape. At much the same time, these mountains feature in two of Albert Smith’s novels: The Adventures of Mr. Ledbury and his Friend, Jack Johnson (1844) and The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole at Home and Abroad (1848), and, in a way similar to Ruskin’s, they are influenced by the author’s travels to the region. The Alps are not an integral feature of these works; Smith is more interested in examining the character and nature of the English venturing into foreign parts, but the Alps are incorporated in an attempt to recreate the sensations and exhilaration Smith himself experienced or at least hoped for. The attempt was not altogether successful: he finds no convincing way of

portraying his feelings towards the Alpine mountains, and overall, both novels portray the limitations of Smith as a novelist as well as the background role he chose for the generically-described mountain scenery.

Ruskin's first published work was in poetic form; 'On Skiddaw and Derwent Water' appeared in the February 1830 edition of The Spiritual Times: A Monthly Magazine. Described as '... one of the popular Album poets of the day' (Ruskin, Poems xx), Ruskin then had twenty-seven of his poems published in the fashionable Friendship's Offering between 1835 and 1844. His contributions to this Annual and other selected poems were collected together to form Poems (1850) featuring many of his later poems on the Alps but ignoring most works produced in the mid-1830s, including those directly relating to his Alpine excursions during this period. In 1833, Ruskin undertook his first continental tour and, in addition to having his first sighting of the Alpine peaks, also wrote his first poetry specifically about them. The following year, he was given de Saussure's Voyages dans les Alpes which undoubtedly considerably influenced later work. He carried the book on future continental trips including one in 1835 from June to December where he crossed the Alps numerous times. It was during this three-year period that many of his early Alpine poems were inspired and written, although almost all of these were published only in 1891 following the publication of Praeterita, owing to the author's conviction that his early poetry was best read only from a biographical perspective.

Nevertheless, it was in this earlier work that Ruskin was most successful in portraying Alpine scenery in verse. By using 'poetic diaries', whereby he would describe the Alpine environment in a collection of poems under an embracing title 'Journal of ...' or 'Account of ...', Ruskin allowed himself the breadth and space for conveying the Alpine

experience that he was otherwise unable to depict succinctly in his later shorter poems. His Account of a Tour of the Continent in 1833, a medley of prose and poetry, includes an account of his first sighting of the Alps. The poem ‘The Alps from Schaffhausen’, halfway through the journal, begins with a minute and protracted examination of the natural environment from a garden-terrace at Schaffhausen that is typical of the prose and poetry of the Account as a whole. Once a mist dissipates, he sees:

The Alps! the Alps! – it is no cloud
Wreathes the plain with its paly shroud!
The Alps! the Alps! – Full far away
The long successive ranges lay. (25-28)

This proclamation is succeeded by a series of questions that challenge the perceptual authenticity of the mountains, suggesting they may be an ethereal illusion. One can see in this poem the influence of the Romantic heritage of the sublime in the lengthy account of the awe-inspired individual overwhelmed by the sublime object; though, in fairness, it should be noted that the moment did, indeed, have a life-changing impact on the author. Later on, in the poem ‘Splügen’, charting Ruskin’s crossing of the Alps via the Splügen Pass, the poet recalls how:

I drank, and rested, and would fain
Have stopped to gaze, and gaze again,
And rest awhile the wearied eye,
Wearied with wild sublimity. (24-27)

Both these passages from Ruskin's 1833 Account suggest a focus on the affect of nature on the poet whereby the enormity and sublimity of the scene provokes an outpouring of emotion and a belittling of his own self. Nevertheless the focus in the Account essentially lies elsewhere. The significance of this early work with respect to the theories Ruskin would later advance in Modern Painters is that it offers a comprehensive and detailed examination of natural scenery rather than placing emphasis on the effect that such scenery can provoke. Patricia Ball, in her examination of his poetry, emphasises the 'taste for exactness' in his description of nature within his early poetry (50). She includes Ruskin's 1833 Account as belonging to a period when 'fresh description continues to be a salient mark' (50). This can be exemplified in 'Splügen' where Ruskin not only describes the panoramic scene but gives a close, detailed examination of the nearby surroundings:

And, drop by drop, a little spring
Down the smooth crag came glistening,
With a sweet, tinkling sound, and fell
Into a mossed receptacle, –
The long trunk of an aged fir:
You scarce could see the water there,
So clear it ran, and sparkled round,
Then gurgled o'er the grassy ground,
Marking its course by the fresh green
Of the grass-blades it danced between. (14-23)

Here, there is clear evidence of Ruskin taking a deep interest in natural detail. The Alps mean more than the sublime reactions they can produce. In John Ruskin: The Argument of

the Eye (16-19), Hewison explores Ruskin's desire to depict nature truthfully with particular reference to Wordsworth, a key influence on Ruskin's earlier work and one who expects the traveller to 'observe and feel, chiefly from Nature herself' (Wordsworth, The Prose Works of William Wordsworth. Vol.II 234). A passage from The Excursion features on the title page of every volume of Modern Painters, including the lines '...having walked with Nature, / And offered, far as frailty would allow, / My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth' (Bk. IV, 980-982). Here Wordsworth exhorts men to look beyond their egotism in oneself to appreciate the natural beauty created by God. 'From Wordsworth, Ruskin learnt a context in which to place his natural sensitivity to the beauty of the earth, a beauty felt most powerfully in mountain scenery. Landscape was to be closely observed, and represented not as a generalization of an idea of what nature should be like, but as truthfully as possible', Hewison comments (John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye 18). For Ruskin it was of importance to abandon conventional attitudes and preconceptions about a natural object; to examine it faithfully without trying to adapt it to form some ideal composition. Whether successfully or not, Ruskin's Alpine poetry here aims to withdraw the self into the background and to place emphasis on the environment itself.

Ruskin's most interesting poetry was particularly influenced by the geological studies that he continuously undertook on his Alpine tours, and which provided an additional inducement to observe natural detail at close quarters. By the time of his 1835 continental tour, Ruskin had already been given Robert Jameson's System of Mineralogy and Manual of Mineralogy that succeeded the children's book Scientific Dialogues by Jeremiah Joyce, an early influence in this area. Most importantly he was now in possession of de Saussure's Voyages dans les Alpes that laid down the inductive principle that geology must derive theories from facts alone. Tim Hilton, in John Ruskin, remarks that on

Ruskin's 1835 trip '... he made notes on glaciers and snow. By the time the Ruskins reached Chamonix there are diary entries three thousand words long describing mountain formations. These entries are accompanied by drawings and geological maps' (33-4). Unsurprisingly, all this had a major influence on his poetry, as reflected in the poem 'Journal of a Tour through France to Chamouni, 1835'. He not only pays homage to de Saussure in one stanza, by praising his methodical approach to obtaining geological data, but also explores the diluvian theory of the flood which de Saussure's research found no evidence to dispute: 'When o'er the world the conquering deluge ran / Rolling its monster surges far and wide' (379-380). Ruskin continues by seeing the Alpine mountains through the eyes of the geologist:

Such are the dreams of the geologist!
He sees past ages of the world arise;
Strange sounds salute his ears, prepared to list,
And wondrous sights, his rock inspired eyes.
Before him solid mountains wave and twist,
And forms of life within them fossilize;
The flint invades each member as it dies,
And through the quivering corse on creeps the stone,
Till in the mountain's hardened heart it lies,
In nature, rock, -in form, a skeleton. (393-402)

This passage demonstrates that Ruskin not only utilised his geological interests to compose poetry centred on small natural detail, but could also use the science to inform poetry about the wider landscape and its processes; in this case to consider the passing of geological time

in the Jura mountains. In the 1802 version of his preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth predicted the future influence of science in poetry:

The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective Sciences (Wordsworth, Lyrical Ballads 260).

Ruskin's poetic 'geological' passage above is informed by science, but there is also 'an artistic grasp of form and appearance' (Ball 51) in the description of the 'wave and twist' of the mountains. Both science and the arts influence Ruskin's poetry, with his earlier and longer works assimilating the ideas more successfully than his later pieces from the mid-1840s. Ball points out that 'as he [Ruskin] gets older the double role of nature observer and poet proves harder to sustain. The passion for studying phenomena grew steadily, the desire to produce poetic masterpieces was still felt, but by the early 1840s an incompatibility in these aims can be discerned' (54).

In the early 1840s, Ruskin prepared and wrote the first volume of Modern Painters. He also took his final examinations at Oxford in May 1842. As a result, his poetic output during this period was small (Ruskin, Poems xxvii). Writing to W.H. Harrison (editor of Friendship's Offering) from Chamonix on June 20th 1842, Ruskin complains that:

every moment of time is valuable – between mineralogy and drawing – and getting ideas; - for not an hour, from dawn to moonrise, on any day since I

have been in sight of Mont Blanc, has passed without its own peculiar – unreportable – evanescent phenomena, that I can hardly prevail upon myself to snatch a moment for work on verses which I feel persuaded I shall in a year or two almost re-write, as none of them are what I wish, or what I can make them in time (Poems 222).

Observation was replacing representation. Nevertheless, ‘A Walk in Chamouni’, ascribed to 1843 and almost certainly inspired, if not written, in the previous year, is arguably his best poetry on the Alps in that decade and unquestionably ‘...the production of an observant mind’ (Ruskin, Poems xvii). The poem allows for a detailed exploration of nature in association with geological and religious ideas (exemplified in the line ‘Of dateless age and deathless infancy’ (15)), and his attention to detail is exemplified in the first stanza:

And frequent mountain waters, welling up
In crystal gloom beneath some mouldering stone,
Curdled in many a flower-enamelled cup,
Whose soft and purple border, scarcely blown,
Bubbled beneath their touch, and trembled to their tone. (6-10).

Nonetheless, Ruskin saw a tension between his poetic and his wider intellectual ambitions. In other poetry of the same era, he is less successful in his attempt to condense his vision, thoughts and ideas into verse. Writing to his mother in 1845, Ruskin considered that ‘I am getting far too methodical to write poetry now, and a little pious, as you will see by the tone of them...’ (Ruskin, Poems 233). He had in fact withdrawn himself from his poetry and was looking for other means of analytical exploration.

‘The Alps (Seen from Marengo)’ from 1845, suffers severely from a sense of overstated, exaggerated, and perhaps inappropriate rhetoric as Ruskin attempts to express the Alps as God’s creation:

Ye Pyramids of God! around whose bases
The sea foams noteless in his narrow cup;
And the unseen movements of the earth send up
A murmur which your lulling snow effaces
Like the deer’s footsteps. Thrones imperishable! (5-9).

Ball remarks that these later works suffer from ‘rhetorical emotion and platitudinous moral statements’ (49). This is indeed how they appear, although Ruskin, when discussing his last poetic works in Praeterita, claimed them to be ‘extremely earnest, and express, with more boldness and simplicity ... the real temper in which I began the best work of my life’ (474). Nevertheless, what they lack is the undercurrent of Ruskin’s authentic passion, and the novelty of approach which is perceptible in his prose accounts of Alpine topics – and indeed in some of his more extended poetry – when he has the space to portray more fully the environment he cherished.

Despite his retrospective valuation for his poetry, Ruskin reveals in Praeterita that his father’s ambitious designs for his son contrasted with his own conviction of his limitation as a poet:

I wonder a little more that my father, in his passionate hope that I might one day write like Byron, never noticed that Byron's early power was founded on a course of general reading of the master in every walk of literature, such as is, I think, utterly unparalleled in any other young life, whether of student or author (141)

In Ruskin's own estimation he possessed neither the right background, nor the right talent. During the 1830s and 1840s there is abundant evidence of Ruskin's misgivings about his own poetry. This is exemplified as in his attitude to his 'poetic diary' entitled 'Journal of a Tour through France to Chamouni, 1835' that describes the first part of a six-month continental trip. The original aim of the journal was to elucidate the entire tour, as Ruskin reveals in Praeterita:

... I determined that the events and sentiments of this journey should be described in a poetic diary in the style of 'Don Juan', artfully combined with that of 'Childe Harold'. Two cantos of this work were indeed finished – carrying me across France to Chamouni – where I broke down finding that I had exhausted on the Jura all the descriptive terms at my disposal, and that none were left for the Alps (152)

Despite this collapse of both convention and inspiration (as well as the ambition to integrate two very unlike poems by Byron), the 'unfinished' poem does have its merits, not least in its juxtaposition of scientific and artistic thought as elucidated below. Cook and Wedderburn reveal a more potent reason for the abandonment of this poem whereby 'stronger than any exhaustion of his descriptive powers, was that, before the author had

been many weeks at home after this journey, he had discovered a new motive for poetry – his first love-affair’ (Ruskin, Poems 396). The daughter of Juan Pedro Domecq (a partner in Ruskin’s father’s wine company: Ruskin, Telford & Domecq), Adèle had met Ruskin in Paris whilst he was touring Europe in 1834. Subsequently Pedro Domecq and four of his five daughters including Adèle had stayed at the Ruskins’ home at Herne Hill early in 1836. It was here that Ruskin’s passion for her began. Batchelor supports Ruskin’s own evaluation in Praeterita whereby ‘[s]he felt nothing for Ruskin and she found his attentions embarrassing’ (Batchelor 31). Despite Ruskin belittling the episode in Praeterita, his passionate poetry following his 1835 ‘Journal’ through to ‘Farewell’, written in 1840 following Adèle’s betrothal to the Baron du-Quesne, is pervaded with allusion and reference to her, including poems that also feature the Alps. These include ‘Swiss Maiden’s Song’, ‘Jacqueline’ (for ‘Jacqueline’ read ‘Adèle’) and ‘Alpine-Glow’, the last of which begins:

Oh, she was like the light of ruby red
By sinking sun on Alpine mountain shed;
A transient glow across its coldness east,
A beaming glory far too bright to last; (1-4).

Many of Ruskin’s poems which labour this analogy between Adèle and the Alps were not published until 1891, though a few, including ‘On Adèle, by Moonlight’ made it into the 1850 edition. In tracing Ruskin’s perception of the Alps through poetry, prose and art, these poems are somewhat an anomaly as the focal point is, understandably, not quite on the mountains themselves.

Most of Ruskin's Alpine poems, with the possible exception of his love poems to Adèle, introduce the vision of the Alps expounded in Modern Painters. His earliest, and arguably best, poetry describes both the minute detail and the panoramic scenery in depth, with an undercurrent of enthusiasm and passion which from time to time becomes rhetorically conventional and bombastic. These works look forward to his prose writing where he would have a more suitable medium to present his ideas on natural beauty, on man's relation to nature, and on geological history and God's presence in nature.

Shortly after Ruskin abandoned poetry, Albert Smith began writing a series of satirical 'natural history' pamphlets beginning with 'The Natural History of the Gent' in 1847. The humour in these works would form a useful precursor to future stage shows where he would describe comically the linguistic and other challenges facing English men and women whilst travelling abroad. The ridicule in these earlier works was aimed at 'the junior clerk and shop-assistant class, [who] tried to live and dress like a dandy on less than fifty pounds a year' (Fitzsimons, The Baron 63). According to Fitzsimons, the pamphlet sold two thousand copies on the first day (The Baron 64) and was promptly followed by 'natural histories' of "the flirt", "the idler upon town" and "stuck-up people", the last of which aimed to 'expose, as simply and truthfully as we can, the foolish conventionalities of a large proportion of the middling classes of the present day, who believe that position is attained by climbing up a staircase of money-bags' (Smith, Stuck-up People vi).

These pieces parallel the scorn that Smith aimed at characters in The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole at Home and Abroad (1848) and his Mont Blanc shows in the following decade. The burlesque found in the 'natural histories' is also evident in a more protracted but less savage form in The Adventures of Mr Ledbury and his Friend

Jack Johnson, originally published in serial form in Bentley's Miscellany and then as a novel in 1844. As with all Smith's fiction, the story has no lasting appeal, although in a biographical sketch of Smith in Mont Blanc, the journalist Edmund Yates (who was Smith's close friend) does praise Mr Ledbury: 'What "Pickwick" was to Dickens, "Ledbury" was to Albert Smith. Everyone read it, and everybody liked it' (The Adventures of Mr Ledbury. [1856] xi). The story centres on the two eponymous characters: Mr Ledbury, a meek and introverted character, and his friend and antithesis, Jack Johnson. The novel follows their decision to tour Europe, and records their observations and escapades that culminate in a gruelling crossing of the Alps. At the height of Smith's popularity, a new edition of this work was published in 1856 with a preface by the author outlining his intentions:

I endeavoured ... to sketch the manners of certain classes of society as they actually were, not as they were conventionally represented to be; and as they were taken from Nature, - not individually, but generally, - I hope they will be considered at least faithful. If they are thought, in some instances, superficial, or deficient in deep knowledge of human nature, I would only beg my readers to regard the portrayal of my characters as they would a face of a clock; the chief object of which being to convey certain intelligence, provided it does so honestly, the great part of the world cares little by what hidden springs or wheels such a result is produced, beyond the general principle of its action. And possibly it is a more pleasant thing to look upon each variation of the world's kaleidoscope as an agreeable *ensemble*, - to be content and pleased with it as we find it, - rather than pull it to pieces for the

sole purpose of showing how comparatively dull and worthless are its constituent atoms (The Adventures of Mr Ledbury. [1856]. vi-vii).

One can see here that Smith's (rather defensive) interest is in characters as types rather than individuals and that he is keen to explore their conduct and position within the various grades of society. For example, Ledbury and Johnson examine their fellow travellers journeying along the Rhine: '... the different British migratory classes of aristocratic, respectable and parvenu, neither of which grades include the few strange persons who merely voyage for inclination or knowledge – travelling, in most cases, being a compulsory pilgrimage, by which the tourists hold their caste in society' (The Adventures of Mr Ledbury. [1886], 349). The final third of the novel, including this scene on the Rhine, covers the places that Smith himself followed during his continental travels of 1842 when his attention was rarely upon the natural surroundings but rather on his fellow passengers largely heedless of the passing sights: 'When any famous view was announced, those tourists who were taking refreshment below rushed up on deck, and as soon as it passed went back to their meals' (Fitzsimons, The Baron 55). In Christopher Tadpole, Smith focuses more upon specific characters for his ridicule, as illustrated in a scene where a Mr and Mrs Gudge (two main characters in the novel) attempt to order roast beef in Venice and fall 'into the popular error of believing that to make a foreigner understand you, you must talk broken English to them' (227).

In both novels, a variety of incidents and escapades precede a climactic incident involving the heights of the Alps where Smith seems particularly eager that the depiction of this part of the natural environment is accurate. Patricia Ball makes the pertinent remark that:

in the arts, the first half of the nineteenth century was the golden age of the English illustrated travel book or book of views. ... the trend of taste was away from picturesque scenic arrangements, either verbal or painted, towards a greater factual, informative accuracy. Descriptive writing flourished, but travel books had to convince their readers that they were receiving an impression of the real thing, the place as it actually appeared. (53-4)

In his 1856 preface to Mr Ledbury, almost fifteen years after it was originally written, Smith's overriding concern was to insist on the factual accuracy of his first novel; he perceived the work as one would a travel guide that should correctly reflect the present-day state of affairs, rather than as a novel. He considers a radical re-write in order to account for the fact that '...many of the descriptions no longer answer to the place, and most of the allusions are to topics and objects of fifteen years ago' (The Adventures of Mr Ledbury. [1856], v). As an example, he cites '...the once noble road over the Simplon [being] ... hopelessly ruined, from Gondo to Crevola' (v). Smith's reasoning for this stems from two concerns. Firstly, his Mont Blanc shows were being updated yearly to provide purportedly more accurate depictions of the places described, and Smith felt his novels should keep pace with the accuracy of his shows. Secondly, both novels are critical of places which are deemed to bear little resemblance to their portrayal in earlier poetry and prose. Smith's novels are thematically concerned with the collision between expectation and reality which, as we have seen, was a key motivation of Smith himself. For example, Mr Ledbury is dissatisfied with Altdorf, a town in central Switzerland and the setting for the William Tell legend, because his 'ideas of that village had been taken from a theatrical diorama' and he

is therefore ‘somewhat disappointed at its forlorn appearance in reality’ (The Adventures of Mr Ledbury [1886], 414). Similarly, in Christopher Tadpole, the narrator conjectures that:

There is not a more cruel disenchantment than that which attends a first visit to any place abroad, the leading features of which we are only conversant with from dioramas, dissolving views, ballets, and ‘stanzas for music’, or ‘lines on’ wherever the subject may be. Our notions before this, of the localities are always most romantic and highly coloured (266).

A parallel can be drawn here with Ruskin’s eagerness to observe things as they are, and not as they are supposed to be. Nevertheless, there is little physical description of the European surroundings in either novel until the characters are engaged with, or battling against, the Alpine environment, as is particularly the case in the later chapters of Christopher Tadpole. There is a contradiction here, that will become more evident when exploring Smith’s Mont Blanc shows, between Smith’s wry observations of his character’s inflated expectations and disenchantments, and his own theatrical and entrepreneurial wish to exploit that very appetite himself.

The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole at Home and Abroad was published as a serial in 1848. Unlike his earlier work, this was Smith’s first attempt at a serial published without the support of accompanying work by other authors, as Smith pointed out in his original preface to the novel:

I began it in fear and trembling – doubting my power to sustain a continuous tale unaided by other attractions; since the previous serials I had written had

all been brought out in periodicals, wherein was to be found as well, a sufficiency of good and popular names to keep my own afloat, had it become too heavy to swim by itself (xiii).

His concern could be said to be well founded, but the tale benefits from having a plot that loosely holds the episodes together and provides an overall structure, something which Mr Ledbury notably lacked. Christopher Tadpole is essentially a *Bildungsroman*, with some similarities to Dickens's novels of the period, including Dombey and Son (1847-8) and David Copperfield (1849-50). This extends to a penchant for unusually named characters including Mr Gudge, Mrs Hamper and Sprouts, all with eccentric expressions and mannerisms. In addition, all three novels highlight problems facing disadvantaged children. There is even a reference to the character of the son, Paul Dombey, in Smith's preface to the new edition of Christopher Tadpole in 1851 'who was a month younger [than Christopher], but who had – and deservedly – a great many advantages' (iii). A rather strange remark to make considering Paul is motherless, deprived of affection, physically delicate and dies in childhood, although Smith is probably alluding to the strengths of the author, Dickens. There is a tenuous Alpine link between the three novels as the first parts of Dombey and Son were written whilst Dickens was living in Lausanne, Switzerland, and David Copperfield has a scene set in the Alps where they form a backdrop to David's sorrow as he comes to terms with the death of his wife, Dora, and beloved friend Steerforth. The healing process begins in the positive power and beauty of the landscape, a very Romantic concept also to be found in, for example, Frankenstein and the works of several Romantic poets. By contrast, the Alps in Christopher Tadpole are used in a much more modern sense associated with ideas of danger and excitement, as Christopher accompanies Mrs Hamper as she attempts to scale Mont Blanc.

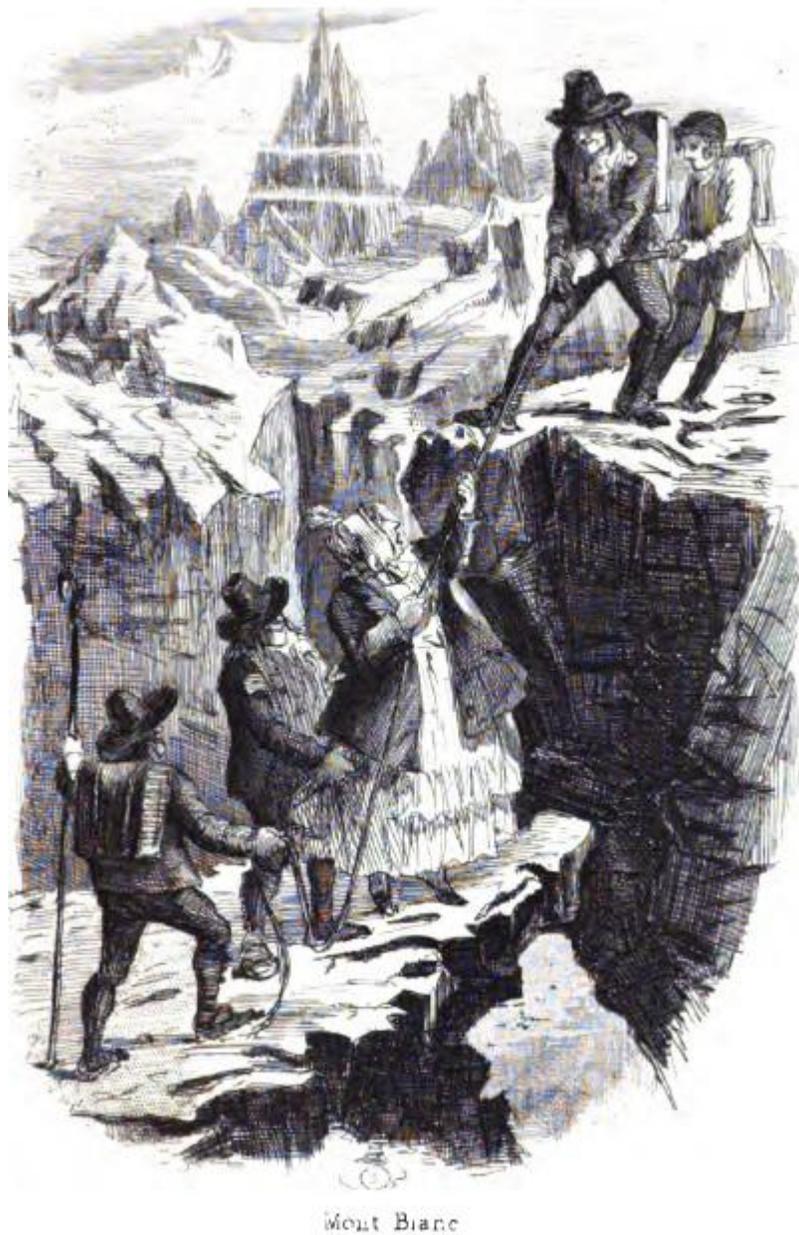


Fig 2. John Leech 'Mont Blanc' (1849)

In addition to robbery and kidnapping in the Italian Alps, Christopher Tadpole contains two dramatic scenes in the mountains: first in the Great St Bernard Pass, and then on Mont Blanc. Both excursions have no importance for the central plot – which concerns Tadpole's search for his identity and to improve his position in society – but both aim to

recreate the author's interest in and understanding of the high terrain in a way that will entertain his new public, seeking information as well as exotic adventure: 'for the ascent of the Great St. Bernard pass does not lie all the way amongst those regions of snow and dreariness ... Grape-vines were clinging to the sides of the mountains, which were dotted here and there with châteaux in a most effective manner' (300). Here, Smith is composing an 'exceedingly picturesque' (300) scenic depiction of the Alps and, despite his insistence that interpretations of European places and landscape, especially pictorial depictions, should faithfully represent the scene, he embellishes the prose to maximise sensations, exemplified here when a storm descends:

The elements appear to increase their fury in comparison with the grandeur of Nature's work around them. Sheets of mingled fire and water, chequered by huge snow flakes, seem to fall continuously from the crags and sweep over the mountains; whilst the thunder never ceases, - the echoes prolonging the reverberations of one crash until another begins; and above all, the mighty roar of the falling avalanches ... increase the wild tumult (303).

The desire to thrill his readers continues when a set of circumstances end with Mr Gudge immersed in a raging torrent at the heights of the St Bernard Pass. Having tried to negotiate a river that had had its' bridge swept away, he heads towards 'an abyss so deep that its fall could scarcely be heard amidst the riot of the elements' (306). In addition, the novel contains twenty-six etchings by John Leech with one entitled 'Mrs Hamper's Terrific Ascent' (see fig. 2 above) depicting the Alps. Here, we see a foolhardy attempt to scale Mont Blanc. Rather than portray a scene to highlight and convey vertiginous sensations associated with such heights such as the ones Smith later recreated in his successful shows,

the emphasis both in the prose and in the illustration, is towards the comic side of the endeavour. The strong vertical lines of the rocks and peaks contrast with the drawing-room billow of the lady's skirts and bonnet. As we shall see, elements of comedy would also form a key component of Smith's stage shows. Nevertheless, the vertical, the jagged, the exposed and the dangers provide the setting.

Though exaggerated, these scenes are not completely unlike Smith's own experiences. This oscillation between the knock-about, the adventurous, the literal and the terrifying is typical of Smith. If Ruskin's poetry was abandoned because it could not provide a suitably pristine language in which to capture the authenticity and importance of his experiences, Smith is on the whole unconcerned by such nicety and it is perhaps characteristic of his whole approach that truth and fiction are untroubled neighbours. In the introduction to Mont Blanc, Smith describes his own ascent in 1838 of the same St. Bernard Pass where 'the footpath was streaming with water from the hills; ... and the rain gradually turned to sleet and then to snow, whilst we had literally icicles in our mustachios' (23). Emphasising hardship, Smith and his companion eventually arrive at the Convent, their destination, though 'the road [was] very difficult to trace as the water had carried away a foot-bridge ...' (23-4). Nevertheless, the depiction of the Alps in Christopher Tadpole centres on a dialogue between appearance and reality, and provokes one to wonder whether Smith believed that any medium could successfully capture the sense of actually being within the Alps. In describing Chamonix, one of the few places that does not dissatisfy him, Smith acknowledges that 'however disappointed travellers may feel at the first sight of the majority of the continental show places, with which they have only been acquainted through the medium of Annuals and dioramas; yet few pens or pencils can do justice to the exceeding grandeur of this valley' (329). Significantly, Smith's analogy when

describing certain Alpine features is to compare them with London entertainments and landmarks. The height of Mont Blanc becomes ‘the distance between St Paul’s churchyard and Hyde Park Corner set straight up on end’ (329), whilst a glacier becomes:

Holborn Hill paved with blocks of Wenham Lake ice; and even then you will have no idea of it. For you will miss its mighty chasms, rent in four hundred feet of diamond ice; its glittering pinnacles, and chrystal [sic] domes; its streams of diamond water in their glassy channels; its ever-changing and fantastic fairy architecture (334).

Here, it is evident that Smith is labouring to convey Alpine sensations to a readership who would probably have little idea of the scenes he is describing, apart from the visual mediums that Smith believes inadequately represent the terrain. Nonetheless, it is striking that, in the passage quoted above, he moves swiftly from the literal Holborn Hill to ‘fantastic fairy architecture’ of what remains, essentially, an imaginary Alpine landscape. Smith is unable to convey the literal impact of the Alps and he ceased to try once he believed he had found a more effective medium. In the following decade, his only books were either re-issues of earlier works or travel books including Mont Blanc (1853) and To China and Back (1859) (discussed in chapter three). But, more importantly, he had discovered that a modern phenomenon needed a modern medium to represent it. From 1850, he combined oratory with dioramas to present travel shows of Egypt, the Alps and China that attempted to satisfy an interest in and demand for the spectacular representation of the exotic.

Through poetry and the novel respectively, Ruskin and Smith attempted to use conventional literary media to convey their interest in the Alpine landscape, but ultimately they failed to express fully even their own sentiments. Ruskin needed scope to discuss a complex array of responses to the landscape that would be best communicated through oscillating scientific and lyrical prose supported by artistic representations. Smith's outlook needed a theatrical arena in which he could emphasise the excitement, dangers and humour he experienced in his travels through Europe and up Mont Blanc. It was only when they combined visual representations with lyrical prose and showmanship respectively did they successfully gain receptive audiences that would change the way the Alps were viewed.

2 Ruskin's Alpine Landscape

2.1 Ruskin and Turner

During the mid-Victorian era and beyond, Ruskin was the leading champion of Turner's landscape paintings, including those that portrayed Alpine terrain. Although there were others before him who had already seen the merits of Turner's work, Ruskin captured in erudite prose the achievements that could be attained in landscape art through the qualities he identified as particular to Turner's painting (Hewison, Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 23). As Ackroyd comments, 'Ruskin became the principal advocate of Turner's art, and it can be said with some certainty that no artist has ever had a more profound and articulate explicator' (133). From his adolescence through to the late 1850s especially, but continuing through to later life, he praised Turner's art almost without fault as being based on an accurate and comprehensive scrutiny of the natural prospect. Furthermore, Ruskin saw in Turner someone who had the imaginative inspiration to produce a work that emphasised the beauty and the sublimity of the landscape and manifested all that was glorious in God's creation while attending to its detail and minutiae. The extent of Ruskin's enthusiasm for Turner's art, and his portrayal of the Alps in particular, can be exemplified by the walls of the breakfast room in his Denmark Hill home on the Surrey Downs which in 1845 was replete with Turners, including 'St Gotthard' and 'Schaffhausen' (Hermann, 22).

In Modern Painters, lectures, catalogues, letters, articles and elsewhere, Ruskin went to great lengths to describe why Turner excelled, focusing on his depiction of many

facets of the landscape including leaves, trees, clouds, rivers, mists and mountains. Additionally, he instructed the reader (ideally one with ‘informed intelligence, devotion and openness’ (Birch, Ruskin on Turner 10)) in the ‘proper’ way to receive these works in order to appreciate their qualities fully. As a result, Ruskin was instrumental in ensuring that interest in the Alpine aesthetic continued beyond the interest in sublime environments generated in the late 1700s and early 1800s by such works as Byron’s Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage (especially the third canto published in 1816) and Manfred (1817); Shelley’s ‘Hymn to Intellectual Beauty’ (1817) and ‘Mont Blanc’ (1817); and paintings by the water colourist John Robert Cozens, ‘the greatest Alpine landscapist of the last quarter of the eighteenth century’ (Axton, 286).

One of Turner’s aims in his artistic recreation of the Alpine scene was to capture the sublimity that the Romantics had successfully achieved through poetry and bring its creativity and magnitude to works of art (Birch, Ruskin on Turner 10). It was an opportunity to experiment with ambiguity and obscurity, and stretch ‘painting’s dominion from visual representation to poetic suggestion’ (Wettlaufer, 156). In the January 1844 edition of The Artist and Amateur’s Magazine, Ruskin addresses the issue of poetry’s apparent superiority over painting, and champions a similar elevated position for Turner’s art:

It is a strange thing that the public never seem to suspect that there may be a poetry in painting [referring specifically to Turner], to meet which, some preparation of sympathy, some harmony of circumstance, is required; and that it is just as impossible to see half-a-dozen great pictures as to read half-

a-dozen great poems at the same time, if their tendencies or their tones of feeling be contrary or discordant (Modern Painters I 651).

Despite Ruskin's familiarity with and affection for Romantic poetry, and his recognition of its potential correlation with landscape art, his ideas on Turner's paintings could at times be at variance with Romantic ideals particularly in the early volumes of Modern Painters. His argument was twofold. Firstly, Ruskin went to laborious lengths to establish Turner's adherence to natural facts. This, he claimed, dominated over the artistic licence Turner took to express the feelings and emotions generated by the landscape. Secondly, there was the interrelated religious interpretation that Ruskin imposed on Turner's work that probably said more about the critic and his rigorous religious upbringing than it did about the works themselves.

Ruskin continually associated Turner's work with spiritual elucidation, even after his private disavowal of Evangelical Protestantism in the late 1850s. Nevertheless, there is an underlying change in emphasis on how to 'read' Turner in Ruskin's subsequent assessment of his paintings in later volumes of Modern Painters from 1856 to 1860, a process not unnatural given the seventeen year period between the first and last volumes of this work. Ruskin's revised evaluation focused on the imaginative capability and power of Turner's art that could, for Ruskin, depict the scene as if one was actually experiencing the panorama; it was an amalgam of technical accuracy with a rush of feeling and spiritual emotion.

Ruskin did 'more for Turner's reputation than anyone else in England' (Batchelor 121). His defence of Turner from criticism in the press, and his passionate and evocative

descriptions of the works themselves and of the way, Ruskin insisted, we should understand and appreciate them, heightened both the interest and importance of landscape art and the visual recreation of the sublime. Indeed, as one critic writes, ‘Ruskin’s worship of Turner is fulsome, beautiful and extravagant’ (Batchelor 51), a sentiment also felt and expressed by literary figures including Wordsworth, George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë who praised Ruskin’s lyrical prose and his, at the time, controversial appreciation of Turner in the first volume of Modern Painters. Brontë (who incidentally had an Anglo-Swiss ‘mountain maid’ heroine, Frances Henri, in The Professor (192) written shortly after the publication of Ruskin’s work) wrote:

Hitherto, I have only had instinct to guide me in judging of art; I feel now as if I had been walking blindfold – this book seems to give me eyes. I *do* wish I had pictures within reach by which to test the new sense. Who can read these glowing descriptions of Turner’s work without longing to see them? ... I like this author’s style much; there is both energy and beauty in it. I like himself, too, [sic] because he is such a hearty admirer. He does not give himself half-measure of praise or vituperation. He eulogizes, he reverences with his whole soul (qtd. in Modern Painters I xxxix).

Ruskin’s vehement praise of Turner is reflected in the full title of Modern Painters I that champions Turner’s ‘superiority in the art of landscape painting to all the Ancient Masters’. When this is combined with the subject of the Alps, so dearly cherished by the author, one can begin to realise how Ruskin’s work augmented interest both in Alpine art and the landscape itself instituting a cultural pilgrimage in his wake that would develop rapidly during the 1850s and 1860s.

In Ruskin on Turner, Dinah Birch makes the radical assertion that ‘Ruskin saw Europe through Turner’s eyes’ (120). Although there is little doubt that Turner did influence the way that Ruskin observed the Alps, this statement underestimates the interest Ruskin had in the natural sciences, particular geology, which predated his enthusiasm for Turner and about which he wrote extensively following trips to Chamonix and its counterparts. Batchelor writes of the pleasures Ruskin found in the geological configurations of the mountains and in the rocks and stones in Chamonix during 1844 (62), whilst Ruskin, referring to the same year, writes in Praeterita that ‘I had learned to draw now with great botanical precision; and could colour delicately, to a point of high finish. I was interested in everything, from clouds to lichens. Geneva was more wonderful to me, the Alps more living and mighty, than ever; Chamouni more peaceful’ (328). These interests remained throughout his writing life and he continued to publish works on natural science in later years including The Eagle’s Nest (1872). He used his scientific knowledge to inform both his appreciation of the Alps and the art they inspired. In the third of his 1872 lectures on the relation of natural science to art, Ruskin declared that ‘[t]here is nothing that I tell you with more eager desire that you should believe – nothing with wider ground in my experience for requiring you to believe, than this, that you never will love art well, till you love what she mirrors better’ (Ruskin, Lectures on Landscape ... 152-3). This was the case with respect to Alpine landscape and Alpine art until later in Ruskin’s life when the rise in the number of tourists and climbers visiting the region, the commercialisation of popular tourist destinations, and the increased pollution and its detrimental effect diminished its appeal for him and prompted a more nostalgic perspective (see chapter 4.3). By that stage, its untainted representation in art by Turner held far greater appeal.

Ruskin's interest in nature was instrumental to his appreciation of Turner's artistic recreation of the Alpine scene for he believed Turner's art closely mirrored how he, Ruskin, perceived the landscape. In the 1840s the two became almost inseparable; indeed Birch goes so far as to claim that 'He [Ruskin] sees Turner's paintings as an expression of natural truth, so faithful that they almost transcend art, and become facts of nature in themselves' (Ruskin on Turner 10). Ruskin promoted this idea over any other, even in the late 1850s when he was reappraising the imaginative qualities of Turner's work. He wrote in Modern Painters III that:

I have always said, he who is closest to Nature is best. All rules are useless, all labour is useless, if you do not give facts; ... *I* never said he [Turner] was vague or visionary. What *I* said was, that nobody had ever drawn so well: that nobody had ever given so many hard and downright facts (173-174).

In the 1840s in particular, Ruskin travelled around the Alps in a bid to identify the sites painted by Turner and to discover the extent to which they accurately represented the scene. This was the central aim of a trip he made to Switzerland in 1845. In August, he writes to his father that '...as I shall have to spend much on the Torrent Turner, I must see its actual scene, that I may know what is composition and what is verity' (qtd. in Hewison, Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 78). Here, Ruskin is referring to the turbulent water that is a major feature of Turner's 'The Pass of St Gotthard, near Faido' (1845). In Praeterita, Ruskin reminisces how Turner had attempted to dissuade him from travelling in 1845, concerned about 'my getting into some scrape in the then disturbed state of the cantons' (341). However, a more probable underlying issue was Turner's concern at having his canvases scrutinised in such a manner which threatened to ignore the imaginative

expression of the sublimity of the scene that Turner was keen to express (Hewison, Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 61, 78). Evidence that this may have been the case can be seen in Ruskin's reference to Turner's sketch of the Pass of St Gotthard included in Ruskin's 'Catalogue of the Turner Sketches in the National Gallery': 'This sketch was realised by Turner for me in 1845, but I having unluckily told him that I wanted it for the sake of the pines, he cut all the pines down, by way of jest, and left only the bare red ground under them' (Ruskin, Turner. The Harbours of England 205-6). According to Ruskin, Turner was unsurpassed in his ability to express the 'truth' of nature, which was believed by his admirer to be a vital condition in works of art. In Turner's Romantic Alpine paintings such as 'The Pass of the Splügen' (1841-2) ('the noblest Alpine drawing Turner had ever till then made' (Ruskin, Turner. The Harbours of England 480)), Ruskin argued that they could only have been achieved after direct contact with the landscape itself and a careful examination of the prospect. This assertion remains constant through Ruskin's work and is emphasised in the third volume of The Stones of Venice, written in the early 1850s: 'Nothing must come between Nature and the artist's sight. ... The whole value of that witness depends on its being *eye-witness*' (49). Ruskin wrote to his father in 1845 whilst in Macugnaga, an Italian mountain village in the Alps, enclosing a letter to Turner inviting him to join him in the mountains. He tells his father, 'Is the gentleman doing anything – if he isn't, tell him he may as well come here & catch fish and climb hills with me' (Ruskin, Ruskin in Italy 163). In truth, Ruskin wished to observe how Turner drew mountains, but unsurprisingly Turner never went; indeed he was never to leave England again.

His first encounter with Turner's work was on Ruskin's thirteenth birthday in 1832 when he received a copy of Samuel Rogers' poems entitled Italy. Despite its title, this Romantic work included poems 'The Alps' and 'The Descent' that describe the journey to

Italy from Lake Geneva through the Great St. Bernard Pass, with the author claiming that ‘much of it was originally written on the spot’ (Rogers, Italy iii). But of more significance than the poetry, the 1830 edition given to Ruskin (published two years after the original), included illustrative engravings by Thomas Stothard and Samuel Prout, in addition to twenty-five by Turner who provided the illustrations of the Alpine terrain. Hilton remarks that ‘The 1830 edition, by virtue of its illustrations, has a place in the enlargement of the picturesque tradition that developed after the Napoleonic wars. The picturesque mode became less provincial, less conventional. Turner’s imagination and new standards of naturalism were important’ (24-5). This tension between imagination and naturalism is key to Ruskin’s understanding of Turner’s landscape art. Through Turner’s drawings, Ruskin became fascinated with this juxtaposition of truthfulness of art and the spiritual imagination. He was therefore ‘attracted to Turner by the mountain truth...’ (Praeterita 254).

Ruskin’s time subsequent to his first tour of the Alps in the following year was ‘spent in composing, writing fair, and drawing vignettes for the decoration of the aforesaid poetical account of our tour, in imitation of Rogers’s Italy’, although, as Hayman notes, it was actually Samuel Prout’s Facsimile of Sketches in Flanders and Germany published in 1833 that prompted the trip (Hayman, 1). When Ruskin refers to Italy at the beginning of Praeterita, he warns that ‘it is the great error of thoughtless biographies to attribute to the accident which introduces some new phase of character, all the circumstance of character which gave the accident importance. The essential point to be noted, and accounted for, was that I could understand Turner’s work ...’ (29). This understanding was momentous in its impact on Ruskin’s future career; Italy did make a lasting impression. He refers explicitly to the work in an 1840 letter to the Reverend Edward Clayton, a friend from

Christ Church College, and then proceeds to write that Turner ‘is the epitome of all art, the concentration of all power; there is nothing that ever artist was celebrated for, that he cannot do better than the most celebrated. He seems to have seen everything, remembered everything, spiritualised everything in the visible world’ (Ruskin, Early Prose Writings 428-9). The process here is sequential: seeing, memorising, (ie recording) and then spiritualising. For Ruskin there was an inextricable link in Turner’s work between imagination and spirituality; but it was a link that Turner would have refuted. Ruskin read in these paintings the power and beauty of God’s creation that, for Ruskin, Turner was then able to deduce from a close, factual attention to the natural scene. Ruskin’s previously ‘unabated, never to be abated geological instinct’ united with, and would eventually become subsidiary to, his attraction to Turner’s art (Praeterita 120-1). Like many critics, Ruskin saw his own priorities in his subject’s work.

The first volume of Modern Painters uses one of Turner’s contributions to Italy to exemplify the conviction that Turner’s work portrays natural facts:

Now, if I were lecturing on geology, and were searching for some means of giving the most faithful idea possible of the external appearance caused by this structure of the primary hills, I should throw my geological outlines aside, and take up Turner’s vignette of the Alps at Daybreak. ... Observe the exquisite decision with which the edge of the uppermost plank of the great peak is indicated by its clear dark side and sharp shadow; then the rise of the second low ridge on its side, only to descend again precisely in the same line; the two fissures of this peak, one pointing to its summit, the other rigidly parallel to the great slope which descends towards the sun; ... (433)

It is interesting to note Ruskin's ease in combining art and science and how they can be used to inform each other. They are not mutually exclusive, as Birch points out: 'Science, in Ruskin's argument, has no monopoly on the intellectual excitement of accurate observation' (Ruskin on Turner 60). The emphasis is on how Turner's art replicates fact. This idea continues through the first volume of Modern Painters where the artistic recreation of these facts in all their beauty produces, Ruskin believes, works that display moral truths and evidence of God's benevolence.

One of the overriding disagreements between Ruskin and Turner over the latter's work centred on the religious connotations of his depiction of the landscape. The natural landscape was evidence of God's creation, so, according to Ruskin, art that captured nature recorded God's work. Ruskin's ideas around this theme are expressed in his defence of Turner following the display of three of Turner's canvases at the Royal Academy in 1836. All three oil paintings - 'Mercury and Argus', 'Rome, from Mount Aventine' and 'Juliet and her Nurse' - were criticized by the Rev. John Eagles, the art critic for Blackwood's Magazine. Denigration of the third of these was particularly severe. Famously it was described as 'a composition as from models of different parts of Venice, thrown higgledy-piggledy together, streaked blue and pink and thrown into a flour tub' (Hewison, Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 26). On advice from his father, Ruskin sent his written response to the artist himself who in reply claimed '... I never move in these matters, they are of no import save mischief and the meal tub...' (Ruskin, Praeterita, 218). Consequently it was never published in Ruskin's lifetime, but it was significant in helping define Ruskin's emerging credo.

Ruskin's response began by defending the accuracy of Turner's depiction of Venice in 'Juliet and her Nurse' (the work was more appropriately renamed 'St Mark's Place, Venice (Moonlight)' in 1842) and continued his argument by emphasising how Turner does not paint nature but 'paints *from* nature' (Modern Painters I 637):

... he rushes through the aetherial dominions of the world of his own mind, - a place inhabited by the *spirits of things*; he has filled his mind with materials drawn from the close study of nature (no artist has studied nature more intently) – and then changes and combines, giving effects without absolute causes, or, to speak more accurately, seizing the soul and essence of beauty, without regarding the means by which it is effected (Modern Painters I 639).

Ruskin's aesthetic judgements were based on the connection between beauty and godliness that had originated in the religious education provided by his mother, who, by insisting that he recited passages of the Bible from memory, enforced precision of feeling and expression. Ruskin originally saw Turner's spiritual identity as akin to his own and associated the beauty within Turner's work with what he deduced to be Turner's spirituality. As Birch notes, 'he does this by presenting Turner as an unwearied seeker after truth, humbly serving and interpreting a spiritual power far greater than himself. The paintings become a ministry of a natural world which is in its turn an expression of the divine' (Ruskin on Turner 11).

In a way similar to Ruskin, Turner was an enthusiastic reader of poetry from Samuel Rogers and James Thomson (who anticipated the Romantic feeling for nature and

the Alps in The Seasons (1726-30)), through to Scott and Byron in later life. Turner himself wrote poetry to accompany his paintings, including 'Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps' (1812) inspired, in particular, by the poems of Thomson. Although Turner's art has been described as 'more fully and consistently connected with poetry than that of any other great artist' (Lindsay, 11), his poetic attempts are very pale by comparison with his paintings. However, in contrast to Ruskin's strict Evangelical initiation in his formative years, Turner's adherence to Romantic principles resulted in his rejection of Christianity. Ackroyd asserts that 'Turner paid no great attention to matters of religion. ... He loved ruined abbeys and churches, but he dismissed religion itself of no importance' (18). For Ruskin however, a combination of observing natural fact with imaginative dexterity could only reveal the beauty of God's work in works of art, providing that the observer of such works received them in a correct mental state:

Of course, for persons who have never seen in their lives a cloud vanishing on a mountain side, and whose conceptions of mist or vapour are limited to ambiguous outlines of spectral hackney-coaches and bodiless lamp-posts, discerned through a brown combination of sulphur, soot, and gas-light, there is yet some hope; we cannot indeed tell them what the morning mist is like in mountain air, but far be it from us to tell them that they are incapable of feeling its beauty if they will seek it for themselves. But if you have ever in your life had one opportunity, with your eyes and heart open, of seeing the dew rise from a hill pasture, or the storm gather on a sea-cliff, and if you yet have no feeling for the glorious passages of mingled earth and heaven which Turner calls up before you into breathing tangible being, there is no hope for

your apathy, art will never touch you, nor nature inform (Modern Painters I 411).

Ruskin was forthright in believing that religious elevation was the acceptable frame of mind in which to receive Turner's landscape art and the Alps themselves. Even when Ruskin had personally renounced his religious faith by the time the final volume of Modern Painters was published, he was still publicly adhering to the belief that the natural landscape manifested divine qualities (Modern Painters V 9).

The latter half of the 1850s saw Ruskin give new emphasis to the value of imaginative creativity in Turner's work. This is particularly evident in the fourth volume of Modern Painters. Following 'a profound knowledge of natural phenomenon', it was possible to evoke 'sublime visions through the action of imagination' (Christian, 187). In the chapter 'Of Turnerian Topography' in the fourth volume of the series, he writes of an artist who, like Turner, has 'real invention':

First, he receives a true impression from the place itself, and takes care to keep hold of that as his chief good; indeed, he needs no care in the matter, for the distinction of his mind from that of others consists in his instantly receiving such sensations strongly, and being unable to lose them; and then he sets himself as far as possible to reproduce that impression on the mind of the spectator of the picture (Modern Painters IV 33).

Despite some fluctuations in articulation, there is still Ruskin's typical sequence which moves from 'true' observation, through recollection of a (moral) good, and concludes in the

reproduction of the impression in the minds of others. A prime example is in Ruskin's description of Turner's 'Goldau' watercolour from 1843 (see fig. 3 below). The rocks in the foreground of the painting were the product of an avalanche that killed countless people and buried 'five villages, together with the principal one of Goldau, and partially choking up a little lake, the streamlets which supplied it now forming irregular pools among the fallen fragments' (Modern Painters IV 379). Comparing Turner's watercolour with a study of the actual scene, Ruskin focuses on the idea of the power and force of nature epitomised both by the boulders that represent the landslide and the precipitous sides of the mountains. This, he concludes, could only have been achieved by witnessing the scene:

The Rossberg itself, never steep, and still more reduced in terror by the fall of a portion of it, was not available to him as a form *explanatory* of the catastrophe; and even the slopes of the Rigi on the left are not, in reality, as uninterrupted in their slope as he has drawn them; but he felt the connection of this structure with the ruin amidst which he stood, and brought the long lines of danger clear against the sunset, and as straight as its own retiring rays (Modern Painters IV 379-380).

The attraction for Ruskin was also the difference between sketches and the finished watercolour. The original drawings of 'Goldau' had no traces of red that dominate the skyline in the completed painting. Ruskin asserts that in the painting 'the scarlet of the clouds was the symbol of destruction' (Modern Painters V 438n) and 'especially the death of multitudes' presumably with biblical associations. The scarlet sky of 'Goldau' is 'the deepest in tone of all that I know in Turner's drawings' (Modern Painters IV 381). Ruskin here accepts Turner's licence to use symbolism within his work to convey the tragic events

connected with the site. An accurate observation of the surrounds was still essential, but increasing artistic license to interpret the feelings and emotions became evident in the final three volumes of Modern Painters written in the latter half of the 1850s.



Fig. 3. J.M.W. Turner, 'Goldau' (1843).

The painting most often discussed in terms of Ruskin's focus on the imaginative strengths of the artist is his detailed examination of Turner's 'The Pass of St Gotthard, near Faido' (1842-3), or 'The Pass of Faido' as it is more commonly known. On travelling here in 1802, Turner described the 'fragments and precipices [as] very romantic and strikingly grand' (Ackroyd, 30-1). Again, in his chapter 'Of Turnerian Topography', Ruskin begins by giving a comprehensive description of the landscape. This is accompanied by one of his own topographical sketches of the area, which, crucially, depicts all the features that would actually appear within the framework of Turner's painting. He then continues by examining Turner's painting in relation to the accuracy of the actual scene and the effect that both Turner's work and the landscape itself have on the traveller. Hitherto Ruskin has been at pains to describe a theoretical sequence in which that artist moves from observation to the

spiritual imagination. However, in practice, the process is, as he recognised, substantially more complicated. Significantly, when one considers earlier volumes of Modern Painters, Ruskin focuses on how Turner's painting represents the feeling one has on arrival at the site at the expense of truthfulness of detail:

It will be seen that, in my topographical sketch, there are a few trees rooted in the rock on this side of the gallery, showing, by comparison, that it is not above four or five hundred feet high. These trees Turner cuts away, and gives the rock a height of about a thousand feet, so as to imply more power and danger in the avalanche coming down the couloir.

Next, he raises, in a still greater degree, all the mountains beyond, putting three or four ranges instead of one, but uniting them into a single massy bank at their base, which he makes overhang the valley, and thus reduces it nearly to such a chasm as that which he had just passed through above, so as to unite the expression of this ravine with that of the stony valley (37).

Ruskin continues in the same vein discussing Turner's artistic felling of more trees and the alterations he made to a road and bridge.

Nonetheless Ruskin's paramount reason for his praise of Turner's work here is that the artist has been faithful to his artistic vision of the scene. According to Ruskin, he has not intellectualised the scene by considering how best to achieve the effect the landscape has had, and neither has Turner thought how best to convey this to his prospective audience: 'If he thought, he would instantly go wrong; it is only the clumsy and

uninventive artist who thinks. All these changes come into his head involuntarily; an entire imperative dream, crying, ““Thus it must be,” has taken possession of him; he can see, and do, no otherwise than as the dream directs’ (Modern Painters IV 38). As Wettlaufer points out, there is a change in emphasis from the representation of the facts and details of nature to ‘an internal landscape and the state of a human consciousness when confronted with the ungraspable’ (163). The emphasis moves from facts to interpretation, although Ruskin’s underlying principle of experiencing the scene in detail oneself remains constant throughout. The sublimity of the painting in this instance has not been attained solely by capturing the landscape that is represented within the work itself, but by incorporating the experience of having arriving there after having crossed the Mont St. Gotthard, in effect eliding two (or more) different scenes. Ruskin evidently felt this himself whilst following in Turner’s footsteps:

There is nothing in this scene, taken by itself, particularly interesting or impressive. The mountains are not elevated, nor particularly fine in form, and the heaps of stones which encumber the Ticino present nothing notable to the ordinary eye. But in reality, the place is approached through one of the narrowest and most sublime ravines in the Alps, and after the traveller during the early part of the day has been familiarized with the aspect of the highest peaks of the Mont St. Gotthard [sic]. Hence it speaks quite another language to him from that in which it would address itself to an unprepared spectator: ... the defile, not in itself narrow or terrible, is regarded nevertheless with awe, because it is imagined to resemble the gorge that had just been traversed above; and, although no very elevated mountains immediately overhang it, the scene is felt to belong to, and arise in its

essential character out of, the strength of those mightier mountains in the unseen north (Modern Painters IV 35).

Ruskin emphasises that whilst Turner's Alpine art is still *based* on an accurate impression of the landscape, 'the work is directed towards reproducing that impression on the mind of whoever should look at his picture' (Birch, Ruskin on Turner 121). But literal observation has shifted to something much more like psychological collage, in which spirituality is a near-neighbour to the aesthetic sublime as well the geologically observant.

Behind the juxtaposition of fact and imagination that Ruskin perceives in Turner's Alpine paintings lies evidence of sentimentalism. This is seen when Turner depicts contemporary characters. David Hill in Turner in the Alps examines Turner's c.1827 painting 'Martigny', a town at the Swiss base of the Great St. Bernard Pass. Hill argues that the painting depicts the residents as 'healthy and young, gaily dressed, playful, happy, clean and colourful, the pure products of unsullied nature', perhaps alluding to the eponymous fictional character in Rousseau's Julie (1761) who, despite being a 'fallen' woman, was depicted in similar terms and inhabited the region nearby. Hill contrasts Turner's representation of Martigny with a description from John Murray's A Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland published just over ten years later which describes the area as,

a flat swamp, rendered desolate and unwholesome by the overflowings of the Rhone and its tributaries, which, not being carried off by a sufficient declivity in their beds, stagnate, and exhale a most injurious malaria under the rays of the burning sun. From this cause and the absence of pure-drinking water, the valley is a hot-bed of disease; its inhabitants are

dreadfully afflicted with goître, cretinism, and agues and the appearance of decrepitude, deformity, and misery, arrests the traveller's attention at every step (qtd. in Hill 91).

Turner's portrayal of Swiss locals also contrasts to Ruskin's experience. Ruskin writes about them in a fashion similar to Murray's Handbook in his chapter 'On Mountain Gloom' from Modern Painters IV. He describes the inhabitants living in the Valais region around Sion and Martigny, for instance, as having 'at a certain time of life, violent affections of goitre, and often, in infancy, cretinism' (411). However, if Turner was arguably guilty of imagining an ideal people to match the sublimity of nature, so Ruskin was prone to imaginative idealism in his relationship with the Alps. Birch states that, 'the Europe that Ruskin encountered was inevitably different from the stirring prospects which had occupied Turner's imagination. ... As railways were extended, roads improved, and hotels built, Ruskin saw the first manifestations of mass tourism in the places that he and Turner had seen as travellers of a different kind' (Ruskin on Turner 120). For Ruskin, the Alps were, by and large, a depopulated landscape, to be experienced only by the few who could appreciate them in a manner similar to his own. In the 1850s, the development of a cheaper and quicker means of travelling to and across Europe enabled a different class of traveller to experience the Continent; for Ruskin this would see places like Chamonix change from a sanctuary to a playground (Ring 61). In Praeterita, he bemoans the introduction of the railways: 'The poor modern slave and simpletons who let themselves be dragged like cattle, or felled timber, through the countries they imagine themselves visiting, can have no conception whatever of the complex joys, and ingenious hopes, connected with the choice and arrangement of the travelling carriage in old times' (106). As the facts of nature became tarnished, and 'even the stainless glaciers of the Alps were littered with the refuge

of a new and irreverent generation of tourists' (Birch 15) – including, one suspects, Albert Smith – Ruskin eventually came to see in Turner's art and its depiction of sublimity the ideal Alpine landscape that was disappearing around him.

Following the death of Turner in December 1851, Ruskin became extremely apprehensive over the future of the vast amount of art Turner had produced. He was concerned both about the physical condition of the paintings in the cellars of Turner's home in Queen Anne Street, London, and also the possibility that they may become available for immediate private purchase. In the same month as Turner's death, Ruskin urgently wrote to his father from Venice advising what paintings should be bought if they became obtainable. After emphasising that 'the first and most important of all are the original sketches of my St. Gothard and Goldau; and, if possible, the original sketches of all the Swiss drawings we have', he writes that

... the chief thing is to get mountains. A mountain drawing is always, to me, worth just three times one of any other subject, and I have not enough, yet: the only two *thorough* ones that I have are the St. Gothard ['The Pass of Faido'] and the Lake Lucerne last got from Munro; the Rigi is divine as an evening thought, but the mountain form is heavy; ... I want drawings as like the St. Gothard as possible ... (Ruskin, Turner. The Harbours of England xxiii-xxiv).

Ruskin continues in the same vein desperately trying to communicate the works that mean the most to him. This letter is evidence of how influential Turner's sketches and paintings depicting the Alps had been for him during the preceding twenty years and also how he

wished to own them to memorialise and capture the experience. Shortly after writing this, he was informed that all the contents of Queen Anne Street would become the property of the nation, and Ruskin himself would become one of the executors of the will.

In his study of Turner, Ackroyd highlights the importance for Turner of scrutinising the source and using this as the basis for all art (Ackroyd 84). This is the one constant in Ruskin's interpretation of Turner's work. Although his rich, eloquent prose exploring the range and detail of Turner's art would certainly facilitate a wider appreciation, and ironically attract those who wished to see the actual sites for themselves, Ruskin eventually came to appreciate Turner's imaginative power over his attention to detail. After a discourse about accurately depicting natural landscape in his 1851 article 'Pre-Raphaelitism' (where Turner's work predominates), he states:

... But is there no place left, it will be indignantly asked, for imagination and invention, for poetical power, or love of ideal beauty? Yes, the highest, the noblest place – that which these can only attain when they are all used in the cause, and with the aid of truth. (Ruskin, Lectures on Architecture and Painting 352).

From 'realistic' observation of present reality he was already on a journey to a refuge.

2.2 Modern Painters

The Alps had a crucial role in the composition and content of Modern Painters. The analysis alternates between contemporary and established painters, amateur and professional artists, artistic theory and subject matter, and frequently these topics revolve around questions of Alpine representation. In preparation for all five volumes Ruskin travelled through these mountains, spending considerable time in Chamonix at the base of Mont Blanc. Here he divided his time between reading, drawing, and studying the terrain in scientific detail whilst keeping a detailed record of his ideas in his diaries. Modern Painters itself can be seen as a developing account of his ideas and sentiments towards art and landscape incorporating such themes as geology, urban development and religion, as well as issues around scientific truth, subjectivity, imaginative expression and theology.

Unsurprisingly, Ruskin's theories surrounding subject, medium and their relationship changed and developed in the seventeen years from the publication of the first volume in 1843. Concurrently, the general perception of the Alps was transformed during this period from the Romantic sublimity expressed by Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and Turner towards a site best described by Leslie Stephen's title to his collections of essays on the Alps, The Playground of Europe. Somewhat contradictorily, Ruskin himself wanted both to encourage and deter interest in the Alps. He championed the landscape and instructed his readers on how to see nature and capture it through art whilst also cherishing the landscape because most had been unaltered by human intervention. Over half a century earlier, Wordsworth had been on a similar mission in the Lake District and wrote about feelings towards the scenery of the mountains and lowlands in his A Guide through the Lakes (final version published in 1835). In his introductory 'Directions and Information for

the Tourist', he writes 'In preparing this Manual, it was the Author's principal wish to furnish a Guide or Companions for the *Minds* of Persons of taste, and feelings for Landscape, who might be inclined to explore the District of the Lakes with that degree of attention to which its beauty may fairly lay claim' (Prose II 221). He too came to regret the encouragement this gave to tourists. Likewise, as the 1850s progressed, Ruskin became disillusioned with Alpine scenery when people began arriving to the area in increasing numbers, although his own enthusiasm for the region was partly responsible for this trend. Modern Painters encouraged a rise in interest in the area, from geologists and artists to those seeking a cultural excursion in the mountains.

Modern Painters expresses attitudes of ardour and devotion towards the Alps. This is articulated in many ways. The height and scale of the mountains are part of the attraction particularly in the way that they can represent feelings of awe and spiritual elevation, and, as we have seen, this is often connected to their representation in Turner's art. In some respects more important for Ruskin, however, is 'mountain character', in particular 'the number of lovely colours on the rocks, the varied grouping of the trees, and quantity of noble incidents in stream, crag, or cloud, presented to the eye at any given moment' (Modern Painters IV 420). For Ruskin, the Alps were a lot more than an arena for one to experience sublime Romantic feelings but contained a multitude of natural detail for observation and scrutiny. Therefore, in contrast to previous Alpine sentiment whereby the mountains were perceived with awe and wonderment alone, Ruskin adds a methodical enquiry to correspond to the variety of responses he had to the natural scenery. Ruskin already had a familiarity with the Scottish Highlands, Snowdonia and most notably the Lake District, but despite 'many deep sources of delight ... gathered into the compass of their glens and vales', they did not have the same affect or aesthetic influence' (Modern

Painters IV 118). His prolonged trips to the Alps fundamentally changed his outlook on landscape.

In the first volume of Modern Painters (1843), Ruskin sporadically uses the poetry of Wordsworth to assist in conveying emotions generated by natural scenery. When one considers the scale of the full title of Ruskin's volume: Modern Painters: Their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to all the Ancient Masters proved by Examples of the True, the Beautiful, and the Intellectual, from the Works of Modern Artists, especially from those of J.M.W. Turner, Wordsworth may seem rather a distant choice. As we have seen, during this decade Turner was producing some of his most powerful and ambitious work, including the Alpine landscapes 'The Pass of Splügen' (1841-2) and 'The Pass of St Gotthard, near Faido' (1842-3), works that, with the assistance of Ruskin's prose, would transform perceptions of the Alps as well as the artist himself. By contrast Wordsworth was by then far from the revolutionary poet of his youth. A common perception of him in his final years was as a 'poet of the English Lake District, eminently adaptable to tourism, gardening, calendar art, and mournful private reflections on the impossibilities of modern public life' (Johnston, 604), who replaced Southey as Poet Laureate shortly before the publication of Ruskin's book. Nevertheless an excerpt from The Excursion, published nearly thirty years earlier, appears on the title-page of every volume of Modern Painters:

Accuse me not

Of arrogance, ...

If, having walked with Nature,

And offered, far as frailty would allow,

My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth

I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
Whom I have served, that their Divinity
Revolts, offended at the ways of men,
Philosophers, who, through the human soul
Be of a thousand faculties composed,
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
This soul, and the transcendent universe,
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud Self-love her own intelligence (Book 4, 978-992).

Dinah Birch argues that this conspicuous use of an established poet supplies credibility and authority to Modern Painters. By offering an epigraph that emphasises ‘humility, sacrifice, service, and self-abnegation’ (Birch, ‘Elegiac Voices’ 333-4), Ruskin indicates the approach that will be taken to the relationship between art, artist and nature. However the quotation emphasises another important aspect of Ruskin’s aesthetic: the importance of ‘Truth’ and veracity of representation and its relation to the ‘soul’ and ‘transcendence’. The importance for him here is that landscape art must begin with nature itself. Only after prolonged observation and study can one then begin to investigate the relationship between the objective and the subjective self, in a way similar to Wordsworth’s connection with nature. Although Ruskin later championed the importance of the spontaneous feelings and emotions that nature stimulated, nature itself always took precedence, and all man’s interpretation of it was of secondary importance.

Elsewhere in the same volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin quotes the first six lines of a more recent poem by Wordsworth (composed in 1844 and known by its first line) to

explain ‘the chief fault of our English landscapists’ who ‘have not the intense all-observing penetration of a well-balanced mind’ and ‘have not, except in one or two instances, anything of that feeling which Wordsworth shows in the following lines’ (177). Ruskin is probably including his own drawing masters, like J. D. Harding (discussed in 2.3), who manipulated natural fact in order to present pleasing water-colours. Wordsworth’s poem reads:

So fair, so sweet, withal so sensitive; -
Would that the little flower were born to live
Conscious of half the pleasures which they give.
That to this mountain daisy’s self were known
The beauty of its star-shaped shadow, thrown
On the smooth surface of this naked stone. (1-6)

Wordsworth’s observations here are detailed and precise, which would certainly have appealed to Ruskin. It is important to notice and separate the two points that Ruskin makes in relation to his quotation from the poem. One argument concerns the inability of English landscape artists to recreate through their medium the equivalent feeling for nature expressed by Romantic poets like Wordsworth, or more passionately by Byron in Childe Harold and Manfred, and Shelley in ‘Mont Blanc’. Ruskin’s exceptions are Turner and possibly Samuel Prout. However, there is the additional imperative need for artists to have that ‘intense all-observing penetration of a well-balanced mind’. For Ruskin, landscape art must not solely display an imaginative and emotional response to nature, although a passionate appreciation of the subject is important. Ruskin makes this clear in his celebrated chapter ‘The Mountain Glory’ where even the most glorious mountain character

must not 'in any wise [be] a matter referable to feeling, or individual preference, but demonstrable by calm enumeration' (Modern Painters IV 420). Mountainous areas are, Ruskin surmises, an environment where one is more liable to be *overwhelmed* by the sublimity of the terrain. In Praeterita, Ruskin offers a self-analysis to exemplify the qualities which ideally should manifest themselves in the work of landscape artists:

I was different, be it once more said, from other children even of my own type, not so much in the actual nature of the feeling, but in the mixture of it. I had, in my little clay pitcher, vialfuls, as it were, of Wordsworth's reverence, Shelley's sensitiveness, Turner's accuracy, all in one. ... I did not weary myself in wishing that a daisy could see the beauty of its shadow, but in trying to draw the shadow for myself (219-20).

Here is Wordsworth's mountain daisy again. Accuracy, sensitiveness and reverence create pre-eminent paintings of nature, and Ruskin found all three in the works of Turner. Regarding Wordsworth however, although Ruskin shared his sensitiveness and feelings for the natural world, the quotation from Praeterita above (which specifically refers to the poem 'So fair, so sweet, withal so sensitive') marks a contrast in their methods of response to nature. Ruskin favoured drawing and prose as the way he could best describe nature informed by his scientific curiosity. He was unable to succinctly combine precision of detail and feeling successfully through poetry but needed the space to elaborate on his ideas in a methodical and detailed manner.

Although a defence of Turner's art sparked the origins of Modern Painters, the main source of inspiration for five volumes spanning seventeen years lies with this twofold hold

that landscape, particularly that of the Alps, had on this 'Graduate of Oxford': methodical interest in natural detail and an emotional bond inseparable from religious admiration. Whilst the stress in Wordsworth's poetry on the relationship between truth and nature centres on man, the emphasis in Ruskin's concept of art in the first volume of Modern Painters begins with the landscape itself: 'The word Truth, as applied to art, signifies the faithful statement, either to the mind or senses, of any fact of nature' (105). All Ruskin's theories of art begin with the natural source. The representation of fact is,

the foundation of all art; like real foundations, it may be little thought of when a brilliant fabric is raised on it; but it must be there. ... nothing can be beautiful in art which does not in all its parts suggest and guide to the foundation. ... And thus, though we want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth, yet they must be thoughts arising out of the knowledge of truth, and feelings arising out of the contemplation of truth. ... nature is so immeasurably superior to all that the human mind can conceive, that every departure from her is a fall beneath her (Modern Painters I 137).

The best topographical artists, like Turner, can combine the representation of the true facts of nature with their thoughts and feelings. Herbert makes the important point that 'Ruskin was perfectly aware of the fact that vision is not a neutral or passive experience, that if a person is to become educated in the visual arts, his eye and his mind must be exercised together' (viii). In Modern Painters Ruskin develops the idea of the relationship between natural fact and the artist's imagination, not least in the representation of the Alpine scenes that, for Ruskin, could not be painted successfully without a strong emotional attachment to

them. As a result, Modern Painters includes a significant portion devoted to the examination of the artist's mind and character.

For Ruskin, landscape artists who are unable to use their imaginations to recreate the effect that nature has on them, should remain faithful to accurately portraying natural fact. Ruskin himself as an amateur artist produced many works that exemplify a fidelity to this policy which attacked the vogue of painting with a picturesque sensibility primarily in mind. His rule is emphasised at the beginning of volume one of Modern Painters and continues to be reiterated in later volumes. On a chapter on Turnerian topography in volume four, for example, he writes:

If ... when we go to a place we see nothing else than is there, we are to paint nothing else, and to remain pure topographical or historical landscape painters. If, going to the place, we see something quite different from what is there, then we paint that, nay, we *must* paint that, whether we will or not; it being, for us, the only reality we can get at. But let us beware of pretending to see this unreality if we do not (Modern Painters IV 28)

The passage is an implicit warning against both merely painting literal features (and so remaining only topographical or historical) and trying to see landscape through conventional eyes and therefore painting what you wish to see but not what is actually there. For Ruskin this second fault was by far the worst, demonstrating little interest or attention to the landscape, whilst the first fault was limited, but truthful. Ruskin therefore offers close observation as well as imaginative creativity as criteria for a judgement of landscape art. Rather than examining topographical art by the standards of what had come

before, pictures should be considered based on their truthful relationship to nature. George Eliot noted the importance of this fidelity to nature in her review of Modern Painters III for the Westminster Review in April 1856 where she writes:

The truth of infinite value that he teaches is *realism* – the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be obtained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite substantial reality. The thorough acceptance of this doctrine would remould our life; and he who teaches its application to any one department of human activity with such power as Mr Ruskin's, is a prophet for his generation ('Art and Belles Lettres' 626).

In a parallel move, in chapter seventeen of Adam Bede, Eliot extended this principle to include the depiction of social life, though here her model is the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century. However by contrast, for Ruskin, problems arise when nature comes into contact with human activity, as will be seen in chapter four in his response to the arrival of mass tourism in the Alps.

The importance of Ruskin's scientific studies of the landscape as preparatory work for all volumes of Modern Painters is reflected in the field work observations and research undertaken during his time in the Alps, to which there are many reference in his diaries. During his 1849 excursion to Chamonix (the experience of which lay behind volumes three and four of Modern Painters) many entries exemplify his inexhaustible geological research. On one day alone he examines beds of Gneiss and calcaire (limestone), reads and expounds upon a paper by Sir Roderick Murchison (President of the Royal Geographical Society)

denying extended glacial action, and makes detailed notes on the angles of various mountain peaks and slopes (Diaries 1848-73 392). One significant point here is the scale of the research. In Praeterita, as we have already seen, Ruskin was predominantly interested in the geology of Snowdon whilst climbing the mountain as a youth (96). This was the only memorable part of the ascent; the mountain had otherwise no effect on him. However, the size and scale of the Alps were a major factor in changing his outlook. As Hilton points out, ‘Before, he had collected stones. Now he was interested in the orographic, the study of whole mountain ranges’ (33) initiated by his reading of Saussure’s Voyages dans les Alpes.

Ruskin’s expanded geological interests influenced his theories on how the natural landscape should be portrayed in art. In discourses on the artistic representation of natural truths, the emphasis is placed on those that show evidence of time passing, whether in seasonal cycles or in geological time. It is those ‘which tell us most about the past and future states of the object to which they belong’ (Modern Painters I 163). To describe relatively transitory changes Ruskin uses the example of a tree, in relation to which ‘it is more important to give the appearance of energy and elasticity in the limbs which is indicative of growth and life, than any particular character of leaf, or texture of bough. The first truths tell us about the tree, about what it had been, and will be, while the last are characteristics of it only in its present state’ (Modern Painters I 163). As an instance of more enduring subjects, Ruskin describes glacial action in volume four of Modern Painters, where ‘its universal affect is to round and soften the contours of the mountains subject to it; so that a glacier may be considered as a vast instrument of friction, a white sandpaper, applied slowly but irresistibly to all the roughness of the hills that it covers’ (211). In context, this statement relates to an examination in great detail of the various angles, peaks and composition of aiguilles, crests and precipices in the Alpine mountains. The effects of

external forces altering the appearance of the mountain aesthetic were analysed under the influence of the physicist James Forbes with whose works Ruskin was familiar. Forbes' publications, including Travels through the Alps of Savoy and other parts of the Pennine Chain, with Observations on the Phenomena of Glaciers in 1843, exemplify an empirical approach to glacial erosion. Ruskin's observation of the rounded outline to the Alpine mountains due to the gradual erosive effect (based upon his own extensive research) is seen by Schama in Landscape and Memory as crucial:

Perhaps the greatest of all revelations that had come to Ruskin, the one that seemed to him to signify how paramount the place of rocks was in creation, was their waviness of deep form. Though their edges might be arbitrarily sharp, their surface was figured with the whorls, loops, braids, and ropes of mineral matter that revealed the dynamic heaves and pressures of geological change. So when the tastemakers of the sublime had eulogized the brutal jaggedness of mountain scenery and the impaling spikes of its summits, he argued they had merely been indulging in callow sensationalism (509).

According to Ruskin, this 'callow sensationalism' is centred on those who use 'tricks of chiaroscuro which cause objects to look projecting from the canvas, not worthy of the name of truths' (Modern Painters I 164). As we shall see in chapter three, Ruskin's criticism might be applied to William Beverley's exaggerated paintings of Mont Blanc that accompanied Albert Smith's presentations and which accentuated the dangers, terrors and risks of the mountains.

The interest in geological forces continually altering and eroding the landscape is explored in the chapter on 'The Lateral Ranges' in Modern Painters IV. In this section there is no explicit questioning of God's role in the creation of the earth but there is the attempt to harmonise Creationist belief with geological evidence. As seen in the last chapter, William Buckland, Ruskin's geology tutor, expressed the belief that the Biblical interpretation of the Earth's creation was symbolic of a much longer period of time whilst another of Buckland's pupils, Charles Lyell, proposed that the earth was significantly older than previously considered and subject to a transformation through natural forces (Walton 78). Ruskin could never fully except Lyell's theory and states that '...for us the intelligible and substantial fact is that the earth has been brought, by forces we know not of, into a form fitted for our habitation: on that form a gradual, but destructive, change is continually taking place, and the course of that change points clearly to a period when it will no more be fitted for the dwelling place of men' (Modern Painters IV 179). This position sustains reference to God the creator, but it exemplifies the debate within Ruskin between Creationist and evolutionary theory that would shortly lead to his private religious renunciation. If there is a God for Ruskin, His work is exemplified in the Alpine landscape, which was certainly the case for him in the 1840s. From Chamonix in 1842, Ruskin writes:

The very evaporation from the snow gives it a crystalline, unfathomable depth never elsewhere seen. There is no air like its air. Coming down from Chamouni into the lower world is like coming out of open morning air into an ale-house parlour where people have been sleeping and smoking with the door shut all night; and for its earth, there is not a stick nor a stone in the valley that is not toned with the majestic spirit; there is nothing pretty there, it is all beautiful to its lowest and lightest details, bursting forth below and

above in such an inconceivable mixture of love and power – of grace and glory – its dews seem to ennoble, and its storms to bless; and with all the constant sensations of majesty from which you can never escape, there is such an infinite variety of manifestations, such eternal mingling of every source of awe, that it never oppresses, though it educates you. Nor can you ever forget for an instant either the gentleness or the omnipotence of the ruling Spirit (Poems 223n).

There is the contrast here between the negative description of social, inhabited space and the open, uninhabited mountain environment. For Ruskin, the landscape here is not ‘pretty’. Neither was it for Byron who in 1816 indignantly wrote to a friend, ‘At Chamouni – in the very eyes of Mont Blanc – I heard another woman – English also – exclaim to her party – “Did you ever see anything more *rural*” – as if it was Highgate or Hampstead – or Brompton – or Hayes. “*Rural*” quotha! – Rocks – pines – torrents – Glaciers – Clouds and Summits of eternal snow far above them – and “*Rural*!”’ (qtd. in MacFarlane 80-1). According to Modern Painters the landscape is the work of God, and this should be manifest in the works of artists when they depict the landscape. By the late 1850s however, Ruskin was struggling in private to summon up enthusiasm for the same conviction, partly due to religious doubt.

In Modern Painters, the dual interests in geology and religion are played out in Ruskin’s desire for an artist to recreate the landscape as both specific and imaginative, not general and ideal: a role eventually to be projected for Turner. This is particularly seen in the early volumes of Modern Painters when the two concepts of factual accuracy and

spiritual idealism were more in concord. The 1844 preface to the second edition of Modern Painters I states that

The true ideal of landscape is precisely the same as that of the human form; it is the expression of the specific – not the individual, but the specific – characters of every object in their perfection. There is the ideal form of every herb, flower, and tree, it is that form to which every individual of the species has a tendency to arrive, freed from the influence of accident and disease. Every landscape painter should know the specific characters of every object he has to represent, rock, flower, or cloud; and in his highest ideal works all their distinctions will be perfectly expressed, broadly or delicately, slightly or completely, according to the nature of the subject, and the degree of attention which is to be drawn to the particular object by the part it plays in the composition (27).

The Alps in their untainted form represent for him both an area of scientific geological fascination and an area of outstanding Godly beauty. It provides both the ideal medium to exemplify God's work and reveals a broad canvas of natural facts which are conducive to that ideal.

The conflict in the latter half of the 1850s between Ruskin's research in physical science and his religious upbringing appears only briefly and implicitly in Modern Painters. Otherwise there is the firm conviction that natural beauty, especially in the Alps, is evidence of God's work. This is explicitly stated in the opening of the final volume when, perhaps to counter his private torment, he states of Modern Painters as a whole that 'there is

no variation, from its first syllable to its last. It declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God; and tests all work of man by concurrence with, or subjection to that' (Modern Painters V 9). As long as the Alps (in particular Ruskin's favourite site, Chamonix) retain this celestial quality then Ruskin will continue to document the relationship between natural scenery and art. Before Turner:

Landscape art has never taught us one deep or holy lesson; it has not recorded that which is fleeting, nor penetrated that which was hidden, nor interpreted that which was obscure; it has never made us feel the wonder, nor the power, nor the glory of the universe; it has not prompted to devotion, nor touched with awe; its power to move and exalt the heart has been fatally abused, and perished in the abusing. That which ought to have been a witness to the omnipotence of God, has become an exhibition of the dexterity of man; and that which would have lifted our thoughts to the throne of the Deity, has encumbered them with the inventions of his [sic] creatures (Modern Painters I 22).

The preface emphasises the artist concealing himself to allow the art to honour God rather than his own ego. The rule applies for Ruskin if the artist uses his creativity and imagination to recreate the impression of the landscape through the mind's eye.

For Ruskin, it is important that the facts and ideals he perceives in the landscape are effectively represented through art to depict and exalt nature simultaneously. In Modern Painters extensive consideration is given to both the qualities of the artist and the impression that such works make on the spectator. Although Ruskin was unable to recreate

through his own art the highest standards he espoused in theory, the artists themselves should ideally approach art with the same psychological attitude as Ruskin himself. The topographical painter should ‘first take care that it is a subject intensely pleasing to himself, else he will never paint it well; and then, also, that it shall be one in some sort pleasurable to the general public, else it is not worth painting at all; and lastly, take care that it be instructive as well as pleasurable to the public, else it is not worth painting with care’ (Modern Painters IV 30). The artist should also select ‘his objects for their meaning and character, rather than for their beauty; and use them rather to throw light upon the particular thought he wishes to convey, than as themselves objects of unconnected admiration’ (Modern Painters 1 134). The warning here is against portraying the conventionally beautiful disconnected from inner meaning and also swings away from the pole represented by his insistence on fidelity to precise truth. Here it is ‘inner meaning and character’ that is paramount, a factor that became increasingly important for him. After the artist has made the selection, they should then ‘guide the spectator’s mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which there were regarded by the artist themselves’ (Modern Painters I 133). As seen in the last section, Ruskin imposes assumed spiritual aspirations on Turner and believes that the topographical artist should ideally aim for a teleological representation of nature in accordance with the Creationist vision Ruskin has for the landscape.

Ruskin explores the idea of depicting nature *without* the appropriate artistic creativity. This is associated with the amateur artist who is unable successfully to bring into relation the facts of nature with an imaginative sense of what the scene conjures up for them. In these instances, the spectator must have in mind ‘the faithful conception of any natural objects’ that have resulted from the artist’s ability to replicate truthfully the natural

scene (Modern Painters I 133). As we shall see in the next section, Ruskin became particularly adept at this topographical accuracy in his own work, and claimed that, when the selection from nature is ‘perfect and careful’, it can lead the spectator to the ‘attainment of the pure ideal’ in a way comparable to the finest artist’s achievements (Modern Painters I 134-6). However, the danger of this sort of artwork for Ruskin is its potential to appeal to our ‘animal nature’ (134) and produce a sort of painting that toys with ideas of the beautiful or the sublime without integrity or spiritual aspiration.

The interplay between scientific accuracy and artistic imagination has added complexity in later volumes of Modern Painters. In comparison to the following decades, the Alpine landscapes of the 1830s and 1840s, including those in the area around Chamonix, had for Ruskin an untainted and unspoiled air to them, similar to their artistic recreation in the works of Turner. By the time of writing the third and fourth volumes of Modern Painters both Turner and Wordsworth had died, and simultaneously for Ruskin, the Alps were losing the aesthetic appeal that had so inspired these Romantic artists. The popular appeal of the Alpine landscape inspired by Smith and others was affecting and influencing Ruskin’s artistic theory and potentially compromising both truthfulness and idealism. In Modern Painters IV, Ruskin resorts to his earlier rule of depicting nature whereby, if a painting is purely topographical, then ‘not a line is to be altered, not a stick removed, not a colour deepened, not a form removed; the picture is to be, as far as possible, the reflection of the place in a mirror; and the artist to consider himself only as a sensitive and skilful reflector’ (31). However, with the influx of tourism altering the landscape, Ruskin had to take into account the construction of new hotels and businesses, and the overall changes taking place in the towns and cities that were, to be blunt, spoiling the

view. His proposal is for art to ignore the development and not involve itself with a 'submission to ugly accidents interfering with the impressiveness of the scene'. He writes:

For instance, it is not possible now to obtain a view of the head of Lake Geneva without including the "Hôtel Biron" – an establishment looking like a large cotton factory – just above the Castle of Chillon. This building ought always to be omitted, and the reason for the omission stated. So the beauty of the whole town of Lucerne, as seen from the lake, is destroyed by the large new hotel for the English, which ought, in like manner, to be ignored, and the houses behind it drawn as if it were transparent (32).

It is significant that this passage comes from a chapter entitled 'Of Turnerian Topography'. Ruskin continues to use Turner's art as the benchmark for depicting the Alpine landscape and he espouses a theory of how one should paint in order to create effects similar to such works. As Birch states, 'Ruskin's inventiveness is deeply rooted in memory. Wordsworth's poetry and Turner's paintings figure in the mind as part of his childhood and youth' ('Elegiac Voices' 332). From the early 1850s, the Alps for Ruskin become more and more associated with his earlier life. This is partly due to a nostalgic, romanticised recollection of his early trips to the Alps before the complications of health due to stress, and before his woefully unsuccessful marriage. However, it is also due to the changing interest in the Alps from respect and awe at their sublimity to a desire by some to scale and conquer their peaks. In his diary Ruskin writes about an event that occurred in his beloved Chamonix during the same month that Albert Smith climbed Mont Blanc: 'I find the following advertisement in the Galignani of 21st August, this year of 1851. "Glaciers of Chamouni – A Casino is open for the season at this favourite summer resort. Music,

refreshments, and reading-rooms. N.B. – Every kind of amusements, as at Baden-Baden, Hombourg, etc. Branch establishments at the Spa of Evian, on the Lake of Geneva” (Modern Painters IV, 456n). From the early 1850s, Ruskin came to see the Alps more and more through memory and the art of Turner which depicted the landscape before the influx of change. Following his instruction to omit the new Swiss ‘Hotel Biron’, he writes that ‘if a painter has inventive power he is to treat his subject in a totally different way: giving not the actual facts of it, but the impression it made on his mind’ (33). Ruskin does not ask the proficient artist to recreate the impression of this changing scenery and the arrival of tourism. Instead, as we have seen in the previous section when he explores how the painting of Turner’s ‘Pass of St Gotthard, near Faido’ is influenced by the journey to the Pass as well as the site itself, Ruskin resorts back to an earlier, seemingly more idyllic time for him before major human alteration took place. This denial of the changes wrought by mass tourism pushes him further and further away from the factualised observation of his earlier credo and towards ideal depictions, or at least the harmony of the truth of the imagination associated with Turner’s paintings.

It is not just the Alpine landscape that gave Ruskin cause for concern. In ‘The Mountain Gloom’ from Modern Painters IV, his attention moves away from both art and landscape to focus on the inhabitants of the Alpine villages ‘with the practical hope of arousing the attention of the Swiss and Italian mountain peasantry to an intelligent administration of the natural treasures of their woods and streams’ (Modern Painters III lix). The observations that form the basis of ‘The Mountain Gloom’ were made in 1849, in St Martin’s, an Alpine valley below Chamonix, and were recorded in his diary:

What a strange contrast there is between these lower valleys, with their overwrought richness mixed with signs of waste and disease, and their wild noon-winds shaking their leaves into palsy and their black clouds and dark storms folding themselves about their steep mural precipices; and the pastoral green and ice, and pure aiguilles, and white fleecy rainclouds of Chamouni (Diaries 1848-1873 408).

The final two chapters of Modern Painters IV covering mountain gloom and glory develop this theme, with the gloom of the valley floor drawing parallels with the industrial towns and cities in Britain. The chapter ‘The Mountain Gloom’ suggests that Ruskin’s interest in humanity within this terrain was widening by the mid-1850s coinciding with the beginning of his association with the Working Men’s college. His concern for the mental and physical welfare of the villagers is seen here to override his interest in the geological composition of the mountains which govern the fourth volume. With alarm, Ruskin senses in the villagers an immunity to their surroundings, the very antithesis to his own outlook: ‘Here, it is torpor – not absolute suffering – not starvation or disease, but darkness of calm enduring; the spring known only as the time of the scythe, and the autumn as the time of the sickle, and the sun only the warmth, the wind as a chill, and the mountains as a danger. They do not understand so much as the name of beauty, or of knowledge’ (Modern Painters IV 388). Clearly, there is a contrast between the purity of the uninhabited landscape at high altitude and the reality of conditions for those living in the valleys. In his writing on these mountains, Ruskin had always been far more concerned with the former, although here in the attention to social living conditions there is an added complexity to his study of Alpine meaning and representation.

From the late 1850s, Ruskin's outlook on the Alps was further complicated by heightened interest from overseas. During this time Ruskin devised plans to live in the Alps in a bid to 'educate' the villagers, but was deterred by growing tourism. Nevertheless, Modern Painters IV does passionately evince the noble feelings that he hopes the Alpine environment will generate for the spectator, the same feelings that he trusts will come from the artistic representation of the scenery. He writes:

... if in the nature of things it be possible that among the wildness of hills the human heart should be refined, and if the comfort of dress, and the gentleness of language, and the joy of progress in knowledge, and of variety in thought, are possible to the mountaineer in his true existence, let us strive to write this true poetry upon the rocks before we indulge it in our visions, and try whether, among all the fine arts, one of the finest be not that of painting cheeks with health rather than rouge (Modern Painters IV 393).

There is a sense here of a feeling for the natural landscape that is similar to sentiments expressed in Rousseau's Julie. Saint-Preux describes his journey back to Switzerland to be reunited with Julie. Here the physical and moral superiority of the countryside is expressed: 'the Alpine air so wholesome and so pure; the gentle breeze of the country, more fragrant than the perfumes of the orient; ... the aspect of a happy and free people; the mildness of the season, the serenity of the weather; a thousand delightful memories...' (286). However, Ruskin saw his vision of an 'ideal' Alpine landscape in harmony with its inhabitants as a more and more distant dream as interest in the region began to centre on catering for the increasing numbers of climbers, travellers and tourists.

In Modern Painters and other works on the Alps, the mountains represented, for him, the pinnacle of God's work and generated the highest degree of sublime sympathy (crucial to artistic representation) when experienced first hand. Topographical art must originate with the artist being exposed to the environment itself, and ideally having the scientific eye, the emotion, the imagination, and the religious reverence successfully to 'produc[e] on the far-away beholder's mind precisely the impression which the reality would have produced' (Modern Painters IV 35). For Ruskin, this theory of seeing and conveying the landscape equated to a Turnerian picturesque; a term frequently used in his work, which can ultimately be considered 'the final and representative statement of his aesthetic position' (Landow 239). Of Mountain Beauty (the title of the fourth volume of Modern Painters) was, in particular, an important book in its examination of the Alpine mountains (and 'a seminal moment in European landscape history' (MacFarlane, 54)) that inspired in others a cultural appreciation of the Alps and brought many to the mountains to follow in his footsteps.

2.3 Ruskin's Alpine Drawings

By comparison to his prose, Ruskin's drawings have been overlooked by critics. The traditional attitude reflects Ruskin's own low opinion of his drawings, especially when compared to works by Turner. Nevertheless, he produced many drawings and paintings of the Alps that demonstrated both an attention to detail and an emotional affinity with the subject. Once Ruskin liberated himself from the stifling but necessary instruction of his art tutors and learnt to draw nature as it appeared to him, his art became an integral part of his exploration of the alpine aesthetic. The drawings and paintings form a vital accompaniment to Modern Painters and The Elements of Drawing in terms of this research.

Ruskin's art was not produced for the conventional purposes of being purchased or displayed publicly in galleries. Producing works of art did not dominate but formed only part of Ruskin's diverse interests. His father's commercial success in the sherry business ensured that he never had any need to earn money, whilst his mother's ambitions for him to pursue an ecclesiastical career meant that his early instruction in art was seen as only a technical accomplishment that formed part of his overall education. Indeed he only once offered one of his drawings for sale, a study of leaves in 1882 (Hewison, Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 148). Hewison argues that Ruskin's art therefore served no definite purpose (147). By contrast, Whitehouse asserts that 'he always drew with a purpose' (22) as his art went in tandem with his prose. Certainly many of Ruskin's works remained unfinished in the traditional sense, but then this was not necessary because the intention he had for them was to illustrate his books on art. Essentially, therefore, Ruskin's alpine art served two purposes. It was used to reinforce his assertion that Turner's portrayal of nature eclipsed any other artist. Secondly, it served to illustrate how an amateur artist (like

himself) should best approach landscape composition. In exploring both ideas, Ruskin's art became an integral part of his work reinforcing and illuminating the particular points he wished to address.

Ruskin's drawings were connected with an awareness of his own limitations as an artist and sponsored a determination to train fellow amateurs in ways of seeing and portraying nature. By comparing his own drawings with those of Turner, Ruskin's disappointment lay in his inability to convey successfully his emotional attachment to the environment into the representations he produced. By contrast, his prose descriptions could successfully bring together a study of natural detail with a rendition of the imaginative subjectivity interacting with it. Nonetheless, although he felt that his own works could not attain such heights, he was arguably too critical of his own abilities. The attention to detail that is manifest in many of his Alpine drawings and the quantity of his output demonstrate his affection and love of nature that concedes nothing to patronage and everything to the natural world. Nevertheless, many of his works, by his own admission, begin and end with the endeavour to depict the natural scene he witnessed accurately. In a letter of 1846, he writes that 'I can do nothing that I haven't before me; I cannot change, or arrange, or modify in the least, and that amounts to a veto on producing a great picture, ... Anybody can pick out the picturesque things and leave the plain ones, but he [Turner] doesn't do this ... but of the *ugly* things he takes and misses and cuts and shuffles till everything turns up trumps, and that's just what isn't *in* me' (Ruskin, The Letters 1827-1869 64). Accordingly his Alpine drawings were used in The Elements of Drawing to assist other amateur artists in depicting nature. They were always advised to use the environment itself as their first and foremost guide, for art was to be judged by 'the amount of unadulterated nature it

contained' (Brownwell, 219); a process defined in Modern Painters III as historical topography (see pp 63-66).

By using his own Alpine art to instruct others, Ruskin encouraged interest in the Alps themselves by stressing the importance of directly witnessing the natural scene. For the artist there was no substitute in prose or other works of art to experiencing the environment. During the early Victorian era, amateur landscape art was moving away from the picturesque to a more considered and detailed exploration of the natural scene (Walton 11). Ruskin himself became a strong advocate for the view that landscape art should not simply be aesthetically pleasing to the eye but should inform the spectator about the truths of the natural world including its configuration and history. Emphasis is placed on the source rather than the artfulness. Although Ruskin adhered to the idea that there was an ideal in nature which had a crucial spiritual dimension, The Elements of Drawing maintained that nature should not be artistically manipulated for visual affects devoid of natural truth and authentic emotional response.

In Ruskin's account of his first sighting of the Alps in 1833, he wrote elaborately and emotionally about the impact the scene had on him. He followed the convention of the time by producing his own account of the trip through poetry and sketches that were influenced by Samuel Prout's set of lithographs Facsimiles of Sketches in Flanders and Germany. Both this and Samuel Rogers' Italy (see section 2.1) exemplify the taste for poetically and pictorially descriptive accounts of popular travel routes and destinations. Interest escalated after the Napoleonic Wars when the more affluent could again travel across Europe, often accompanied by an early guidebook that tended initially to be more aesthetic than practical. According to Walton, 'large numbers of professional travel

illustrators now roamed over Europe, the Near East, and North America, making sketches to be engraved or lithographed for publication, often with a text providing the historical and literary background for scenes and monuments along popular tourist routes' (11). In Ruskin's own representations of his 1833 trip, his illustrative work follows this trend and, when compared both with the enthusiasm that exudes from his diaries at the time, and also with his later paintings of the Alps, they seem rather staid, conventional and emotionally restrained (see Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. John Ruskin, 'Lake of Thun, near Oberhofen' (1833).

Similar to many illustrations in the travel books that inspired his trip, his own sketch of Lake Thun is stylised to portray the beauty of the scene in the picturesque manner with little variety in its shading, and without distinctive or stimulating characteristics. A depiction of the needles of Mont Blanc (see fig. 5 below) employed monochromatic shading, but in general the style is limited to conventional depictions of landscape which, Ruskin would argue later, depict the landscape ideally rather than portraying what is actually there. For example, the sketches are framed like a vignette and the depiction of the mountains give little sense of height and magnitude. This emphasises the emotional distance between artist and subject. In a defence of his early work, Ruskin also attempted to

imitate the engravings that were produced from Turner's work to accompany the travel literature of the period, like those produced for Rogers' Italy, demonstrating the effort and attention that Ruskin was prepared to undertake at an early age. Ruskin's early artistic representations of the Continental landscape before the publication of the first volume of Modern Painters included copying the works of contemporary landscape artists. Nevertheless, if one takes a typical drawing from this early period, like his depiction of the needles of Mont Blanc, and compare it with a description of the mountain taken from a fragment of his 1833 journal, the difference is clear. Writing from Chamonix, he exclaims:

Well, I looked up, and lo! seven thousand feet above me soared the needles of Mont Blanc, splintered and crashed and shivered, the marks of the tempest for three score centuries, yet they are here, shooting up red, bare, scarcely even lichened, entirely inaccessible, snowless, the very snow cannot cling to the down-plunging sheerness of these terrific flanks that rise pre-eminently dizzying and beetling above the sea of wreathed snow that rolled its long surging waves over the summits of the lower and less precipitous mountains (Ruskin, Poems 382).

Ruskin's writing combines a description of what he saw with the emotions and imagination that these images conjured up, whilst his art of the time conformed to the instruction given to him by Charles Runciman, Ruskin's drawing-master from 1831 and a specialist in perspective.



Fig. 5. John Ruskin, 'The Needles of Mont Blanc, from Geneva' (1833).

Runciman's artistic background lay in the picturesque portrayal of landscape and historical subjects that were visually pleasing to a contemporary audience but devoid of emotional attachment and originality. From 1831 he had given Ruskin weekly lessons on art. Walton speculates that Runciman had ambitions to train Ruskin with the aim of eventually displaying his work at the Royal Academy (9). This assertion is supported by Runciman's unsuccessful attempt to introduce Ruskin to oils, even though Ruskin wrote to his father in 1835 complaining 'I cannot bear to paint in oil' (Ruskin, Early Prose Writings xxxii). Ruskin's own manifold and diverse interests, and, more significantly, his parents' own ambitions for him, ensured that Ruskin's training by Runciman and, from 1834, Copley Fielding (President of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours) gave him a technical accomplishment that formed part of his overall education. Indeed, it has been argued that the limitations placed upon the development of his creative temperament and a lack of encouragement to express himself imaginatively through art resulted in an artistic deficiency in later life (Walton, 8). Nevertheless, the reputation and the pedigree of the artists employed to develop Ruskin's artistic prowess, combined with his own

determination to develop his drawing technique, ensured that he became a distinguished amateur.

During the same period, trends in amateur landscape art itself was moving away from the picturesque to a more serious and detailed examination of nature. This was particularly the case in the field of water-colour. Ruskin himself was a member of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours from 1834, and the opportunities and compositions that could be produced in this medium suited his aims and ideals. The Society:

had been founded in a mood of resentment against the Royal Academy, where the water-colours had always been given an inferior place in its exhibitions. This was because the Academicians regarded water-colours as ‘drawings’, and according to academic standards those who made only drawings, without leading their studies toward idealized compositions on canvas, were virtually amateurs, hardly to be ranked as artists in the full sense of the term’ (Walton, 16-17).

At the same time, Ruskin made numerous copies of Turner’s work in a variety of mediums, from black-and-white to water-colour, and even in oils (Modern Painters I xx). In a letter to the Rev. H.G. Liddell dated October, 1844, he writes:

I think ... that just as it is impossible to trace the refinements of natural form, unless with the pencil in the hand – the eye and mind never being keen enough until excited by the effort to imitate – so it is nearly impossible to observe the refinement of Turner unless one is in the habit of copying him. I

began copying him when I was fourteen [actually thirteen when he began copying the vignettes in Rogers' Italy], and so was early initiated into much which escapes even the observation of artists, whose heads are commonly too full of their own efforts and productions to give fair attention to those of others (Modern Painters I 669).

An important result of the influence Turner had on Ruskin was that, both in his theories and his own output, his ideals were above the quality of the majority of amateurs, a fact he proclaims unashamedly in Modern Painters. Secondly, Ruskin was constantly aware of his own failings when compared to the sublime and overwhelming landscapes by Turner which Ruskin felt unworthy to attempt to emulate.

An exception was two interpretations of the voluminous falls at Schaffhausen in northern Switzerland by Ruskin in 1842, where Walton suggests that the influence of Turner and J.D. Harding, (Ruskin's drawing tutor from 1841) were crucial (52). These works, one in pencil and gouache (see fig. 6 below), and another in pencil and water-colour, display a self-assurance in their brushwork and arrangement. Ruskin here breaks away from the influence of his earlier drawing tutors and their conventional techniques of conveying nature by fastidious outlining and compositional stability that are devoid of emotional involvement. He claims that the pencil and gauche drawing was 'one of the very few, either by other draughtsmen or myself, which I have seen Turner pause at with serious attention' (Modern Painters I 529n). His assertion that this was his only work in which Turner ever displayed any interest is significant. Ackroyd, in his biography of Turner, recounts an anecdote from an 1815 lecture on perspective by Turner, where he ends his talk by stating:

‘After all I have been saying to you, gentlemen – the theories I have explained and the rules I have laid down – you will find no better teachers than your own eyes, if used aright to see things as they are.’ When a pupil asked him, ‘How?’ he characteristically replied, ‘Suppose you *look*.’ (84)

By abandoning the conventions of the time, Ruskin, in these pictures, and supported by Turner, allows the focus to centre upon nature itself and then allow his imagination and emotion to recreate the scene as it appears in the mind’s eye.



Fig. 6. John Ruskin, ‘Falls of Schaffhausen’ (1845).

In the third of his ten lectures on the relation of natural science to art given at Oxford University in 1872 (collectively known as The Eagle’s Nest), Ruskin emphasises

how the development of his own artistic expertise came about essentially through his love of nature rather than through his love of art. Had the former been lacking, he argues, he would not have had the interest and imagination to recreate successfully what he saw. He writes:

It is the widest, as the clearest experience I have to give you; for the beginning of all my own right art work in life, ... depended not on my love of art, but of mountains and sea. ... And through the whole of following life, whatever power of judgement I have obtained in art, which I am now confident and happy in using, or communicating, has depended on my steady habit of always looking for the subject principally, and for the art, only as the means of expressing it (Lectures on Landscape 153).

By the time of his continental tour of 1842, when he drew the Falls at Schaffhausen described earlier, Ruskin's ideal artistic combination of both studying nature closely and imaginatively would now become an integral part of his Alpine compositions. He would henceforth draw from nature and find his need and desire for a drawing master diminish.

Ruskin's last instructor was J.D. Harding, a former pupil of Samuel Prout who taught Ruskin for around three years from 1841. Ruskin, however, was later to disapprove of the finishing techniques Harding used to enhance his drawings which, Ruskin believed, gave precedence to surface over the examination and direct experience of the landscape itself. Harding placed too much emphasis on impression ahead of Ruskin's need for facts, as Ruskin explains in a letter to his father in 1845: 'There is one essential difference between us: his sketches are always pretty because he balances their parts together, and

considers them as pictures; mine are always ugly, for I consider my sketch only as a written note of certain *facts*, and those I put down in the rudest and clearest way as many as possible' (Modern Painters I, 200). Nevertheless, Harding had taught Ruskin about the importance of being faithful to immediate impressions of a scene and also encouraged him to study Turner's *Liber Studiorum*; a series of landscape studies from 1806-1819 that was divided into six sections: historical, pastoral, elevated pastoral, mountain, marine and architectural. No doubt the section on mountains was particularly important.

Of equal importance during this period was Ruskin's inspection of a series of Swiss subjects sketched by Turner during his final continental excursion. Works included 'Goldau', 'The Pass of the Splügen' and 'The Pass of St Gotthard, near Faido'; all sketched in the early 1840s. Ruskin was greatly influenced by these works and their sense of immediacy when capturing accurately the impression of the scene taken straight from nature. As well as being crucial to the development of Ruskin's theory of landscape art in later volumes of Modern Painters, they also served as a benchmark for Ruskin as to how he might draw landscapes himself. In an 1883 epilogue to Modern Painters II, he writes about the 'Splügen' drawing that 'My admiration of it ... directed mainly all my mountain-studies (not into imitation of the drawing itself, but to investigation of the mountain forms which it illustrated) and geological researches' (344). 'The Pass of St Gotthard' was also a key drawing which was used extensively to illustrate his landscape theory in Modern Painter IV.

Despite his years of instruction, 'Ruskin's real tutor was himself. He learnt quickly what others could teach him, but his amazing progress was due to his great industry and untiring delight in seeking to express himself in drawing' (Whitehouse 17). In 1845, Ruskin

went to the Alps with the aim of making sketches and water-colours of the mountains using the theory he had cultivated during the previous few years. He sought out the sites of Turners' sketches in Switzerland in order to compare the accuracy of Turner's work with the landscape. Although this demonstrates a possible unwillingness to detach himself from all influence and concentrate solely on capturing the landscape, it is during this period that 'Ruskin's art becomes interesting for its individuality and expressive power' (Walton 58). Ruskin sought out the viewpoint for Turner's 'St Gotthard', though he found this complicated. In a letter to his father, he wrote, 'I have found his subject, or the materials of it, here; and I shall devote tomorrow to examining them and seeing how he has put them together. The Stones [sic], road, and bridge are all true, but the mountains, compared with Turner's colossal conception, look pigmy & poor. Nevertheless Turner has given their act[ua]l, not their apparent size' (Ruskin, Ruskin in Italy 172). His task was also made difficult by Turner's omission of certain features of the landscape if they happened not to fit in with his overall concept for the painting. Ruskin's appreciation that Turner's Alpine works were a hybrid of fact and imagination would be crucial to his later drawings and theory.

Ruskin made a series of sketches of St Gotthard including 'The Pass of Faido on the St Gotthard' (1845) in figure 7 below, using brown ink and watercolour with bodycolour, on brown paper. He arguably succumbed to the grandeur of the area by painting the scene from a lower position than Turner to convey the sublimity of the landscape in a manner akin to Turner's own apparent aim (although this is only conjecture). Walton believes Ruskin's sketch is not entirely an objective rendering of fact as there is 'an agitated rhythm in the composition, and in the linear accents that define rocks, hills and water' (63). Despite Ruskin's overriding desire to create an objective replica of the scene in order to compare it

with Turner's interpretation, one can sense from the sketch how Ruskin was influenced deeply by it; indeed he acknowledges this in Modern Painters IV when he finally publishes his thoughts following this exercise over ten years later in 1856 (see chapter two: 'Of Turnerian Topography').



Fig. 7. John Ruskin, 'The Pass of Faido on the St Gotthard' (1845).

During this 1845 tour, Ruskin did not limit himself only to drawing the landscapes that Turner had already sketched and painted. His 'Trees on a Mountainside' for example demonstrates a move away from the sublime arena of Turner yet still conveys a genuine vibrancy and intensity. As Walton notes, 'the effect is not simply decorative, for there is a flame-like agitation in the rhythm of pen and brush stroke that contains intense emotional excitement, and from now on this expressive quality is a distinctive feature of Ruskin's studies from nature' (58-60). Works such as 'Trees on a Mountainside' combined Ruskin's

interest in the spectacular side of the Alpine aesthetic with his interest in close factual studies of nature. Here one can see a detailed study of leaves and rocks in the foreground with the Alpine panorama behind. His artistic development at this time is perhaps best summarised in his own words. In a letter to his mother he described the progress of his skills beyond factual copying. He could draw architecture ‘very nearly like an architect, and trees a great deal better than most botanists, and mountains rather better than most geologists’ (Modern Painters II, xxvi). The emphasis on accuracy of depiction in the manner of exacting professionals is striking.

Through the 1840s, Ruskin learnt to take the detailed study of nature itself as the source of all his landscape art, and he had the enthusiasm and resolve to persevere. In an 1847 letter he writes that ‘My eyes do not seem to serve me very well, but they are better than nine pairs out of ten, and I am very thankful to have such ...’ (Ruskin, The Letters 1827-1869 73). In contrast to his drawing masters like Harding, who, he felt, manipulated nature to produce pictures deemed conventionally pleasing, Ruskin brought out the beauty of nature as a living system. Naturally, his depictions of the Alps evolved and improved with maturity. With lifelong financial security and liberty for intellectual and creative aspirations Ruskin could concentrate on developing his technique in concurrence with the development of his ideas rather than persisting with prevailing notions of picturesque taste, as Walton emphasises in his important book on Ruskin’s drawings: ‘...Ruskin’s art shows development and change in a way that is probably unique among amateur artists, who are generally content to acquire a serviceable and pleasing style’ (3). By the late 1840s his water-colours were on a par with many contemporary professionals; indeed many believe he could easily have turned professional himself (Hewison, Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 147).

Ruskin continued to work on his landscape theory and his drawings during his 1849 tour of the continent where he produced drawings to illustrate the final three volumes of Modern Painters. The interruption between his studies of the Alpine aesthetic emphasis his diverse interests. His architectural research and the subsequent publication of The Seven Lamps of Architecture, dominated his time in the latter half of the 1840s. The Stones of Venice was written in the early 1850s between his research in the Alps in 1849 and the ensuing publication of the third and fourth volumes of Modern Painters in 1856.

In his artistic output of the Alps from his 1849 continental tour one can see a variety of emotions and influences acting on his depiction of the landscape. On a personal level, there is the personal strain of his relationship with his wife, who was sent home to Scotland when Ruskin undertook the tour with his parents. Effie is rarely mentioned in his diaries (one entry reads, ‘I am very late to-night, having been writing to Effie, and have little to note, except the wonderfully clear *eventail* structure of the Bouchard’ (Ruskin, Diaries 1848-73 394-5)). However, the resulting sober tone of much of this section of his diary indicates the new way in which he began to perceive the Alps coloured by personal dismay and an evolving and more troubled aesthetic. Mont Blanc, for instance, ‘looks like a heap of earth with four or five good spadefuls of fresh well beaten mortar splashed on the top and beginning to run down; or perhaps, in places where it is broken, more like a fresh, white, creamy cast of Plaster of Paris; it has exactly the texture and blunt kind of line ... I am beginning to be in doubt whether the Mont Blanc is a pretty thing, after all.’ (Ruskin, Diaries 1848-73 391-2) Interestingly, the two negative images used here are man-made objects: a building and an art object. Significantly, it would be human intervention in the Alps that caused Ruskin’s interests to diminish. The possibility is that Ruskin’s earlier

youthful enthusiasm for the Alps has been tainted by the events of his marriage. There are also fears of his own mortality following his illness caused by stress that severely debilitated him at the start of the decade. All this seems to affect both his perception of the Alps and the way he is able to interpret it artistically. His diary entry from June 3rd 1849, recording his journey to Chamonix, reveals these concerns:

I walked this afternoon up to Blonay, very happy and yet full of some sad thoughts: how perhaps I should not be again among those lovely scenes, as I was now and had ever been, a youth with his parents – it seemed that the sunset of to-day sank upon me like the departure of youth.

First I had a hot march among the vines, and between their dead stone walls. Once or twice I flagged a little, and began to think it tiresome; then I put my *mind* into the scene, instead of suffering the body only to make report of it; and looked at it with the possession – taking grasp of the imagination – the true one. It gilded all the dead walls, and I felt a charm in every vine tendril that hung over them. It required an effort to maintain the feeling – it was poetry while it lasted – and I felt that it was only while under it that one could draw or invent or give glory to any part of such a landscape. I repeated ‘I am in *Switzerland*’ over and over again, till the name brought back the true group of associations – and I felt I had a soul, like my boy’s soul, once again. I have not insisted enough on this source of all great contemplative art. The whole scene without it was but sticks and stones and steep dusty road (Ruskin, Diaries 1848-73 381).

Whilst previously, Ruskin had struggled artistically to recreate the powerful effect that the sublime landscape had had on him, here he finds it difficult to conjure up the very emotions that had so transfigured him in the past. As his time in Chamonix concludes, he writes: ‘I have had a most unlucky day, vainly trying to finish my brown study from the window; I think, however, I see my way out of it now, and I wish I had a few more such, but really my Chamouni work has been most disappointing to me – and humiliating. I can’t do it yet, but I have the imagination of it in me, and *will* do it, some day’ (Ruskin, Diaries 1848-73 404). The work he is referring to here is his pen and sepia interpretation of the Glacier des Bossons in Chamonix, (Ruskin, The Ruskin Art Collection at Oxford, plate 29). According to his diary, this work dominated all other attempts at drawing during his time in Chamonix that year. It also reveals the longstanding debate within his artistic theory and practice concerning the reconciliation of his own visionary style and his wish to depict nature with scientific accuracy. Significantly, with respect to his emotional state at the time, Ruskin chose to draw the Glacier des Bossons with a strict and rigorous attention to detail (see figure 8 below). The angles and perspective are all worked methodically and the process appears laborious. The result is a work of technical and realistic accuracy including the application of light and shade, but one that suggests some struggle and, indeed, repression.

Ruskin’s interest in the factual accuracy of his drawings was central in this period. Hilton notes how ‘he made notes on the angles of various peaks, examined the flora, analysed the geology, ascertained the movements of glaciers, watched the streams and clouds. Some of this material was gathered into the diary, but many other notebooks were used’ (134-5). Following from his investigations of the scale of mountains in perspective, and the landscape of Turner’s ‘Pass of Gotthard’ in particular, Ruskin was now producing technical drawings of the Alpine scenery to elucidate the complex and often technical

matter of conveying its size and presence. At the same time, he was also taking daguerreotypes of the landscape, a method about which he had mixed feelings. He praised its ability to capture the facts of a landscape: ‘among all the mechanical poison this terrible 19th century [sic] has poured on men, it has given us at any rate *one* antidote, the Daguerreotype. It’s a most blessed invention, that’s what it is. ... It is such a happy thing to be able to depend on *everything* [sic] – to be sure not only that the painter is perfectly honest, but that he *can’t* make a mistake’ (Ruskin, Ruskin in Italy 225). However, even this was not completely reliable. In Modern Painters IV, he complained that distant rocks of the upper peaks of Alpine mountains came out an erroneous ‘coal-black’ (293). They could certainly not have substituted for the variety of tones that Ruskin used in his books, and without which Modern Painters could not have been written (Whitehouse 18). However, the most fundamental drawback of daguerreotypes for Ruskin was that there was no way to gauge responses to the scenery. The link between artist and subject had vanished, and with it the more visionary elements of his aesthetic theory:

There is one thing wanting in all the doing of these men, and that is the very virtue by which the work of human mind chiefly rises above that of the daguerreotype or calotype, or any other mechanical means that ever have [sic] been or may be invented, Love. There is no evidence of their [sic] ever having gone to nature with any thirst, or received from her such emotion as could make them, even for an instant, lose sight of themselves; there is in them neither earnestness nor humility; there is no simple or honest record of any single truth; none of the plain words or straight efforts that men speak and make when they once feel (Modern Painters I, 169).



Fig. 8. John Ruskin, 'Glacier des Bossons, Chamonix' (c.1849).

Ruskin's output of drawings during the 1849 was prolific, and served to illustrate many of the ideas he set down in his discourse on mountain beauty. Hilton notes that 'apart from sketched memoranda Ruskin made forty-seven drawings which were highly enough finished for him to catalogue, a rare procedure with his own work. This was the last time that he was to draw landscape consistently for a number of years' (134). Ruskin used the drawings made on this tour of the Alps to illustrate specific components of mountain structure that are explored in five detailed chapters in Modern Painters IV, namely aiguilles, crests, precipices, banks and stones. A trip to Zermatt to study the Matterhorn, for example, enabled him to write the chapter on precipices. In these chapters, Ruskin uses diagrams, line drawings, and detailed sketches to convey ideas such as the steepness of mountain cliffs, the curvature of summits, and the effects of erosion. Of crested mountains, for example, after a protracted and complex analysis featuring numerous diagrams he

concludes that ‘we shall ... find good and intelligent mountain-drawing distinguished from bad mountain-drawing, by an indication, first, of the artist’s recognition of some great harmony among the summits, and of their tendency to throw themselves into tidal waves, closely resembling those of the sea itself’ (264). A detailed examination and understanding of the underlying anatomy of the mountain, in other words the geological matter, structure and processes, was necessary, Ruskin felt, down to the smallest detail. Only then can one produce the quality of paintings epitomised by Turner. Ruskin praises him over Claude for realising that ‘it is not the *outline* of a stone, however true, that will make it solid or heavy; it is the interior markings, and thoroughly understood perspectives of its sides’ (Modern Painters IV 372-3). Once more Ruskin uses a variety of different drawings to illustrate the point.

In prose, when not focusing on such painstaking detail, the rich, eloquent and passionate wording that Ruskin used to describe the Alpine mountains could match the pictorial representations of Turner. Whilst Ruskin’s own drawings and water-colours never reached the ambitions he established in his writing, ultimately because of his lack of artistic imagination, they were nevertheless an integral part of his vision of the Alps. Indeed any lack of imagination in Ruskin’s Alpine art was reconciled with an integrity with respect to detail that was not compromised. Here Ruskin’s art attained a level that matched the aims he laid down to instruct amateur artists in their depiction of landscape and nature. In his introduction to The Elements of Drawing, Cook claims that by the late 1850s Ruskin was ‘the acknowledged chief among contemporary writers on art; he was the only critic who had the will – perhaps also the only one who has been competent – to translate his principles into practice, and teach with the pencil and brush the system he advocated with the pen’ (xvi). In terms of depicting Alpine topography, which is integral to this work,

Ruskin had attained a level of proficiency in his own art that was compatible with the aims he laid down for the amateur artist and their depiction of this landscape as well as at least one half of his own theoretical aesthetic.

3. Smith's Mont Blanc

3.1 'Mr. Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc'

Albert Smith's Mont Blanc shows at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly ran from 1852 until 1858. At the height of their popularity in December 1854, Charles Dickens remarked on the new accessibility of the Alps during an annual dinner to mark the anniversary of the foundation of the Commercial Travellers' Schools. Smith was the guest of honour and when proposing his health, Dickens stated that:

So many travellers have been going up Mont Blanc lately, both in fiction and in fact, that I have recently heard of a Company to employ Sir Joseph Paxton to take it down. Only one of those travellers, however, has been enabled to bring Mont Blanc to Piccadilly, and, by his own ability and good humour, to thaw its eternal ice and snow, so that the most timid ladies may ascend it twice a day 'during the holidays' without the smallest danger or fatigue (Dickens, The Speeches of Charles Dickens 166).

This light-hearted speech exposes the keen interest that was developing in Britain to conquer the Alpine mountains during this period, inspired in part by the unparalleled success of Smith's shows. Whilst Smith was scaling Mont Blanc in 1851, many in England were visiting the Great Exhibition (designed by Paxton), an emblem of Victorian industrial success, which celebrated British economic, military and industrial superiority (Wilson 138). Smith's shows, beginning the following year, capitalised on the festive and

triumphant mood of a nation that turned its attention to the natural world with a desire to conquer its most difficult terrains. Successful negotiation of Mont Blanc and other Alpine peaks became associated with ideas of patriotism and national identity. Following Smith's expedition, The Times patriotically stated that 'this successful ascent by four Englishmen turns the scale in favour of the English; the French tourists having been hitherto accustomed to point with satisfaction to the fact that more of their own countrymen than of ours have succeeded in reaching the top of the king of the Alps. The present forms the 25th ascent – the first dating in 1787' ('Another Account' 6).

Albert Smith's own successful climb of Mont Blanc (with three companions and an entourage of local assistants) marked a period when the Alps were being appreciated as not just an arena for scientific research and Romantic inspiration but also as a 'playground' for mountaineering and recreation; as in the present day, 'the time had come for the sportsman to climb from the vales to the peaks, if he liked, for sheer pleasure' (Robertson 119). However, despite Robertson's assertion, the Alps were not solely the province of men. As Ring points out, the first woman to ascend Mont Blanc was Maria Paradis, a chambermaid from Chamonix, in 1809, followed by a French noblewoman Mademoiselle Henriette d'Angeville in 1838. From the 1850s, the surge in English interest in mountain climbing saw more women and more ascending the Alpine peaks, contesting Dickens's supposition that women's association with mountaineering could only be achieved via Smith's London shows. At the same time, as the 1850s progressed, an increasing number of predominately Englishmen, inspired by the interest in the Alps generated by Smith, attempted to ascend Mont Blanc to the extent that in 1854 'the route to the summit was becoming as crowded as Piccadilly' (Fitzsimons, The Baron 133). Two years later The Times complained that 'at

present a perfect Mont Blanc mania pervades the minds of our fellow-countrymen' ('Mont Blanc has become a positive nuisance' 8).

In August 1851, Smith travelled to Chamonix with the aim of ascending the highest peak. The rain and heavy fog which delayed the expedition eventually cleared. On the evening before the ascent Smith and his companions 'walked about Chamouni [sic]... with heads erect, and an imposing step. People pointed at us, and came from the hotels to see what we were like. For that evening, at least, we were evidently great persons' (Smith, Mont Blanc 206). During the 1850s, Chamonix inhabitants fêted Smith for the popularity he brought to the town bringing with it dramatic increases in the number of English tourists. The quotation reflects an English mood of both optimism and superiority, and a swaggering confidence that no natural barrier is insurmountable. Despite not having 'undergone the least training for my work' (202), there is the confidence that this Englishman will succeed.

In his account of his climb, both in Mont Blanc and in his stage presentations, Smith focuses predominately on his physical relationship with the Alps. This is in marked contrast to the Romantic poets and those like Ruskin who focused on the effect the Alps had on their eyes, minds and imaginations. In the build-up to the climb, Smith emphasises the provisions that he, his three companions, and their sixteen guides and sixteen porters would take on their expedition. The list includes forty-six fowl, four legs of lamb, four shoulders of mutton, six pieces of veal and one of beef, twenty loaves and ten cheeses in addition to numerous bottles of wine for a climb lasting only two days. Schama writes, with direct reference to Smith's inventory, that '...in contrast to the feeble guts and nervy imagination of the Romantics, the Victorians wanted to advertise the imperial splendor of their bowels.

They had a constitution, political and alimentary, for this kind of thing: the stomach to take on the world' (499). In marked contrast to Ruskin, where the focus is specifically on the object of sight, here the eyes are turned firmly on those that are doing the climbing. The celebrity is now the mountaineer and not the mountain, and there is a switch from the picturesque sublime to sublime danger. Smith's actual ascent of Mont Blanc would be as flamboyant and celebratory as the shows that would follow.

In the chapter 'The Night-March on the Grand Plateau – the Mur de la Cote – Victory!' in Mont Blanc, Smith charts the final ascent to the summit following a detailed account of the potential dangers and threats that have accompanied the group. Many previous attempts had been made to conduct scientific research at altitude on Mont Blanc (the most famous at the time being de Saussure who recorded his account in Voyages dans les Alpes). In Smith's Mont Blanc, however, the emphasis centres not on the outcomes and results of the climb, but the very nature and difficulty of the expedition. In this, he was undoubtedly inspired by The Peasants of Chamouni (1823), which charted Dr Hamel's tragic attempt at the summit. Nearing the top, Smith refers specifically to the gulf into which an avalanche had swept Dr Hamel's guides. He writes: 'In fact, although physically the easiest, this was the most treacherous part of the entire ascent. A flake of snow or a chip of ice, whirled by the wind from the summit, and increasing as it rolled down the top of the mountain, might at length thunder on to our path, and sweep everyone before it into the crevice' (Smith, Mont Blanc 251-252). Undoubtedly the hazards that Smith and the others faced were extreme. In his book and stage shows, his successful climb was juxtaposed with unsuccessful attempts, including that of an Irishman, apparently struck with altitude sickness, who was found by Smith 'lying on the snow, vomiting frightfully, with

considerable haemorrhage from the nose' (253). The eventual success by the Englishman is therefore a moment to celebrate:

We made no 'scientific research,' – the acute and honest De Saussure had done everything that was wanted by the world of that kind; and those who have since worried themselves during the ascent about 'elevations' [altitude effects] have done nothing to what he told us sixty years ago. But we had beheld all the wonders and horrors of the glacier world in their wildest features; we had gazed on scenery of such fantastic yet magnificent nature as we might not hope to see again; we had laboured with all the nerve and energy we could command to achieve a work of downright unceasing danger and difficulty, which not more than one-half of those who try are able to accomplish, and the triumph of which is, even now, shared but by a comparative handful of travellers and we had succeeded! (Smith, Mont Blanc 271-2).

This description, which is followed by an engraving of the successful climbers on the summit, expresses the English trend that would expand rapidly during the 1850s where climbers ascend Mont Blanc and, increasingly, other peaks in the Alpine range with the clear aim of conquering, publishing their account and contributing to the pervasive ideology of British eminence.

Despite the dangers of melting ice and the detailed description of the hazards which faced them on the ascent, Smith's return journey is essentially one of celebration and 'great amusement':

Sliding, tumbling, and staggering about, setting all the zigzags at defiance, and making direct short cuts from one to the other – sitting down at the top of the snow slopes, and launching ourselves off, feet first, until, not very clever at self-guidance, we turned right round and were stopped by our own heads: all this was capital fun (Smith, Mont Blanc 273-4).

The company soon arrive back in Chamonix where ‘the whole village turned out to meet us, and a little fete was prepared ... in honour of our safe return. Guns were fired, and wine distributed, and at night the bridge was illuminated with pine branches (Smith, ‘Ascent’ 6). Smith relished the attention he received from the inhabitants. He was increasingly lauded by them on subsequent trips to Chamonix during the 1850s, and became an extremely popular household figure and active participant in the affairs of the town. By the time of his climb, Smith had already gained notable success through his show ‘The Overland Mail’ which charted his experiences travelling around the Middle-East. Therefore his ascent would have attracted significant publicity. This was aided by the fact he was greeted back at his hotel by the ex-prime minister Sir Robert Peel. Peel’s cousin had joined Smith for the climb and Peel, who had arrived in Chamonix just after they started their ascent, had been watching them during the night through his telescope (Fitzsimons, The Baron 121).

Smith soon finished his account of the climb, a copy of which was speedily sent to The Times. Schama (500) argues that, given the speed with which the narrative reached the newspaper (it was published only eight days after his arrival back in Chamonix from Mont Blanc), it is highly probable that most was written before the ascent, especially as Smith already had an intimate knowledge of the Alps and had written about them in works such as

Christopher Tadpole. Certainly Smith was intimate with the mountain through earlier experience and his extensive reading of climbing narratives, but the brevity and the factual nature of the article does suggest that it was written *after* his ascent, and a similar short account also appeared in The Illustrated London News. He was now able to combine his previous knowledge of the Alps with his personal experience of Mont Blanc to present a fashionable and highly popular account of his adventures.

Smith climbed Mont Blanc once and only once. He expressed no desire to climb the white mountain again, nor any other peak, although he did return to Grands Mulets in 1853 (where he slept before his final assault on Mont Blanc) to inaugurate the opening of a hut to save future climbers from spending the night outdoors. Despite having had an attraction for the Alps since early childhood, his main vocation and aim in adulthood was to present his continental experiences to an English audience using every means to ensure popular success. It was the celebrity that followed mountaineering success, rather than the climbing itself that mattered. According to The Times, Smith's climb had been 'a fruitful subject of gossip' ('Mr Albert Smith's Entertainment': 8) and clearly there was interest in hearing more of his exploits. Seven months after his climb 'The Ascent of Mont Blanc' opened at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly on 15th March 1852. By the end of the second season in August 1853 Smith had already made £17,000 from 193,754 spectators who had listened to his exploits 471 times (Fitzsimons, The Baron 126). He would eventually give two thousand shows by the time the final season closed in 1858, earning him £30,000 and the accolade of instigating the most popular and successful entertainment of the nineteenth century (Fitzsimons, The Baron 39).

An early review in The Illustrated London News concluded that ‘the whole was highly interesting, and thrown off in a genial mood, characteristic, and full of *bonhomie*, while the vivacity of the speaker never wearied either in himself or his hearers. The performance must become highly popular’ (‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc’ 243). The popularity of the shows lay not just in the subject matter and the dioramas of the Alpine scenes painted by William Beverley, but also the personality and stage performance of Smith himself. Henry James saw the show as a boy in 1858 and remembered him as the ‘big, bearded, rattling, chattering, mimicking Albert Smith’ (James, Henry James: Autobiography 179). Smith was a showman and from the beginning ensured that the programme was entitled ‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc’. By appropriating and branding the mountain for himself, and publicising it as such, Smith ensured that the two became synonymous in London during the 1850s. Additionally, as Kember points out, Smith ‘instituted an authoritative narrative for mountain climbing: a quasi-scientific expertise, encouraging audiences to trust in his personal narrative of ascending Mont Blanc at a time when few had climbed the mountain’ (30). This was certainly the case in the 1850s, although increasing knowledge and understanding of climbing in the Alps, following the establishment of the Alpine Club in 1857, ensured that the style and content of Smith’s shows became increasingly old-fashioned by the time of his death in 1860.

The success of the shows lay not least in Smith’s own oratorical skill in describing and accentuating the dangers whilst climbing the mountains. By the fourth season (1854) and the thousandth time of narrating the event, the ascent of Mont Blanc still remained the main attraction of the show, despite the fact that the number of successful ascents was increasing each year (Fitzsimons, The Baron 135). In his narration of his climb, Smith could evoke a language that matched the glamour and colours of Beverley’s dioramas. The

Illustrated London News recorded a portion of Smith's speech describing the evening camped at Grands Mulets at 3000m. It is interesting to observe some lurid, rather down-market Ruskinian touches to the style:

The sun at length went down behind the Aiguille du Gôte, and then, for two hours, a scene of such wild and wondrous beauty – of such inconceivable and unearthly splendour – burst upon me ... At first everything appeared one uniform creation of burnished gold, so brightly dazzling, that, now our veils were removed, the eye could scarcely bear the splendour. As the twilight gradually crept over the lower world, the glow became still more vivid; and presently, as the blue mists rose in the valleys, the tops of the higher mountains looked like islands rising from a filmy ocean – an archipelago of gold. By degrees, this metallic lustre was softened into tints – first orange, and then bright, transparent crimson, along the horizon, rising through the different hues, with prismatic regularity, until, immediately above us, the sky was a deep blue, merging towards the east into glowing violet (“Mr Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc.” 291).

Smith's lecture was synchronised with an appropriate diorama that used lighting to reflect the myriad colours described by him. The colours here are, indeed, very striking at a time when most (though not all) illustrations in books were in black and white, including the one of the Grands Mulets by William Beverley that accompanied this article in The Illustrated London News (see fig 7). The exact vocabulary used in this passage was replicated in Mont Blanc the following year. This article in the News declares Smith's speech to be a work of art and an eloquent treatment of the sublime, although in the book the evocative description

is surrounded by less inspirational moments, including ‘racing ... empty bottles down the glacier. We flung them off the rock as far as we were able, and then watched their course’ (Smith, Mont Blanc 235). In truth Smith never really desired to convey a sublime idea on of the Alps or discuss them in relation to the hold they had on the imaginations of Romantic writers of the previous generation. Instead, he was keen to keep his audience entertained by combining humour, beauty, exhilaration and playfulness.

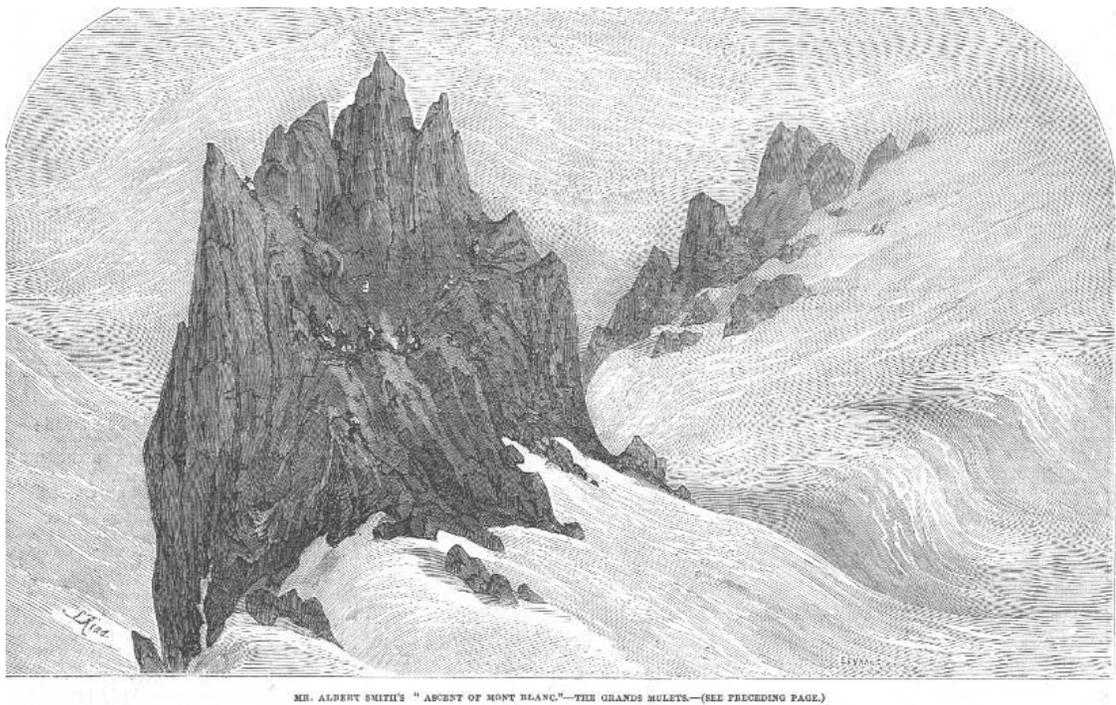


Fig. 9. William Beverley, ‘The Grands Mulets’ (1851-2)

Smith’s oratorical narrative was very similar to his written version in Mont Blanc.

On stage he

described the departure from Chamonix; the dangers of the crevasses on the Glacier des Bossons; the festivities on the Grands Mulets; the ghostly march

over the Grand Plateau by moonlight; and the terrors of the Mur de la Cote. ... The audience were enthralled by Smith's description of the hazards of the ascent, borne out so well by Beverley's pictures. ... Smith spoke of his exhaustion below the summit, and of his joy when he finally reached the highest point in Europe. Here the audience applauded (Fitzsimons, The Baron 124).

In a defence of Smith, his good friend Edmund Yates – writing twenty-six years after his death – asserts that ‘the story, told conversationally, with no attempt at exaggeration, was nevertheless a thrilling one ...’ (640). Despite the hazards involved in such an ascent, Smith did accentuate the difficulties involved matched by dioramas that exaggerated the steepness and scale of the mountain, as Schama (501) and others have noted. In the most notable instance, Smith claims the Mur de la Cote to be:

... an all but perpendicular iceberg. At one point you can reach it from the snow, but immediately after you begin to ascend it obliquely, there is nothing below but a chasm in the ice more frightful than anything yet passed. Should the foot slip, or the baton give way, there is no chance for life - you would glide like lightening from one frozen crag to another, and finally be dashed to pieces, hundreds and hundreds of feet below in the horrible depths of the glacier (Smith, Mont Blanc 260-61).

In the 1860s, climbers now more familiar with the mountain observed that, had Smith actually lost his footing, he would have been ‘perfectly safe’ and would land ‘on soft snow at the bottom’ (Mathews 189).

Smith's alpine descriptions were essentially designed to entertain and thrill an audience unfamiliar with the terrain; an audience who would never see the Alps themselves, or at best would travel to Chamonix and around the base of the mountain, possibly using the advice given in Mont Blanc on travel and accommodation. In Little Dorrit, Dickens uses a similar language when describing the travels made by the Dorrit family through the Alps. Dickens starting writing the novel only five months after his toast to Smith at the Commercial Travellers' Schools dinner in 1854, and he would have been fully aware of the success generated by Smith's shows. At the beginning of the second book Dickens describes the Dorrits' ascent of the Great St Bernard Pass, and evokes a sinister and threatening atmosphere as the family reach high altitude:

As the heat of the glowing day ... was changed to the searching cold of the frosty rarefied night air at a great height, so the fresh beauty of the lower journey had yielded to barrenness and desolation. A craggy track, up which the mules, in single file, scrambled and turned from block to block, as though they were ascending the broken staircase of a gigantic ruin, was their way now. No trees were to be seen, nor any vegetable growth, save a poor brown scrubby moss, freezing in the chinks of rock. Blackened skeleton arms of wood by the wayside pointed upward toward to the convent, as if the ghosts of former travellers overwhelmed by the snow, haunted the scene of their distress. Icicle-hung caves and cellars built for refuges from sudden storms, were like so many whispers of the perils of the place; never-resting wreaths and mazes of mist wandered about, hunted by a moaning wind; and

snow, the besetting danger of the mountain, against which all its defences were taken, drifted sharply down (418).

This scene essentially continues the theme of confinement and imprisonment that surrounds the Dorrit family which they cannot escape psychologically despite now having the material means to remove themselves from the Marshalsea prison. But the evocative and threatening imagery associated with travelling at high altitude would also have been appreciated by many readers through their familiarity with the content of Smith's shows. Dickens could also draw on his own Alpine experience having ascended the Great St Bernard Pass whilst living in Lausanne. He used the Alps in a journey in his novel topically at a time when such scenes were firmly in many readers' consciousnesses, and depicted them in a very specific way.

In a similar vein, Smith's shows were much more than a mere ascent of the mountain. In one segment of his previous show 'The Overland Mail' (1850-1) which describes a trip made by Smith from London to Suez, a diorama of the Egyptian pyramids is shown. The Illustrated London News records Smith's observation that 'The view from the summit of the Pyramids has often been described – the scene which takes place on the summit has found fewer recorders' ('Mr Albert Smith's Entertainment: The Overland Mail' 413). Smith then describes the hustle of the crowd and various characters he meets. The same is true of the Mont Blanc shows. On his travels through Europe, Smith was actively curious about the various people he met and would use these as inspiration for comic characters to be described in the build-up to the narrative of his ascent. This was achieved either through impersonation or through song. Characters included two old English ladies who enjoyed their trips through Switzerland by pulling up the blind of their carriage every

time they came near a precipice; a Mrs Seymour ‘who had lost her black box, and which seems always to have followed her to every place she visited about half an hour after her departure’, and an American tourist who believed Byron and the Prisoner of Chillon to be the same person. (Byron wrote the poem about the sixteenth century Genoais prisoner following a trip to the Château de Chillon on the banks of Lake Geneva in 1816) (‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc’ 243). Such characters echo those from a Venetian scene in Smith’s 1848 novel The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole where, when asked if she had read Byron’s ‘Childe Harold’, a Mrs Grudge replies “‘No, I can’t say I have ... I don’t care much about children when they’re not your own”” (229).

Other characters in Smith’s show included Mr Brown, a young English tourist in Paris attempting to order food in a restaurant. Smith’s impersonation of his attempts at French were extremely popular with the audience who ‘roared with laughter at the perplexity of Brown, with a phrase book in one hand and a list of strange dishes in the other’ (Fitzsimons, The Baron 124). In addition, Smith wrote and sang comic songs like ‘The Young English Traveller’ to enthusiastic crowds. He had a history of ridiculing various types of English characters in his series of ‘Natural Histories’ pamphlets published from 1847 (see pp. 9-10) which aimed ‘to expose, as simply and truthfully as we can, the foolish conventionalities of a large proportion of the middling classes of the present day, who believe that position is attained by climbing up a staircase of money-bags’ (Smith, The Natural History of Stuck-Up People vi). In his descriptions of characters in his Mont Blanc shows, Smith centred his satire on the ‘follies, absurdities, and, to put it mildly, the eccentricities’ of the English abroad (Yates 641). Despite Smith’s desire to appropriate foreign terrain, he ‘did not often extend this territorial objectification into parody of foreign races and cultures, but levelled a remarkably self-reflexive gaze back upon the English in

an increasingly accessible Europe' (Kember 31). This self-mockery works simultaneously with self-promotion as Smith's shows also display a patriotic celebration of the English 'conquest' of the Alps.

Smith's performance was influenced by the one-man entertainer Charles Mathews whom Smith had seen perform at aged eleven. Mathews would mimic and impersonate stereotypes from home and abroad by assuming their voices, and any distinctive facial expressions and manners (Fitzsimons, The Baron 101-2). Smith's success lay in combining the imitation of comic characters through facial features and voices in the style of Mathews with the air of refinement that Smith gave to his shows. Edmund Yates (whose father, Frederick Yates, was the best known imitator of Mathews) remarks:

For the entertainment let me start by stating that it was given from first to last in evening dress, and that, though various characters were introduced, there was no change of costume. Albert Smith had an horror of what he called the 'ducking down business,' the old-fashioned process of diving under the lecture table, and by rapid assumption of wig and costume, reappearing as someone else (640).

In evening attire, Smith gave a mannerly, punctual and respectable show that aimed to appeal to as broad a spectrum of the public as possible in a manner akin to his friend Dickens' public readings.

One of the reasons for the success of the Mont Blanc shows lies in their composite character, with Smith as the respectable, comical one-man show juxtaposed with the

diorama, which carried an historical association as a medium to instruct and educate. When reviewing the opening of Smith's season in 1852, The Times wrote:

The idea which Mr. Smith first adopted in describing the journey from London to Egypt – the idea of combining a series of pictures with a lecture that oscillated between the ordinary instructive and the “at homes” of the late Mr. Mathews – was most felicitous. By applying a talent for comic singing and recitation which few possess, and exercising a power of vivid description from a peculiar point of view, he was enabled to give his entertainment a character which at once distinguished it from the many geographical exhibitions now so prevalent, and was thus able to gratify two classes of visitors – the seekers of instruction, and the lovers of a hearty laugh. The same principle he has applied with success to his new subject (‘Mr. Albert Smith’s Entertainments’ 8).

One important feature of Smith's shows was the way that they were promoted. All posters and advertisements began with ‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent ...’ (see Fig. 8.) and, as the seasons of shows continued, their emphasis and popularity gradually moved away from Mont Blanc and its dioramic depiction to the narrator of continental excursions. The shows increasingly centred on Albert Smith as entertainer, personality and celebrity whose image appeared on posters and merchandise. One powerful influence on Smith was Phineas T. Barnum with whom he had had an inspiring conversation whilst travelling from Birmingham to Stratford in 1844 on what Smith described as ‘a go-a-head day with Barnum’ in an 1847 article in Bentley’s Miscellany. Barnum at the time was touring Europe (including the Egyptian Hall in London) exhibiting the six year old Charles

Sherwood Stratton, or ‘General Tom Thumb’ as he was popularly known, who was only 64cm tall. Smith hoped he would learn more about the ways Barnum successfully promoted himself and his acts. As a result of this meeting, Smith began to appreciate the significance of publicity and, helped by the advice given by Barnum, eventually turned his talents to show business, becoming the most successful showman in London during the 1850s (Fitzsimons, Barnum 165). Smith utilized this innovative publicity as his shows progressed from season to season. For the opening night of the third season in January 1854, Smith invited a number of celebrity guests to promote the show including Dr Joseph Hamel, whose story features in chapter 1.3, and John Auldjo, whose narrative of his 1827 ascent of Mont Blanc was described by Smith as ‘... the best of all that I have read’ (Smith, Mont Blanc 3). Smith repeated the promotional tactic for the opening day of future seasons.

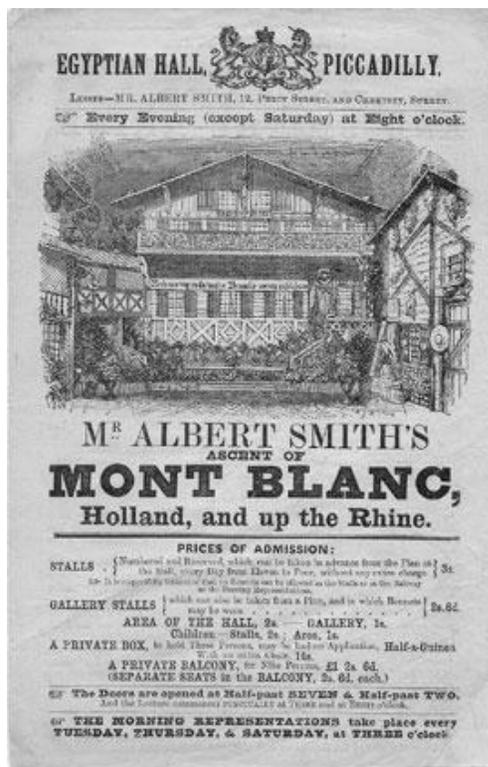


Fig. 10. Programme cover for ‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc’.

Smith also realised the need to keep the entertainment fresh. The first season of shows were modest in decoration with ‘the lecture-hall and proscenium of the occasional stage being ornamented with greenery and plants well calculated to remind the spectator of Chamouni’ (“Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc” 243). By the start of the second season the stage was ‘fitted up to represent parts of a Swiss village, with buildings of the actual size very carefully copied from Bernese models’, including the exterior of a two-storied Swiss chalet with balcony which was raised when the dioramas were shown and lowered again during the intervals’ (Yates 638). In addition to a small waterfall and a water wheel, to the left of the stage was an inn with a balcony that replicated a hotel balcony in Grindelwald. Beyond the inn the windows of a chalet formed a private box. In his autobiography, Henry James reminisces about sitting ‘in a sort of rustic balcony or verandah ... simulating the outer gallery of a Swiss cottage framed in creepers’ (James, Henry James: Autobiography 179).

Smith also made changes to the content of his narrative to encourage those who had already seen the show to make a return visit. Between each season Smith would travel to Chamonix by assorted routes in order to gain inspiration for new material for the next shows. Between the second and third season he ‘travelled to Chamonix by Strasbourg, so the route he now described was different from previous seasons. Beverley had painted some new views, fresh verses had been given to ‘The Young English Traveller’, and some new travelling acquaintances were encountered, but the more popular ones were retained’ (Fitzsimons, The Baron 131). Smith repeated the process at the end of the third season, in whose last show in September 1854, Smith made a speech, recording by The Times, where he talks of his plans before the beginning of the fourth season:

I have now closed the season, not because my friends had deserted me, but honestly for a short holyday [sic]. The pictures were getting worn out; the seats and carpets were getting worn out; and I was nearly worn out myself. I will start immediately for Chamouni, to see what fresh subjects of amusement or interest may be collected on the route, which will be entirely changed. Instead of the Paris and Strasburg line, I shall convey you to Switzerland by Amsterdam, Holland, and the Rhine, and thence by Berne to Geneva; and we shall stop, on our return, at Lyons and Paris (Smith, 'Mr Albert Smith' 10).

Smith had realised the importance of change to attract audiences to revisit the show whilst retaining a familiarity that audiences evidently appreciated. Thus, the emphasis can be seen as beginning to shift just as much towards the travels to and from Mont Blanc as on the ascent itself. As interest in hearing about the climb waned, Smith concentrated more on the characters he met on his travels, creating new songs like 'Murray's handbook' and placing his most popular fictional characters in new predicaments (Thorington 188-9).

Keen to exploit the popularity of the shows, Smith realised early on the potential of merchandising, branding and self-promotion by selling souvenirs and gifts that exploited his stirring account of his ascent. By the second season there was a souvenir shop selling sledges, alpenstocks and chamois horns. To capitalise on the Christmas period that coincided with the opening of the fifth season in 1855, two toys could be bought in both the foyer of the Egyptian Hall and in shops across the country. The first was a set of seventeen stereoscopic views entitled 'Mr Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc in Miniature', whilst the second, 'The Game of the Ascent of Mont Blanc', was akin to snakes and ladders. From

its early success, criticism had been levelled at Smith that his interest in Mont Blanc was purely mercantile, not least from his former employers at Punch where he had been unpopular with his colleagues and was finally dismissed in 1844. In Mont Blanc Smith responded by emphasising his life-long interest in Mont Blanc and the mountains. He asserted that ‘my attachment to Chamouni was no whim of a season; that my venture arose from no mere craving for temporary notoriety; and that those who chose to attack me, in print, on my return from its achievement, in such a wanton and perfectly uncalled-for manner, knew nothing at all about the manner’ (47). Nevertheless Smith did endeavour to maintain his celebrity status as the true authority on Mont Blanc, not least through the fashionable Mont Blanc (1853) published at a time when ‘the illustrated book and magazine, together with the pictorial print, represented [a] ... source of visual stimulus to a public eager for self-improvement and amusement at the same time. The steel engraving, developed for commercial use in the 1820s but made cheaper and better by electrotyping about 1840 was well suited to the new mass market in travel and topographical books and prints; these, as well as reproductions of popular paintings and drawings, were sold in vast quantities in the 1840s and 1850s’ (Booth, 7).

Interest in Smith’s account of Mont Blanc began to wane by the time the sixth season arrived in November 1856 and Smith actually omitted his narrative of the ascent to concentrate on his travels around Europe. He wrote new songs and developed new characters in an attempt to retain the appeal of the show whilst Mont Blanc itself only appeared in the interval as a silent display of William Beverley’s dioramas. Nevertheless Smith’s shows had until then been unprecedented in their popular appeal, amplified by Smith’s awareness of publicity and promotion, and an understanding of the audience’s desires and expectations. As The Times astutely pointed out: ‘Mr Albert Smith knows the

interest which attaches to a personal narrative ... it is impossible not to feel that without him the King of the Alps would not draw many visitors to the Egyptian Hall. He has, in truth, identified himself with Mont Blanc, and no Londoner can think of its snow-capped summit without seeing our adventurous author serenely seated on its loftiest apex' ('Ascent of Mont Blanc' 8).

3.2 William Beverley and the Mont Blanc shows.

William Beverley's visual accompaniment to Albert Smith's narrative was a vital component of the success of the Mont Blanc shows during the 1850s. He frequently travelled with Smith through Europe to draw sketches of famous cities and landscapes that would become sources for the large-scale paintings used for the dioramas, many of which he undertook personally. The popularity of these images coincided with a decade that was 'a period of intense activity for the visual economy as a whole, with exhibitions and exhibitors increasing in numbers' (Hewison, Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 15), including the Great Exhibition and the early years of photography – all of which increased interest in the foreign and the exotic. Since the late eighteenth century the Alps had been a popular visual source of inspiration recreated in paintings and panoramas, and later in dioramas, magazines, travel guidebooks and photographs, inspired in part by the newly-founded interest in the mountain aesthetic by both Romantic writers and scientists. However, much of this visual reproduction captured the Alps both from afar and from below with the spectator as a distant observer. Beverley's dioramas, inspired and influenced by Smith's interpretation of his climb, brought a sense of intimacy and interaction where the audience could experience the sensation of following Smith's ascent at close quarters.

The Alps were slowly becoming more accessible to a broader class of people with the expansion of the railway, but during the popularity of the Mont Blanc shows they still remained a sight that few could actually see and far fewer could attempt to scale. The dioramas used for the Mont Blanc shows therefore provided the opportunity to experience grand, seemingly three-dimensional scenes from high on the mountain whilst lighting effects gave the illusion of time passing and weather changing. The spectator was therefore

immersed in an inhospitable, cold, foreign climate far away from the London streets and the increasing, urbanizing effects of the industrial revolution. As Kember writes:

the wanderer of the city street could be distracted from his own adventure by the interposition of visual and narrative regimes of adventure on a monumental scale. In London and Paris especially, the development of elaborate ... visual spectacles such as the panorama or the Diorama ... allowed citizens imaginatively to escape their increasingly crowded and demotic environment (25).

Beverley's dioramas were crucial to Smith's shows and allowed an interaction with the Alps that was new and appealing, especially for those who yearned to scale and conquer their summits. Irrespective of the accuracy of the paintings in their representation of the mountain, they brought to a wide London public a new perspective on the Alpine aesthetic. The sense of challenge, danger and ultimate reward from scaling Mont Blanc, celebrated in both the narrative and the visuals, encouraged many more to undertake the climb than had done so before. Before Smith's shows, there was less than one ascent a year on Mont Blanc. By the time Smith's Mont Blanc shows closed for the last time in 1858 this had risen to between twenty and thirty (Hansen 300).

William Beverley (1810?-1889) had a long-standing working partnership with Smith that was formed long before their successes of the 1850s. Before the Mont Blanc shows, he had provided the scenic ornamentation for Smith's shows at the Lyceum. In the mid-1840s these included the scenery for Smith's production of Whittington and his Cat and Cinderella, as well as Smith's adaptation of Dickens' Christmas stories The Cricket on

the Hearth and The Battle of Life. Perhaps of more significance as a precursor to the Mont Blanc shows were Beverley's paintings of scenes from Egypt and the Nile that provided the dioramas for Smith's The Overland Mail. Fitzsimons writes that this show 'artfully compounded two distinct classes of entertainment – the instructive diorama and the comic one-man show – and the resulting *mélange* was so popular with his audience that he used the same formula for his other entertainments, Mr Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc and Mont Blanc to China' (The Baron 97). The 'instructive' element is significant. The popularity of panoramas and dioramas lay in their ability to replicate a landscape or scene from history that the audiences believed exactly matched the reality, had they been there to observe it. The spectator therefore believed he or she is seeing something of informative value. This was heightened if the paintings were of a foreign environment and culture.

In August 1851, Beverley travelled with Smith to the Alps to sketch Chamonix and Mont Blanc as well as scenes that chronicled their journey through Europe. Many were done in pencil, with a hint of wash or ink (Thorington 231). These provided the inspiration for the dioramas to accompany Smith's entertainment and included the backdrop to Smith's comic narratives of the British abroad as well as his account of his climb. One can gain a sense of the range of paintings that accompanied Smith's lecture from an article 'Mr Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc' in The Illustrated London News of 6th March 1852, just before the opening night:

The lecture will be illustrated by a brilliant series of *Dioramic Views*, painted expressly from original sketches by *Mr. William Beverley*, who accompanied Mr. Smith to Chamouni last Autumn. They will comprise of Geneva, from the Hôtel des Bergues, with the Ile Jean Jacques Rousseau,

and the Mole, Salève and Mont Blanc in the distance; the Castle of Chillon from the heights between Vevay and Villeneuve; Martigny, in the Vallais; the Convent of the Great St. Bernard at nightfall; the Interior of the Avalanche Deadhouse, on the St. Bernard; the valley of Chamouni, from the Col De Balme pass, with distant View of Mont Blanc, the Aiguilles, the Brevent, and the Glacier des Bossons; the main street of the Village of Chamouni, between the Hôtel de Londres and the Hôtel de l'Union; the Departure of the party; the Cascade des Pèlerins; Commencement of the Ascent; the Pierre Pointue; Pierre à l'Echelle, and approach to the Glacier des Bossons; crevice on the Glacier du Tacconay; the Grands Mulets Rocks by moonlight, with the crevice in front, in which Dr. Hamel's party perished in 1820; hazardous ascent of the Mur de la Côte, and approach to the summit of Mont Blanc; Court-yard of the Hôtel de Londres at Chamouni, with return of the travellers; Half-way Home – Interior of a first-class Parisian Café (190).

Interestingly, many of these places have popular literary associations. The Grands Mulets rocks, the scene of the avalanche incident, were described in The Peasants of Chamouni, a book both Smith and Ruskin read as children. In addition to scenes associated with Rousseau and his novel Julie, there is also the Castle of Chillon and its connection with the popular poem by Byron. The dioramas did not show a logical progression through France and Switzerland to Chamonix, indeed the Convent of the Great St. Bernard in reality requires a significant detour. However, Smith's fascination with the place as expressed in The Struggles and Adventures of Christopher Tadpole ensured the inclusion of the convent, especially when its namesake dog was incorporated into the Mont Blanc shows at the

beginning of the third season. However, there was continuity in Smith's narrative. In his previous show 'The Overland Mail', the dioramas had portrayed different landscapes one by one. Though lighting was used to depict time passing, the paintings were fixed. The Times reported that:

His skies are remarkable for transparency, his distances are always conceived with a true feeling for atmosphere, and the figures in his foregrounds are admirably brought out. A picture of the Nile, with a 'kandjia' or native boat, upon it, is a perfect specimen of scenic art. The views are separate from each other, not connected as in other moving dioramas, and hence we would suggest that in future exhibitions the curtain should be lowered between each scene ('Mr Albert Smith's Entertainment.' 29 May 1850).

In the Mont Blanc shows however the canvas rolled vertically from top to bottom of the screen portraying the climbers making their ascent whilst lighting gave the impression of sunsets and nightfall. This allowed the audience to become more involved in the climb especially when accompanied by Smith's detailed and graphic commentary.

Beverley did not join Smith on his climb; indeed just before the ascent Smith gave him money and some personal possessions in case he did not return (Mathews 185), so his paintings of the ascent of Mont Blanc were based on second-hand testimony. Likewise, Beverley's sketches from the 1850s depicting scenes high on Mont Blanc, which were used for the paintings in the Egyptian Hall, suggest that he also used other print sources for inspiration. One sketch of the summit used for a diorama in a later season of shows was a

mirror copy of an illustration from an 1853 expedition up Mont Blanc by a party whom Smith had accompanied as far as the Grands Mulets (Thorington 233). Smith himself would also have undoubtedly worked with Beverley to ensure that the paintings on Mont Blanc matched his description of the difficulties faced on the climb (Thorington 234-5) and that they recreated the sense of danger and fear that Smith wished to encourage.

This is however not to denigrate the ability of Beverley as one of leading scene painters of the nineteenth century on a par with Clarkson Stanfield, the marine artist (whom Ruskin praised for his treatment of the sea and cloud (Modern Painters I 479n)) who began his career producing highly regarded dioramas at the Drury Lane Theatre. In 1851, Beverley had assisted in the painting of the largest diorama of the time, which depicted Jerusalem and the Holy Land from original sketches by the artist William Bartlett. Whilst Beverley regularly exhibited oil landscapes at the Royal Academy, he was also the foremost scenic artist for pantomime (Booth 9). His work drew upon a tradition of spectacle and was of increasing technical sophistication. This working across high and popular culture was not uncommon in the mid-nineteenth century. Turner himself was another example of one who worked in both spheres. It is worth noting that whilst a student at the Royal Academy in his middle teens, Turner was hired to paint scenery for theatrical and operatic performances at the Pantheon in Oxford Street. Ackroyd speculates that ‘no doubt, he painted stormy seas and threatening skies for whatever melodrama was currently on offer. It was a way of earning badly needed income, to finance his more serious studies, but in any case he seems to have had a natural aptitude for theatrical painting’ (8). Both Turner and Beverley had the ability to produce work on the Alps that could stimulate the imagination, but – in Ruskin and Smith respectively – each had completely contrasting characters to champion their work. Nonetheless, Turner’s love of spectacle, evident in

many of his paintings influenced the way in which Victorian people saw scenery art in the mid-nineteenth century, which gave it an appeal and significance in itself rather than as just a backdrop to a performance (Ackroyd 61). This would have certainly been supported by the work of Beverley and Stanfield.

Coinciding with Turner's early work as a scenic artist, the panorama was first launched in London in 1791 with Robert Barker's elevated view of the city from the roof of a sugar mill in Southwark. The audience sat in semi-darkness at the centre of a large, continuous, cylindrical painting. The panorama was illuminated from above and when the picture revolved around the audience, an illusion of reality was gained through precision of scale and perspective: 'the spectator lost all judgement of distance and space, for the different parts of the picture were painted so realistically ... that, in the absence of any means of comparison with real objects, a perfect illusion was given' (Gernsheim 6). This would be a precursor to Beverley's dioramas that illustrated Smith's shows that endeavoured to convey the sense of being on Mont Blanc. Barker had improved the sense of reality by working out how to curve the lines so as to diminish the distortion (Flanders 263) and therefore give the impression of a precise representation of the subject that guaranteed an immediate popularity. Barker's son travelled the world to record views that included the Niagara Falls, Constantinople, the Alps and Mont Blanc, whilst panoramas also projected historical and contemporary events such as the battle of Waterloo. Their popularity endured into the 1880s. Another artist, Robert Burford, specialised in panoramas and dioramas that depicted Switzerland and the Alps which were noted for both their beauty and their fidelity. Having reached the summit of the Rigi, Smith uncharacteristically remarked on how successfully an artist had depicted the landscape as he was usually disappointed that an actual scene did not compare with its artistic portrayal (Fitzsimons,

The Baron 101). Praise also came from Ruskin who claimed in his autobiography that Burford's panorama in Leicester Square 'was an educational institution of the highest and purest value, and ought to have been supported by the Government as one of the most beneficial school instruments in London. There I had seen, exquisitely painted, the view from the roof of Milan Cathedral' (Praeterita 118). Significantly, Ruskin admired the realism in Burford's work, a trait which would extend to his own attempts to paint landscapes.

The diorama was invented by L.J.M. Daguerre in the 1820s. The effect of lighting on transparent panoramas gave a three-dimensional effect that could also recreate the changing moods of nature. (This technique was used by Beverley to illustrate Smith's description of the sun setting as he camped on Mont Blanc.) Daguerre had been inspired by the Swiss artist Franz Niklaus König, whose much smaller scale diaphanoramas depicted transparencies of Swiss scenes including sunset on the Jungfrau. In July 1822, Daguerre's first diorama show combined two paintings shown in a specifically-designed building. One was 'The Interior of Trinity Chapel, Canterbury Cathedral', and the other (painted by Daguerre) 'The Valley of Sarnen' in Canton Unterwalden, Switzerland. The latter was described in The Spectator as 'well painted, and the diversified effect produced by the varying shadows, as they become transparent or opaque, according to the approach of the storm or the clearing up of the atmosphere, cannot be surpassed' (qtd. in Gernsheim 16-17). Daguerre continued to use scenes from the Alps in his dioramas. Commenting on a new set of pictures, The Spectator writes in 1830 that:

The view of 'Mount St. Gotthard' [by Daguerre] taken from the town of Faido ... is one of the most striking points in the romantic scenery which

characterizes this pass of the Alps. On either side stupendous cliffs rise precipitously to a tremendous height, forming a chasm of unfathomable depth into which the Tessin falls in picturesque cascades ... This beautiful representation of one of the grandest scenes in nature has the effect of bringing the eye so vividly as to excite those emotions and raise up those associations which a contemplation of the actual scene would produce in the mind; such truth, force and feeling is there in the picture (qtd. in Gernsheim 25)

These terms of 'truth, force and feeling' are a key trio in the aesthetic assessment of these productions and convey the affects that Smith hoped would be experienced by the audiences of his Mont Blanc shows. This quotation also has strong parallels with Ruskin's appreciation of Turner's 'The Pass of Faido' in 'Of Turnerian Topography' (Chapter 2 of Modern Painters IV) when he writes of the ability of 'the great inventive landscape painter' (particularly Turner) to produce 'on the far-away beholder's mind precisely the impression which the reality would have produced, and putting his heart into the same state in which it would have been, had he verily descended into the valley from the gorges of Airolo' (35-36). Nevertheless Ruskin and Daguerre differ in their sense of the ways in which this transcendental spectacle is imposed on the mind of the spectator. Whilst Turner's painting, so Ruskin argues, has the ability to imaginatively transport one to the scene itself, the diorama, so Daguerre would argue, attempts to convince the viewer that one is witnessing the actual scene.

The dioramas of William Beverley similarly attempted to transport the audience away from London to Chamonix where they could imagine themselves in a foreign

environment undertaking their own ascent. The three-dimensional nature of the dioramas encouraged the spectator to become immersed in the scene. On reviewing the opening of the second season of Mont Blanc shows, the Daily News wrote that ‘The admirable illustrative views, painted by Mr. Beverley, of the terrible and magnificent features which the mountain presents at the various stages of its ascent, give great assistance to the fancy of the spectator; and we can almost feel as if we had accompanied the bold adventurers on their perilous journey’ (‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc.’ Daily News 30 Nov. 1852). However, the panorama, though realistic in its portrayal of the scene, was limited to one point in time. With the diorama, the spectator was able to witness changing effects of nature such as a stormy sky or the setting sun. The Illustrated London News emphasised the use of effective lighting on the transparent linen on which the scenes were painted: ‘the whole series of the Alpine ascents is splendidly painted, exhibiting those stupendous scenes in all their grandeur and terror. We may just mention in proof those of the Grands Mulets rocks by sunset, the Grand Plateau by moonlight, and the hazardous ascents of the Mur de la Côte’, (‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc’, The Illustrated London News, 20 Mar. 1852, 243).

During the break between each season of shows, Beverley painted new scenes for the diorama accompanying the changes Smith made to his entertainment to ensure it remained fresh and original. For example, at the end of the third season in 1854, Beverley travelled with Smith to Chamonix via a different route through Holland and Germany instead of France. The second page of the programme for the fourth season emphasised these changes:

The route to Switzerland conducts the visitor from London to Rotterdam by Brussels, and thence through Holland and up the Rhine. The new views, painted by Mr. William Beverley, are Amsterdam, on the Rokin Canal, looking towards the Site of the Old Bourse; the village of Broek; the high street of Berne, with the clock tower; the pass of the Gemmi; the Hut lately erected on the Grands Mulets; Lyons; and the place de la Concorde, Paris. In addition to these, a panorama of the Rhine, by M. Groppius, of Berlin, accompanies that portion of the Lecture, including Rotterdam and the chief objects of interest between Cologne and Bingen.

New scenes were painted not only to gain positive reviews and attract audiences back, but also to reflect change in the landscape including the impact of mountaineering. For instance, a hut on the Grands Mulets was built in 1852 to provide shelter on the mountain – indeed Smith had journeyed there with a party of climbers to witness its opening the following year – and that had to be included. During the six years of the Mont Blanc shows, new dioramas depicting Chamonix had to be created following a large flood in September 1852 and then a fire in the summer of 1855 that destroyed much of the town.

As the Alpine landscape was beginning to be climbed more regularly so, argues Kember, the diorama ‘offered an easily-achieved viewing perspective on a conquered landscape. Explicitly rendering the landscape and its conquest as marketable commodities, these entertainments mediated the mountain adventure for city-dwellers’ (25). The mountaineers’ ability to reach the summit of the Alpine peaks and to gaze over the scene below was radically different to the view from the valley appreciated by Ruskin, the Romantic poets and the many other visitors. Similarly the dioramas by Beverley that

portrayed Smith and his fellow climbers reaching the summit gave the audience an intimate and an 'easily achieved viewing perspective of the summit' (Kember 25) that counteracted visual representations that viewed the peaks as distant and unattainable. Consequently the association between the Alps and ideas of the sublime diminished as the mountain range became more familiar. As a result, in later Mont Blanc shows, the appeal of Beverley's dioramas, and indeed Smith's narrative of his ascent, diminished as the spectator became familiar with perspectives from high Alpine terrain. Smith discontinued his narrative of the climb and Beverley's dioramas were shown unaccompanied during the interval.

Beverley's sketches, and the paintings that resulted from them, were influenced by Smith's interpretation of his ascent. Smith, as we have already seen, was especially concerned to represent this landscape accurately and therefore challenge the Romantic rhetoric of earlier travel writers as well as establish his own authenticity. When translating the French drama La Grâce de Dieu under the title The Pearl of Chamouni, the setting of one of the acts was 'the valley and village of Chamouni as seen from the Col de Balme Pass, with Mont Blanc in the distance'. When the play was produced, Smith insisted on this view being accurately depicted. "As far as the audience were concerned," he wrote, "I might have called it Snowdon or Ben Nevis with equal force, but I knew it was correct and was satisfied" (Fitzsimons, The Baron 41). However, when a person is subjected to the dangers and fears of high altitude, it is likely that their perspective will become subjective. Smith's own experience of the climb naturally influenced a 'truthful' representation of the mountain landscape. Kember comments on how 'Beverley's brilliantly backlit images of the climbers sought to bring the exaggerated dangers of mountaineering into the secure and comfortable confines of the Egyptian Hall' (30), while Schama writes of how 'there were some adjustments to the scale and the steepness of the scenery, all by way of adding

interest to the story' (501). This is clearly evident in Beverley's depiction of the Glacier du Tacconay, reproduced in the Illustrated London News (20 Mar. 1852, 244). However, when others climbed Mont Blanc later they found the terrain to be quite different to that portrayed by Beverley. The Alpine explorer Douglas Freshfield, who attended Smith's show, wrote 'I recollect particularly an absurd picture of the Mur de la Côte. I was very much disappointed ten years later by the reality!' (Thorington 153). More sympathetically James Bulwer, who almost reached the summit a year after Smith, wrote that

The views [by Beverley], too, are very good. I do not profess to recognize the exact spots upon the glacier, for the changes which the ice undergoes every year would make it impossible, even supposing the views to be portraits of it as it was when Albert Smith crossed it; but the artist has given a very correct representation of the kind of places one meets with, and has caught the spirit and expression of the scenes (Thorington 158).

The dioramas could either express the sentiments of the author who genuinely suffered and struggled to reach the summit, or can simply be seen as gross exaggeration in order to capitalise on popular interest in Alpine exploration.

Whilst Edmund Yates in his memoir of Albert Smith writes of how 'the magic hand of Beverley so accurately displayed the wonders of the ice-world' (Smith, Mont Blanc viii), the evaluation is very much based on Smith's own perception of the climb, and climbers in the next decade, during the 'golden age of mountaineering', criticized it as exaggerated and sensationalist. However, in the 1850s there were few familiar enough with the mountain, and far fewer who would ever see them at close proximity or at great height. The Era writes

about how the shows reveal places ‘that cannot be visited, even in these railway days, without a considerable outlay of time, convenience and money’ (‘Mr Albert Smith’s Ascent of Mont Blanc’, The Era 21 Mar. 1852). The Times comments how ‘truly the perilous pedestrian feat ... is much more pleasantly performed in imagination during a two hours’ stay at the Egyptian-hall, Piccadilly, than by bivouacking on the Grands Mulets or cutting one’s way with hatchets up the Mur de la Côte.’ (‘The Ascent of Mont Blanc’, The Times 30 Nov. 1852). Panoramas and dioramas in general portrayed landscapes, cities and countries that one was unlikely to see in the mid-nineteenth century. In Household Words from 1850, Dickens writes of an elderly gentleman, Mr Booley, who decides to explore the world through these very mediums beginning with New Orleans and then on to New Zealand and Australia before resolving to ‘proceed up the Nile to the second cataract’ and explore Egypt (‘Some Account of an Extraordinary Traveller’ 75). Coincidentally Dickens’s article was published in the same month as his friend Smith published A Month at Constantinople, his account of his travels around the region that would subsequently become the show ‘The Overland Mail’ with dioramas by Beverley. Dickens concludes his story by stating through the character of Mr Booley that:

‘It is very gratifying for to me,’ said he, ‘to have seen so much at my time of life, and to have acquired a knowledge of the countries I have visited, which I could not have derived from books alone. When I was a boy, such travelling would have been impossible, as the gigantic-moving-panorama or diorama mode of conveyance, which I have principally adopted, ... had then not been attempted. It is a delightful characteristic of these times, that new and cheap means are continually being devised, for conveying the results of actual experience, to those who are unable to obtain such experiences for

themselves; and to bring them within the reach of the people – emphatically of the people; for it is they at large who are addressed in these endeavours, and not exclusive audiences’ (77).

Mr Booley finishes by proposing a toast to Mr Burford (the panorama and diorama artist mentioned earlier) and others with ‘Long life to them all, more power to their pencils (77).

Panoramas and dioramas did allow the public the escapist sensation of experiencing places, events and landscapes directly. The dioramas by Beverley of Switzerland and the Alps were not completely new and drew a good deal on those by Daguerre thirty years earlier and other sources. What they did present, accompanied by Smith’s narratives, was a popular new way of perceiving the mountain which Hansen argues ‘contributed to the declining cultural authority of the picturesque and sublime in the Alps’ (308). The rise in popularity of the Alps by those desiring to do more than just observe the peaks was amplified by the Mont Blanc shows and their depiction of the mountain from new perspectives at high altitude. The shows encouraged the idea that the Alps were not the near-impossible barrier they had previously been considered but could be challenged and conquered. The dioramas made familiar – and even popular – the terrain, conditions, and views attainable at such a height.

3.3 The Popularisation of the Alps.

When Smith climbed Mont Blanc in 1851, the idea of someone scaling a mountain for pleasure seemed somewhat disconcerting to certain parts of the British media. The ascent of Mont Blanc by Dr Hamel in 1820 (described in The Peasants of Chamouni) which resulted in the death of three guides had prompted much discussion on the dangers of mountaineering, although Hamel's professed reason that the climb was for scientific purposes quelled, to some extent, opposition to such apparently foolhardy undertakings. Thirty years later Smith gave no such rationale, and the interest surrounding the activity of one who had already found success in the show 'The Overland Mail' ensured that the topic of Alpine climbing was revived. As Irving writes in A History of British Mountaineering, 'Albert Smith's ascent in 1851 belonged in its execution to the period when the ascent of Mont Blanc was considered a dangerous undertaking, a sign of a peculiar mentality, but excusable if linked with scientific pursuit' (64). Although such undertakings would be seen to be justifiable and relatively normal in only a few years following Smith's climb, at the beginning of the decade there was scant interest in mountaineering as a sport; any endeavours were usually masked behind more 'cerebral' motives. Evidence for the consternation caused by Smith can be found in an article from The Daily News written shortly after his climb. The paper contrasted the ascent with the explorations made by Horace De Saussure half a century earlier. De Saussure was seen to have worthy meteorological reasons for pursuing his Alpine climbs leading to his desire to tackle and eventually conquer the highest peak. He was also perceived to have an appropriate awe, sensitivity and respect for the surroundings akin to the Romantic ideology that esteemed and ruminated over the mountains. This was contrasted, in some ways justifiably, to a crudeness surrounding Smith's climb. The Daily News complained that whilst

Saussure's observations and reflections on Mont Blanc live in his poetical philosophy; those of Mr. Albert Smith will be appropriately recorded in a tissue of indifferent puns and stale "fast" witticisms with an incessant straining after smartness. The aimless scramble of the four pedestrians to the summit of Mont Blanc, with the accompaniment of Sir Robert Peel's orgies at the bottom, will not go far to redeem the somewhat equivocal reputation of the herd of English tourists in Switzerland, for a mindless and rather vulgar redundance of mere animal spirits. ('London, Thursday, Aug 21.' 4).

In a similar strain, John Murray's 1852 Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland noted how Smith had popularized the ascent of Mont Blanc but claimed that 'it is a somewhat remarkable fact that a large proportion of those who have made this ascent have been persons of unsound mind' (qtd in Hansen 300).

Significantly, both these statements were retracted once the popularity of Smith's shows became established. Further articles from The Daily News celebrated Smith's success and praised his show, and 'by 1858 ... Murray mentioned that twenty or thirty people now made the ascent each year, thanked Albert Smith for his help with the text, and purged all references to the mental health of mountaineers' (Hansen 300). During the 1850s, the Alps and especially Mont Blanc became a familiar entity to many through Smith's shows and the resulting exploration of the Alps in further popular entertainments, newspapers, magazines and fiction. No-one before Smith had come close to making them so fashionable in England. In The Victorian Mountaineers, Clarke makes the important point that:

Neither Ruskin's revelation of the mountain glory nor Forbes' careful enquiring journeys would have had much effect on the Victorian public had it not been for the activities of a third man [Smith]. Both Ruskin and Forbes spoke to the informed, discerning, one-thousandth of the population; few even among this small minority had any real knowledge of mountains and for the middle classes, let alone for the vast ... masses, the Alps and their names were symbols but queer words which meant little more than unusual sounds used by men back from abroad (48).

By contrast, Smith's Alpine shows were acclaimed during the early to mid-1850s and received enthusiastic reviews, particularly in The Illustrated London News, that counteracted initial criticism: '... Mr Smith rises in our estimation as an author, for having delivered himself so nobly on a theme requiring and tasking the higher faculties for its due treatment. He has indeed written eloquently on the sublime' ('Mr Albert Smith's Ascent of Mont Blanc.' 10 Apr. 1852: 291). 'Higher faculties' was a key psychological term in the period implying strong approval. Nevertheless, this interest was to a significant extent manipulated by Smith himself who, for example, had been a contributor to The Illustrated London News since 1846 and, as Simkin and others correctly point out, was able to plant 'ample coverage of his own achievements and activities' (Simkin, 'Albert Smith: A Nineteenth-Century Showman' 68). He regularly wrote letters to newspapers and journals especially at the beginning and end of each season to whet the audience's appetite as to what to expect in future performances. The popularity of the shows generated in part by this publicity brought it to the attention of the royal family where it found ready approval. Smith gave the first of three Command performances only a few months after his first

show, whilst in 1854 he gave a special performance before an enthralled Queen Victoria who presented him with a diamond scarf-pin in recognition (Clarke, The Victorian Mountaineers 53).

As already described in section 3.1, Smith's 'lecture' (the term is used in his programmes), gave the semblance of combining instruction with entertainment by juxtaposing the diorama (with its educational association) with a location steeped in worthy sublimity to a narrative that frequently resorted to song and comic observation. The shows therefore had a broad appeal to a wide cross-section of the public as he 'blurred the boundaries between the genteel and the vulgar, the sacred and the profane' (Hansen 308). This combination appealed to many from the middle and upper classes, especially when given a Royal seal of approval. From the earliest shows, The Times reports how the subject matter appealed to the audience:

No entertainment could be more successful than Mr Smith's last night. The description of the ascent was listened to with breathless interest, the beauty of the paintings called forth repeated bursts of applause, and the piquancy of the songs, which are masterpieces of metrical comic writing, excited hearty genuine laughter. The same qualities which were so attractive in the Egyptian tour are to be found in the Swiss expedition, with the advantages of greater variety and a more poetical treatment of the subject ('Mr Albert Smith's Entertainment.' The Times. 19 Mar. 1852: 8).

'Mont Blanc' was the most popular entertainment of the decade. Unsurprisingly this popularity resulted in similar extravaganzas created for the London stage as Smith's shows

‘sent waves of inspiration into the London entertainment business’ (Altick 476). Others tried to match the appeal and success of the ‘Mont Blanc’ shows by using the panorama and/or diorama as a backdrop to an entertainment of humour and song and, as today, popular success provoked parody and spin-off. The British dramatist James Robinson Planché created ‘Mr Buckstone’s Ascent of Mount Parnassus: A Panoramic Extravaganza’. In one scene, the comedian Buckstone did a sketch of Smith’s show in front of a backdrop depicting the Egyptian Hall chalet as an acknowledgment of his inspiration (Altick 476). For many, the ‘Mont Blanc’ shows were simply escapist fantasy, although there was the opportunity for an increasing number to follow in Smith’s footsteps, if not actually up the mountain, then at least to the growing number of Alpine tourist destinations including Chamonix, Grindelwald and Zermatt, in addition to mountainous environments closer to home such as the Lake District.

The shows transported the audience away from industrial London on a journey to a remote, exotic, natural and inspiring landscape. For each season of shows the route to the Alps would alter. A rather circuitous journey was made to explore new towns and cities and further sites of interest, all of which had the tantalising appeal of becoming more and more accessible to the growing middle classes who attended. As Hansen points out ‘by the mid-1830s, the journey by carriage from London to Switzerland still took about two weeks and cost at least twenty pounds. By the mid-1850s, railways and steamers cut the time to just three days and the cost to just two pounds’ (301). The audience were presented with views and descriptions of sites that could then possibly be explored in person, preferably equipped with Smith’s The Story of Mont Blanc which gave details of routes, costs and places to stay. Furthermore, the shows were more successful than his middle-east and China lectures, that respectively preceded and followed ‘Mont Blanc’, because they evoked the sensations

of experiencing the climb. The dangers and terrors involved were brought vividly to the imagination by the oratorical skills of Smith intertwined with the dioramic backdrops. During Smith's life, the only fatalities on the mountain had occurred during Hamel's attempt, but Smith exploited this story in the show to accentuate and sometimes exaggerate the difficulty of the terrain. The audience were 'encouraged to imagine themselves in Switzerland, making their own ascent of Mont Blanc' (Hansen 305).

The Alps were becoming increasingly seen not as venues for geological and meteorological study, nor as sites where one passively gazed in awe at the mountains from the safe confines of the towns and villages. They were progressively perceived as a 'playground' for tourism and pleasurable, high-altitude exploration. On his return to Chamonix in 1853 to collect more exhibits for his shows, Smith acted as a guide for the most prestigious guests in the town and escorted them over the Mer de Glace and the Glacier des Bossons. Increasing numbers also wished to climb Mont Blanc itself as 'Albert Smith's entertaining narrative uncoupled the Alps from the romantic appreciation of nature and inspired ambitious men of the professional middle classes to climb Mont Blanc' (Hansen 304). And not just men: in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), a child Paulina Howe tells Lucy Snowe how she '... intend[s] going to Switzerland, and climbing Mount Blanck [sic]' (Brontë 89). Keen to capitalise on the interest, the Chamonairds realised that Smith's shows were a commercial asset and 'each successful ascent was observed by salvoes of artillery, a festive dinner and the presentation of a certificate, signed by the guides, to prove the ascent' (Fitzsimons, *The Baron* 133). In the 1850s, due to his promotion of the area through his shows and his book on Mont Blanc, Smith became a popular figure in the town to those who provided services to the increasing number of visitors to the region. Edmund Yates, in his memoir of Smith that precedes Smith's study of

the Alps in the 1860 edition of Mont Blanc, writes: ‘Albert Smith was really the popular monarch of the place; his annual return was announced by cannonades; fêtes and holidays were proclaimed in his honour, and during the entire time of his sojourn, he was the lion of the place’ (ix).

Mont Blanc and Albert Smith became synonymous. In a typical anti-Romantic stance Smith appropriated a passage of poetry from Byron’s ‘Manfred’:

Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains,
They crowned him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds
With a diadem of snow. (60-63)

Smith altered the third and fourth line to read ‘But who they got to put it on / I don’t exactly know.’ This anti-Romantic gesture belittling earlier poetic responses to the Alps was the kind of attitude that was repugnant to Ruskin who was at the time having Modern Painters IV published with his final celebratory chapter ‘Of Mountain Glory’. The comic burlesque used in Smith’s stage show meant it was perhaps unsurprising that Punch, in an article that ridiculed the English appropriation of the Alps, described Smith as ‘determined to make himself “the Monarch of Mont Blanc”’ (‘Another and Another Still Succeeds’ 148). In a more sincere vein, The Times reported how:

The ‘terrific ascents’ with which the pyrotechnic displays at Vauxhall used to terminate lost half their interest from the fact that the man who performed them never appeared to give an account of his achievement; but Mr Albert

Smith knows the interest which attaches to a personal narrative, ... it is impossible not to feel that without him the King of the Alps would not draw many visitors to the Egyptian Hall. He has, in truth, identified himself with Mont Blanc, and no Londoner can think of its snow-capped summit without seeing our adventurous author serenely seated on its loftiest apex ('Ascent of Mont Blanc' 8)

The promotion, publicity, merchandise and books all combined Smith's name with the mountain. Nevertheless, whilst many were enthusiastic about Smith's representation of the Alps, there were some who remained unhappy at how awe and reverence had turned to physical onslaught. Ruskin was continually opposed to the new popular appeal of the Alps and the effect it was having on the scenery. The rise in the number of people visiting the Alpine resorts, and the subsequent development of hotels, casinos and other structures began radically to alter the landscape from how Ruskin had witnessed it as an adolescent and young man. Furthermore, Ruskin had followed in Turner's footsteps during the 1840s to find the spots from where Turner painted, but he now discovered that Turner's recreation of certain scenes did not matching the changing landscape (see Modern Painters IV, 37). When writing the first volumes of Modern Painters in the 1840s, towns like Chamonix had a relatively untainted and unspoiled air to them for Ruskin, but it was disappearing only a decade later while Smith was busy popularising the Alps. By the mid-1850s both Turner's alpine art and Ruskin's appreciation of the Alps harked back to a landscape 'belonging' to a previous Romantic generation whose values he believed were disappearing.

Nevertheless, as Buzard in The Beaten Track reminds us, Ruskin travelled to the continent with his wife by train and steamer (for example to Abbeville in 1848) though

little mention is made of this as ‘Ruskin and others habitually associated speed, and its concomitant lower cost, with superficiality’ (35-6). Ruskin, like Smith, criticised tourists who gave no sign of appreciation of the natural and historic sites available, and Ruskin complained of those who made excursions to the continent only because they could with no desire to appreciate the area fully. In The Seven Lamps of Architecture Ruskin writes that ‘[t]he whole system of railroad travelling is addressed to people who, being in a hurry, are therefore, for the time being, miserable. No one would travel in that manner who could help it ... The railroad is in all its relations a matter of earnest business, to be got through as soon as possible. It transmutes a man from traveller into a living parcel. For the time he has parted with the noble characteristics of his humanity for the sake of a planetary power of locomotion’ (159). In 1853, a year after the initial opening of Smith’s show, an anonymous writer in Blackwood’s describes how ‘Switzerland is now visited (for its own sake) only by persons who are stinted for time – who cannot afford a tour, but merely “a run,” and who accordingly scamper off to the Alps ... the journey thither being performable, thanks to steam, in somewhere about thirty hours from London Bridge’ (‘Brute Life in the Alpine Regions’, 539). Chamonix, due to its proximity to Mont Blanc, was a particular target for a middle class that was now able to travel much more quickly and cheaply to the Continent. By 1854, tourists were arriving there in far larger numbers.

In addition to alterations to the landscape, Ruskin was also concerned about the effect this new outlook was having on the minds of men. For Ruskin, mountains above anything else represented all that was beautiful in the natural world and provided evidence of God’s work on Earth. Rather than being beheld and admired from a respectful distance from below, they were now being scaled and conquered. In the preface to the second edition (1865) of ‘Of Kings’ Treasuries’ from Sesame and Lilies, Ruskin agrees with those

who initially criticised Smith's ascent as an act of blasphemy: 'All true lovers of natural beauty hold it in reverence so deep that they would as soon think of climbing the pillars of the choir of Beauvais [belonging to a French cathedral] for a gymnastic exercise, as of making a playground of Alpine snow' (27). 'Playground' would become a familiar term to describe this terrain during the 1860s and was incorporated into the celebratory title of Leslie Stephen's The Playground of Europe (1871), a collection of essays on his Alpine climbs initially published in the Alpine Club journal. However, Ruskin intended the phrase only in a derogatory, infantile sense as he criticized those whom he perceived had neither adoration nor respect for the mountains. One recalls Smith and his companions racing wine bottles down the slopes during the ascent before cannon-fire in Chamonix celebrated his arrival at the summit. Ruskin had been in Chamonix at the time of Smith's climb and heard about it with dismay. As the town celebrated Smith's return, Ruskin wrote to his father with snobbish disdain: 'There has been a Cockney ascent of Mont Blanc of which I believe you are soon to hear in London' (Ruskin, The Letters of John Ruskin Volume I, 1827-1869 117).

Ruskin's distaste for Smith and his followers had not abated by the mid-1860s when most of the Alpine peaks had been climbed. In his Oxford lecture published as 'Of Kings' Treasuries' in Sesame and Lilies (1864), Ruskin makes the often quoted attack on those who:

despised Nature; that is to say, all the deep and sacred sensations of nature. ... the Alps themselves which your own poets used to love so reverently, you look upon as soaped poles in a bear-garden, which you set yourselves to climb and slide down again, with 'shrieks of delight.' When you are past

shrieking, having no human articulate voice to say you are glad with, you fill the quietude of their valleys with gunpowder blasts, and rush home, red with cutaneous eruption of conceit, and voluable with convulsive hiccough of self-satisfaction. (89-90)

In contrast to the report in The Illustrated London News quoted earlier that praised Smith's shows as appealing to the 'higher faculties', here Ruskin bestialises and infantilises these enthusiasts, not so much because of their desire to climb Mont Blanc but due to the manner of their approach. Ruskin's description of contemporary attitudes to the Alps is placed in strong contrast to poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge. The latter for example wrote 'Hymn before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni' at the beginning of the century, a poem highly praised by Ruskin in a letter on Coleridge and Wordsworth from 1843 (Modern Painters II, 391-2). Towards the end of the poem, Coleridge writes:

And thou, oh silent form, alone and bare,
Whom, as I lift again my head bowed low
In adoration, I again behold,
And to thy summit upward from thy base
Sweep slowly with dim eyes suffused by tears,
Awake, thou mountain form! (Lines: 67-72)

Silence, solitariness and emptiness are qualities utterly opposed to the mass tourism which would soon occur in the Alpine region. Although Ruskin joined the Alpine Club in 1869, he remained critical of those who, in his eyes, did not have appropriate respect for the

terrain. It was a concern that increased when Thomas Cook set up excursions from London to Chamonix in 1863 (Brendon 79).

By the time of writing 'Of Kings' Treasuries', the 'Golden Age of Mountaineering' in the Alps, as it is now commonly seen, and which began with Alfred Wills' ascent of the Wetterhorn in 1854, was reaching its inevitable end as each successive peak was conquered. Edward Whymper's tragic descent of the Matterhorn in 1865, would mark its end. Whymper's arrival at the summit of the Matterhorn meant that all the major peaks in the Alps had now been reached, though the deaths that occurred on the descent meant that the sport of mountaineering gained unfavourable coverage. By that time, Smith had been dead for five years and the Alps had become familiar territory to many of the English middle-class. Smith had been crucial in creating this popularity but, in the latter half of the 1850s, interest in his shows had begun to wane. In 1856 The Times complained of Mont Blanc mania pervading the minds of the English as more and more attempted to reach the summit. The paper received an increasing number of accounts by those who had successfully completed the ascent, until on October 6th it branded the mountain a 'positive nuisance':

The frequency with which the feat is performed constitutes the best evidence that, at least in these days, it is attended but with little danger and not much fatigue. It seems to be as easy a matter, nowadays, to go up Mont Blanc as to go up the Rhine, and in all probability there is more peril from roguish kellners and diversity of coinage upon a Rhenish steamboat than any that attends the aspiring mountaineer who 'does his Mont Blanc', at the proper

season of the year, under the auspices of trustworthy guides ('Mont Blanc has become a positive nuisance' 8).

Indeed Mont Blanc was now perceived as a trouble-free climb, provided one took appropriate precautions, and an increasing number undertook the ascent. As Hansen points out, '[i]n 1786, two Chamonix natives climbed the peak, but over the next sixty-seven years the ascent of Mont Blanc was repeated only forty-five times. Yet after Albert Smith's dramatic account of this ascent made mountain climbing popular among the middle classes of Victorian England, Mont Blanc was climbed eighty-eight times in a five-year span' (300). The novelty of ascent had diminished, particularly through its continual portrayal by Smith. Punch (echoing Ruskin's 'Cockney ascent' remark) satirized this ease in an article 'Good News for Cockney Travellers' published in September 1854, a month after Smith's command performance before Victoria and Albert:

Mont Blanc has been carpeted as high as the Grands Mulets, Mr. Albert Smith having been requested to bring out with him, to Chamouni, carpets of the same pattern as those of the *tapis* in the Council-Room at Osborne, where he recently gave his entertainment, and he is also to make another ascent, for the purpose of indicating the best place for lampposts, the government having determined to light Mont Blanc with gas, to the very top ('Good News for Cockney Travellers' 110).

Punch continued to ridicule the new-found popularity of the Alps, although it did so in a manner not unlike Smith's own, by mocking the pretensions of the English abroad in a series of cartoon strips entitled 'Mr Perks's Mountain Experiences' (Sep-Oct 1856).

Satirical comment by Punch centred less on Smith and more on the effect that Smith's shows may have on the landscape as it became commodified by an enthusiastic English public.

By 1856, as a result of articles such as the one in The Times, Smith knew that the 'Mont Blanc' show in its current form was played out, now that 'the ascent of this well-trodden mountain [is] as extraordinary an occurrence as a stroll up Regent Street on a fine afternoon in July' ('Mont Blanc has become a positive nuisance' 8). Smith's ascent was reduced to a ten minute display of Beverley's views of the mountain without commentary. Any 'instructive' element to the show now moved away from his discussion of the mountain to other landmarks. At the end of the season, as in previous years, Smith travelled on a different route to Chamonix for inspiration to refresh his performance, this time via Genoa, Naples, Pompeii, Capri and then up to the summit of Vesuvius. The realisation that the audience needed new stimuli took him to the edges of Europe and beyond. On July 5th 1858, Smith gave the two-thousandth and final performance of his Alpine show. Throughout the course of the six years of performance he had continually made changes to retain audience interest, but in 1858 he now felt that a complete change of location was necessary. He turned to China, a topical subject and a country in conflict with Britain over issues of trade and commerce in the Opium Wars. Following a trip there, Smith's new entertainment 'Mont Blanc to China' opened at the Egyptian Hall on December 22nd 1858. The introduction to the first half is described as follows in the programme: 'The deck of the Peninsula and Oriental Steamer on the Mediterranean night where takes place a dream of the past illustrating, as in a vision, the Ascent of Mont Blanc. The first half describes the journey to Singapore and the second half explores Hong Kong and Canton.' The show contained many new illustrations painted by, or under the direction of, William Beverley.

The first season was not a great success. The audience wanted more than observations and descriptions of locations such as Ceylon and Hong Kong that Smith also published in To China and Back. Fitzsimons records that ‘the audience found Smith’s lectures heavy going, for he spent much of the time giving factual information about the country, and describing the objects he had brought back. He seemed to have lost the happy knack of combining instruction with amusement that had so characterised his “Mont Blanc” entertainments’ (The Baron 183). Furthermore there was no climactic highlight as had been the case in the Mont Blanc ascent. The audience anticipated and expected to be transported on a thrilling and sensational journey which never materialised. For the second season of ‘Mont Blanc to China’, which opened in November 1859, Smith made significant adjustments, now proclaiming:

I find that after trying to force *instruction* in every way – ‘gilding the pill’ as I am best able – my audience do not care one straw about it. They come to hear me solely for amusement, and the instant I commence any matter-of-fact details, however characteristic they may be, I lose my hold over their attention, and they listen to me as listlessly as they would do to the mere verbal description of a panorama, or the demonstration of a geological section, which they do not care to understand (Fitzsimons, The Baron 184).

His discussion of China was now relegated to the first half of the programme with more anecdotes and less description and analysis. The second half was named ‘Chamouni Revisited’ with Smith renewing the acquaintance of many caricature European travellers he had described in previous shows, much to the enthusiasm of his audiences. However by this

time his health was in decline. A few days before Christmas 1859 he suffered a stroke which invalidated him for a fortnight although he returned to the stage the following month. On May 12th 1860 he caught bronchitis. Despite still continuing with the entertainment minus the songs, he finally cancelled the show on May 21st and died two days later. But in any case by this time interest in Mont Blanc and the Alps had moved elsewhere.

Three years earlier, in 1857, the Alpine Club had been established and Smith accepted the invitation to become one of the original members. Despite the disapproval of some members for his treatment of the Alps, he had been the first member to have climbed Mont Blanc and was elected under an initial seventh rule that ‘a candidate shall not be eligible unless he shall have ascended to the top of a mountain 13,000 feet in height’ (qtd in Band 14). However, there is very little reference to him in Peaks, Passes and Glaciers the journal set up by the club in 1858 which subsequently became the Alpine Journal in 1863. Many original members of the Club saw him as predominantly a commercial showman with little interest for the Alps per se. His shows, they thought, were vulgar representations of Mont Blanc (see Band 19). The twentieth-century viewpoint is more sympathetic. Clarke refers to Smith’s sincerity: ‘He really loved the Alps, and the more discerning among his audiences sensed, even if they did not know it, that he had not gone to Chamonix entirely with the idea of making money’ (Clark, The Victorian Mountaineers 55). Likewise, Arnold Lunn describes Smith as ‘the most picturesque of the British mountaineers. He was something of a *blagueur*, but behind all his vulgarity lay a very deep feeling for the Alps ... he felt the glamour of the Alps long before he had seen a hill higher than St. Anne’s, near Chertsey’ (Lunn, The Alps 119).

Smith had been more than a showman, and Mont Blanc had been more than an object to be used in popular entertainment. His lifelong fascination with the Alps manifested itself in a form radically different from those of the enthusiasts that preceded him, but which appealed to a burgeoning middle-class who would seek, literally, to follow in his footsteps. Charles Mathews in The Annals of Mont Blanc does him justice when he says:

He was emphatically a showman from his birth, but it is not true he ascended the mountain for the purpose of making a show of it. His well-known entertainment resulted from a lifelong interest which he had taken in the great summit, of which he never failed to speak or write with reverence and affection. ... It is but just to his memory that he, too, was pioneer. Mountaineering was not then a recognised sport for Englishmen. Hitherto, any information about Mont Blanc had to be sought for in isolated publications. Smith brought a more or less accurate knowledge of it, as it were, to the hearths and homes of educated Englishmen. ... Smith's entertainment gave an undoubted impetus to mountaineering (195-6).

4. The Loss of Ownership.

4.1 'The Playground of Europe': the birth of Alpine Mountaineering.

During the 1850s and 1860s, the Alpine mountains became increasingly regarded as natural challenges to be climbed and subjugated. From the aesthetic worship and low-level appreciation of previous decades, when only a small number of explorations were made at high altitude, there was now an escalating interest in conquering the peaks. Beginning with an increase in climbs of Mont Blanc in the early 1850s, the interest spread to incorporate other, often more technically challenging, summits. Initially, scientific reasons were given to justify such ascents but these were often abandoned once mountaineering became established as a sport. Although scientific investigation, particularly at an amateur level, thrived at lower altitudes, including investigations into glacial movement and geological studies, they became dissociated from mountain ascents.

In his article 'Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain', Hansen writes that during the period 1858-1868, 'mountaineering developed into an aggressive, masculine sport' (309). It is attempts made on Alpine summits during the period associated with ideas of identity, masculinity and nationalism that feature heavily in articles on the Alps at the time, with a physical approach taken to the mountains which was more vigorous and competitive than in previous decades. Kember remarks that '...the mountaineers emulated, and then outreached, the passive Romantic appreciation of the wilderness, and ultimately cultivated that wilderness as a new kind of natural resource. They pursued an active interrogation of the land, turning it into a

landscape by simultaneously immersing themselves in it and objectifying it as another space defined principally by human activities' (24). The combination of aesthetic appreciation with a determination to subdue and conquer are prominent in early narratives by mountaineers during a period which sees a movement away from Romantic awe to an intense, physical interaction.

From Smith's shows onwards, the idea of the Alps as a distant, unfamiliar and unassailable environment waned. Concurrently, the aesthetic representation of the Alps through art and poetry also abated. In part, this can be attributed to the increase in tourism and the correlating development of hotels, casinos and other amenities in resorts like Chamonix and Grindelwald. This has already been seen in section 2.2 where Ruskin outlined the new difficulties of painting the Alpine scenery and the necessity (for him) to imagine that hotels and other new structures were invisible. Additionally, a familiarity with the terrain, and an acquaintance with Alpine summits through visual media and reports, diminished the sense of the sublime and the novelty of wonder at the environment. Panoramas of the Alps by William Beverley and others, and other forms of visual reproduction (including photography), further curtailed the mystique. As one author in the Alpine Journal writes:

It is not surprising that photographs of alpine scenery are taken annually in great numbers, and very widely appreciated, more widely perhaps than similar views of other localities. The effects of snow and ice are reproduced with singular clearness and beauty by photography; and the absence of colour, which is the great drawback to all photographic pictures, matters comparatively little where light and shade, and the dark rocks and bright

snow, form the chief feature of the scene. The great clearness of the air in fine weather enables the photographer to work at great advantage, and the views annually offered to the public are marvellous both for beauty and cheapness (George, 'Alpine Photographs' 48).

Ruskin typically contributed to this desire for detailed knowledge of the Alps and took some of the earliest photographic images of the Matterhorn in 1854. Celebrated photographs of the summit of Mont Blanc were also taken by Auguste Bisson in 1861 whilst five years later the Reverend Hereford George published The Oberland and Its Glaciers Explored and Illustrated with Ice-axe and Camera (Ring 137).

By 1857 the Alps were familiar to many in Britain through the output of, among others, Ruskin, Forbes, and especially Smith. In this year the Alpine Club (the world's first mountaineering club) was founded in London to be followed, once the sport became established, by further organizations in Austria (1862) and Switzerland (1863). The period saw a fresh approach and attitude to the Alps coinciding with a new class of people now able to experience the environment. Predominantly it was the middle and upper-middle classes who took to the sport of mountaineering rather than the upper-class who, for over a century, had incorporated the Alps in their Grand Tour (Lunn, A Century of Mountaineering 43-44). There were exceptions however, including Edward Whymper, the apprentice and son of an engraver whose first trip to the Alps was to provide illustrations for the Alpine Club's journal Peaks, Passes and Glaciers, although he would later become the first to climb the Matterhorn. Whilst the Club was for men only (a Ladies Alpine Club was established in 1908 (Ring 107)), it was open to all those who displayed mountaineering expertise. Obviously one also needed money and time to climb in the Alps which denied

many from poorer social grounds. Nevertheless, from the middle of the 1850s onwards, the rail network brought the Alps within the reach of the professional classes, allowing men (and a few women from the late 1860s), who were not able to afford the cost and time of a full exploration of Europe, the opportunity to make excursions to the Alps in search of adventure and an escape from industrialized Britain. In an 1857 article 'Pedestrianism in Switzerland' Forbes writes that alongside those interested in glaciers and the geology of the Alps, the site is now also open to 'thousands of irreclaimable cockneys and Parisians' to develop 'an out-of-door mind.' Forbes continues:

An Alpine journey is perhaps the nearest approach to a campaign with which the ordinary civilian has a chance of meeting. He has some of the excitements, and many of the difficulties and privations of warfare, without any of its disgusting and dreadful features. He combats only the elements, storms only the fortresses of nature, yet he has continually in his mind the consciousness of the power by which he is surrounded, and at times overawed (286-88).

Not all were so enthused at the prospect of the dilettante climber undertaking trips to the Alps. Leslie Stephen complained that 'they raise prices and destroy solitude, and make an Alpine valley pretty nearly as noisy and irritating to the nerves as St. James's' (194). Interest in the environment had significantly increased and diversified since Forbes's initial excursions in the 1820s. He took an active interest in the causation of glacial movement, and was one of the first Britons to carry out a series of expeditions into the high mountains, although with no apparent compulsion to 'bag' peaks. His Travels through the Alps of Savoy (1843) with chapters on the formation of ice and the progression of glaciers was

extremely influential and frequently cited by early members of the Alpine Club, not least as it was ‘the first book in the English language in which a series of Alpine climbs are described; its only predecessors being a few pamphlets describing ascents of Mont Blanc’ (Lunn, A Century of Mountaineering 33-4).

In contrast to Forbes’ Travels through the Alps and its scientific objectives, the first person commonly acknowledged as writing about the Alps from a mountaineering perspective was Alfred Wills. His climb of the Wetterhorn in 1854 is generally seen as the beginning of the ‘golden age of mountaineering’ in the Alps, a period lasting until 1865. Wills was not the first to climb the Wetterhorn, indeed this had been achieved in 1844. However, his subsequent narrative of his ascent, published in his Wanderings among the High Alps (1856), became the precursor and blueprint for narratives published by mountaineers through the Alpine Club and elsewhere. The emphasis moves away from the early approach of Forbes and others who wrote about the mountains without focusing on the actions of those undertaking the climb. Wills’ account of the terrain and the route up the Wetterhorn is specifically designed to give advice to any climbers who may follow.

Narratives by members of the Alpine Club began to appear from 1859 in the Club’s publication Peaks, Passes and Glaciers that ran for three volumes before becoming the Alpine Journal in 1863. Whilst initially conceived as a personal record of individual climbs designed for private circulation and also as a transcription of talks given during meetings, these articles proved popular once published openly. The first volume of Peaks, Passes and Glaciers sold 2,500 copies by the end of 1859 and went through four reprints. In the early publications, one of the aims was to record scientific research in a manner akin to Saussure and Forbes:

It is intended to report all new and interesting mountain expeditions, whether in the Alps or elsewhere; to publish all such new ideas of scientific and geographical knowledge as can be procured from the various available sources; to give some account of all new books treating of Alpine matters, and generally, to record all facts and incidents which it may be useful to the mountaineer to know (Ball, "Preface" v)

Many of the early articles by members of the Alpine Club reflect an interest in such areas as geology, glaciology, cartography and botany, but often these were not the central concern of the narratives. Robbins asserts that at its inception, the Alpine Club contained members who saw their Alpine activities as science, those who viewed them as sport, and those to whom they were both, which explains the mix of scientific and non-scientific articles in early issues of the Club's publications (587). However, the predominance, even in these early narratives, was of non-scientific articles that may give reference to earlier Alpine scientists, and possibly made some minor observations, but concentrated on the main task of describing the ascent. John Ball, the first president of the Alpine Club (1857-1860), emphasised the less-cerebral, sporting side of Alpine exploration in his introduction to the first volume of Peaks, Passes and Glaciers, stating that his motivation was a combination of 'love of adventure and some scientific interest in the results of mountain travel' (vi). But his priority was clear. The emphasis on man's relationship with the mountain is evident in articles stemming back to this first issue which emphasise danger, risk and hardihood. In 'The Passage of the Fênêtre de Salena' from the first volume of Peaks, Passes and Glaciers, Alfred Wills writes about how one of his company starts to slip 'down a fearful slope of ice three or four hundred feet high, too steep for us to see in what it

ended...' before he is grasped in time (14). Similarly in 'A Day among the Séracs of the Glacier du Géant' from the same volume, John Tyndall records an encounter with an avalanche in straight-faced dramatic fervour:

Crash! crash! crash! nearer and nearer, the sound becoming more continuous and confused, as the descending masses broke into smaller blocks. Onward they came! Boulders half a ton and more in weight, leaping down with a kind of maniacal fury, as if their sole mission was to crush the séracs to powder (49-50).

Tyndall made important contributions in physics, atmospheric science and geology and was a talented lecturer and keen advocate of the public understanding of science. Fleming asserts that 'after Faraday he [Tyndall] was the world's most successful promoter of science: his books sold in thousands and his lectures were attended by as many' (177). Rather than categorizing Tyndall as one entirely devoted to scientific observation as Engel does in A History of Mountaineering in the Alps, where she contrasts him with the 'mountain adventurer' Leslie Stephen (124), Tyndall is similarly interested in man's adventurous relationship with the mountain, as exemplified in his Hours of Exercise in the Alps where he vividly describes the rescue of one of his porters from a crevasse whilst climbing the Jungfrau in the summer of 1861, though the account of such incidents have to be set against other more scientific passages (pp.141-152). In The Glaciers of the Alps (1861), for example, Tyndall writes a lengthy discourse on the formation, structure and movement of glaciers (see the section on the Mer de Glace 39-54). Clark points out that Tyndall's outlook towards the Alps changed in the later 1850s. Examining his interest in glacial movement, Clark writes: 'Tyndall's interest in the subject appears to have gone

through two distinct phases. There was first the era of scientific enquiry that began to change in 1859; and there was an era of the great expeditions which followed 1859, many of them still linked to important scientific enquiries but planned also with the aim of mountain conquest' (Clark, The Victorian Mountaineers 105).

Tyndall was not alone in altering his outlook during the late 1850s and the 1860s. Although critical of those who saw mountaineering as a mere sport, Tyndall's fascination with Alpine subjugation was felt and understood by many in the club. These changes were even reflected in Forbes' Travels through the Alps which had its purely scientific chapters removed and was published as A Tour of Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa in 1855. Despite being only twelve years younger than Forbes and having a similar scientific interest in the Alps, Tyndall's background, combined with the generally altered perspectives on the Alps in the 1850s, demonstrates the change in Alpine perceptions over a short period of time. Forbes belonged to a conservative and wealthy family, and first witnessed the Alps as part of a Grand Tour. His outlook was a combination of scientific interest and religious awe in a manner akin to Ruskin. Tyndall, the confirmed agnostic, first saw the Alps on a student rambling tour in 1849, and was a key figure in both early Alpine mountaineering expeditions and narratives as well as professional scientific studies.

Thus articles for the Alpine Club journal were not generally conducive to detailed scientific research; nevertheless many early narratives, especially by Wills, were written in the dry and factual manner of scientific articles. These were in the style of, and with many references to, scientists like Forbes, a key influence on future mountaineers although not, according to Lunn, as great an influence as Smith (Lunn, A Century of Mountaineering 33-4). Early articles for Peaks, Passes and Glaciers detail altitude and compass readings, the

time taken to get to specific destinations and other information to aid fellow mountaineers. Later the narratives as a whole emphasized the more dramatic episodes of an expedition exemplified in the quotations by Wills and Tyndall above. As the accounts began to be devoured by a wider audience, the attention focused increasingly on the subjective feelings of the author and his fellow climbers, combined with descriptions of the aesthetic beauty of the surroundings. The romance and allure are indicated by an article from the first volume of the Alpine Journal in 1863 that records the ascent of Monte Della Disgrazia and makes the revealing assertion that:

Our energies were partly devoted to the elucidation of matters of antiquarian and geological interest; but while ethnology and physical science claimed their due, another and a mightier attraction existed; we had an unascended peak in contemplation, and what mountaineer can resist the charm which such an object presents? (Kennedy 3).

By 1865 and the end of the ‘Golden Age of Mountaineering’, thirty-one of the thirty-nine Alpine peaks above 13,000ft had been claimed by the British. A key contributor to these statistics was Leslie Stephen, father of Virginia Woolf, and chairman, vice-president, and eventually president (1865 to 1868) of the Alpine Club. Stephen wrote many articles for the Alpine Journal and became the editor. Some of these narratives were later published as The Playground of Europe where pieces on Alpine climbs were juxtaposed with a discourse on the history of literary mountain reverence and forthright opinions on the influx of tourists and the role of science in mountain ascents. Writing about his expedition up the Rothhorn in 1864, Stephen ridiculed scientific motives for climbing,

‘And what philosophical observations did you make?’ will be the inquiry of one of those fanatics who, by a reasoning process to me utterly inscrutably, have somehow irrevocably associated alpine travelling with science. To them I answer, that the temperature was approximately (I had no thermometer) 212° [sic] (Fahrenheit) below freezing-point. As for ozone, if any existed in the atmosphere, it was a greater fool than I take it for. As we had, unluckily, no barometer, I am unable to give the usual information as to the extent of our deviation from the correct altitude; but the Federal map fixes the height at 13,855 feet. Twenty minutes of freezing satisfied me with the prospect, and I willingly turned to the descent (108-109).

Stephen thus crushed the notion that the Alpine Club and its publications had any priority commitment to, or concern for, scientific endeavour, and he alleges that, in fact, in many cases, such reasons were used to mask and validate the real personal motives for ascending the mountains. Tyndall took the ‘fanatic’ remark personally and resigned from the Club, though he returned in 1887 as an honorary member. However it is evident from Tyndall’s writings that he too realised that the interests of the Club were detached from scientific study. Robbins argues, with specific relation to climbers, that ‘the plausibility of scientism was ultimately undermined by the professionalisation of science and the disappearance of the amateur scientists, hence it was athleticism which provided the dominant framework through which the mountaineers conceived, described and justified their activities’ (590-1).

The movement towards climbing as an athletic and sometimes competitive sport is particularly emphasised in articles for the Alpine Club by John Ball. It was Ball who first came up with the idea of Peaks, Passes and Glaciers in 1858 and in ‘Passage of the Schwarz

Thor from Zermatt to Ajas' from the first volume, he places a great emphasis on the mountaineering equipment used on the expedition, whilst the final article in the volume 'Suggestions for Alpine Travellers' examines the appropriate diet, clothing, and further equipment for climbing. Furthermore, as Engel points out, Ball 'devoted eighteen years of his life to the study of mountains with a view of describing them, not in a literary way, but in a precise and topographical fashion for the use of future climbers' (106). This was important as existing information on mountains catered for literary, aesthetic, scientific and travel interests, but were inappropriate or out of date for this new sport or for those interested in the detailed topography of the area. Even Ruskin complained that, whilst progress was being made, 'no entire survey of the Alps had yet been made by properly qualified men; and that except of the chain of Chamouni, no accurate maps exist' (Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies 24). Similarly, in 'A Rough Survey of the Chain of Mont Blanc', Adams-Reilly asserts that 'it is strange that the chain of Mont Blanc should be the most visited, and at the same time the worst mapped, portion of the Alps' (257). In an attempt to rectify such inadequacies, Ball published a series of guides to the Alps (with maps) to aid the climber. The first volume The Guide to the Western Alps appeared in 1863.

The foremost reason for work in this area was to aid achievement, whether the conquering of an unsullied Alpine peak or tackling a new route to a summit. This mindset can be exemplified by an original 'rule twelve' laid down by the Alpine Club that specified that all prospective candidates had to have ascended to the summit of a mountain at least 13,000 ft. in height (Band 14). This was a peculiar criterion as height itself was seldom an inevitable measure of difficulty, and was eventually adjusted to examine an applicants' overall mountaineering experience and expertise, rather than any one isolated climb. Those like Smith, who many believed to have vulgarised their mountain ideals with his

entertainments, could now be refused (although Smith became a member before the changes were made). Furthermore, the club could open their doors to others who, though not mountaineers, had championed the Alps through other methods. This accorded more directly to the objectives of the club, defined as ‘the promotion of good fellowship among mountaineers, of mountain climbing and mountain exploration throughout the world, and of better knowledge of the mountains through literature, science, and art.’ (Clark, The Victorian Mountaineers 81). Consequently, Matthew Arnold was elected in 1859. Physically ‘his only qualification being one very easy glacier expedition, the Théodule Pass’ (Lunn, A Century of Mountaineering 42), but Arnold had continued the poetic tradition associated with the Alps with ‘Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse’ and his ‘Switzerland’ series of poems including ‘Parting’ and ‘The Terrace at Berne’. By applying the same criteria Ruskin became an honorary member in 1869 for his literary appreciation of the mountains, particularly as expressed through Of Mountain Beauty.

Both Arnold and Ruskin exuded an enthusiastic, passionate, and lyrical response to the Alps that caused them to be held in significant esteem by the Alpine Club who opposed them to the ‘vulgarians’ like Smith (Schama 504). Ruskin’s infamous attack on those who climbed high in the Alps as quoted in section 3.3 (‘soaped poles in a bear-garden’) was aimed at Smith and the new influx of tourists who, by their presence, abused the environment en route with noise, litter and an apparent disregard for the aesthetic and spiritual value of the landscape. Later, at the end of the 1860s, in the preface to The Queen of the Air, Ruskin decried the polluted state of the air and water in the Alps: ‘the air which once inlaid the clefts of all their golden crags with azure is now defiled with languid coils of smoke, belched from worse than volcanic fires ... the waters that once sank at their feet into crystalline rest are now dimmed and foul’ (Ruskin The Cestus of Aglaia, 293). Ruskin

however had some respect for and appreciation of the new breed of mountaineers belonging to the Alpine Club, a sympathy that was enhanced following Whymper's expedition to the Matterhorn which ended with four of his party falling to their deaths during the descent. In the preface to the second edition of Sesame and Lilies, published shortly after this accident, Ruskin writes: 'no blame ought to attach itself to the Alpine tourist for incurring danger ... some experience of distinct peril, and the acquirement of habits of quick and calm action in its presence, are necessary elements at some period of life, in the formation of manly character' (21). Ruskin's assertion on the formation of manliness allied itself with the beliefs of many in the club, especially Leslie Stephen (see The Playground of Europe 68-9), that mountaineering could bring about physical, patriotic, chivalric and spiritual improvement whilst pursuing an activity arguably different from other sports in the way it endangered their lives. Ruskin did not condemn those who climbed Alpine peaks providing it was done in the correct spirit with appropriate sensitiveness and respect for the surroundings. In part, this is how the alpinists of Stephen, Tyndall and Wills saw themselves as differing from the vulgarity and vanity they thought was exemplified by Smith, and 'kings, cockneys, persons travelling with couriers, Americans doing Europe against time, Cook's tourists and their like ...' (Stephen, 195). However Ruskin warned that:

Whatever the Alpine Club have done, or may yet accomplish, in a sincere thirst for mountain knowledge, and in happy sense of youthful strength and play of animal spirit, they have done, and will do, wisely and well; but whatever they are urged to by mere sting of competition and itch of praise, they will do, as all vain things must be done for ever, foolishly and ill (Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies 23-4).

The implication here is that Ruskin is uncertain of the motives that drove Whymper to the summit of the Matterhorn, and indeed what drove the Alpinists in general to seek their goals. Ruskin was not the only one. In his article 'Foreign Climbs' (All the Year Round 1865), Dickens examines the mountaineering phenomena shortly after the Matterhorn tragedy. For him, mountain climbing was not undertaken for reasons of health: 'the change of their physical conditions is too abrupt and complete to be healthy' (137); nor from an interest in mountain beauty: 'a panorama, however magnificent, will be but carelessly and cursorily scanned during progresses in which one false step, one feeble handhold, is death'(136); nor from scientific curiosity: 'the scaling of such heights as the Schreckhorn, the Eiger, and the Matterhorn, contributes about as much to science as would a club of young gentlemen who should undertake to bestride all the weathercocks of all the cathedral spires in the United Kingdom' (136). Instead, for Dickens, the motive for this 'foolhardiness' is 'BRAG' (136). He pictures such exploits as suicidal: 'life is a precious gift, not to be likely thrown away' (137), although it should be said that he was not adverse to capitalising on this fascination with the Alps and co-wrote 'No Thoroughfare' with Wilkie Collins two years later for the 1867 Christmas edition of All the Year Round. Whymper, as is evident from his Scrambles in the Alps (1871), represented characteristics that Ruskin and Dickens found distasteful: 'fiercely competitive, immersed in the technical problems of achieving more difficult climbs, entirely unromantic in his attitude to the mountains, he was "terrifyingly modern" in outlook' (Hansen 590-1). The discourse here exemplifies the debates throughout the mid-Victorian era about the cultural 'ownership' of the Alps and the 'correct' and 'appropriate' way that one should interact with the environment.

Leslie Stephen himself had mixed attitudes to those like Ruskin and other ‘sentimentalists’ (Schama 504) who helped establish the appeal of mountains. Whilst praising Ruskin for expounding ‘at great length and with admirable acuteness the difference between the fulness of meaning in a mountain as drawn by Turner and the vague shapeless lumps of earlier artists’ (Stephen 29), for Stephen only experience of high altitude and summiting peaks can allow one to write accurately about ‘mountain truth’. This was not a domain for those who wrote only from the valley below. Stephen cautioned that ‘whilst all good and wise men necessarily love the mountain, those love them best who have wandered longest in their recesses, and have most endangered their own lives and those of their guides in the attempt to open out routes amongst them’ (Stephen 69). For Stephen, mountain truth was a combination of emotions and sensations experienced at high altitude in the mountains when challenging and overcoming a multitude of obstacles. As Schama notes: ‘The premise of the Alpine Club aesthetic was that only traversing the rock face, inching his way up ice steps, enabled the climber, at rest, to see the mountain as it truly was. And once he had experienced all this, it became imprinted on his senses in ways totally inaccessible to the dilettante, low-altitude walker’ (504).

Evidence from the Alpine Club narratives and elsewhere suggest that many mid-Victorian climbers agreed with Stephen’s outlook and enjoyed similar spiritual and aesthetic responses. Those who did this climbing were predominately the upper-middle and middle-class professionals including university dons (like Leslie Stephen), civil servants, bankers, barristers, clergymen and men from the armed forces and the medical professions. Of the two hundred and eighty-one members who made up the original cohort of club members between 1857 and 1863, only nineteen came from the landed classes (Schama

502). Lunn claims that no more than three belonged by birth to the old aristocracy (Lunn, A Century of Mountaineering 44).

Whilst the club was more liberal than some in the class of person it accepted, it was exclusively a society for men. An argument against female membership was their perceived lack of moral and physical stamina, although successful climbs of Mont Blanc by women dating back to 1809 repudiate such claims. The debate however really centred on the opinion that women should not climb as it was 'strictly contrary to Victorian notions of propriety' (Ring 104). Mary Mummery (married to the famous Alpine climber Alfred with whom she climbed regularly), contributed a chapter to her husband's 1895 work My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus where she complains of this inequality and prejudice in the Alpine Club:

The masculine mind is, with rare exceptions, imbued with the idea that a woman is not a fit comrade for steep ice or precipitous rock, and, in consequence should be satisfied with watching through a telescope some weedy and invertebrate man being hauled up a steep peak by a couple of burly guides, or by listening to this same masher when, on his return, he lisps with a sickening drawl the many perils he has encountered (68).

Indeed, it was not until the last couple of decades of the nineteenth century that women began to climb regularly in the Alps. Before then, however, there were notable exceptions including Lucy Walker, who began climbing in 1859 and ascended almost one hundred peaks including Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa in 1862 (Ring 105), even though if she were

to submit an article on her experiences to the Alpine Club it would have to have male authorship (Fleming 320).

Whilst mountaineering in general was associated with middle-class male culture during this period, Hansen stresses the importance of exploring British middle-class perceptions of mountaineering through ideas of identity, character and masculinity, which became aligned with concepts of nationalism and imperialism. Those who climbed the Alps and wrote of their experiences on the mountains did so in a period coinciding with:

A series of military crises from the mid-1850s to mid-1860s [that] undermined a complacent confidence in British manliness and power. The incompetent if heroic performance of the British military in the Crimean War, the massacres of the Indian Mutiny, the Second Opium War with China [from which stemmed Smith's interest in the country], ... the agitation over the American Civil War, and the controversy over Governor Eyre in Jamaica in the mid-1860s – each provoked anxiety and debate about the decline of British power. ... These events created a climate in which middle-class men elevated the exploits of athletes and the adventures of mountaineers into cultural symbols of British masculinity, patriotism, national character, and imperial power. (Hansen 313-4)

These ideas are implicit in many of the writings by Alpine Club members. On arriving at the summit of the Matterhorn, Whymper emphasises the fact that they had beaten a team of Italians scaling a different route, whilst he concludes Scrambles Amongst the Alps with the following:

... where there's a will there's a way: and we come back to our daily occupations better fitted to fight the battle of life, and to overcome the impediments which obstruct our paths, strengthened and cheered by the recollection of past labours, and by the memories of victories gained in other fields (Whymper 396).

The moralised interpretation is very clear, but evidence from the pages of Peaks, Passes and Glaciers, the Alpine Journal, and publications from individual writers also suggests that a more intimate affinity with the mountains, and a sense of personal quest and ambition was at least as crucial as issues of patriotism and national supremacy. Certainly many members came from cities; suggesting that one possible motive was an escape from and antidote to the pollution and grime of the Industrial Revolution. Stephen writes that in the Alps 'we can breathe air that has not passed through a million pair of lungs' (68). In addition, the fact the Britain was enjoying a period of great prosperity with relative peace with neighbouring mainland Europe, allowed easy access to the mountains. Those who wrote for the Alpine journal rarely wrote so jingoistically as Hansen in his article implies, but they certainly did emphasise their personal trials and tribulations, and their ability to triumph over these, as an indicator of moral worth or the triumph of certain collective values.

By 1864, in the same article in which Stephen mocked the accommodation of science with climbing that caused the resignation of Tyndall, he also shows increasing weariness towards Alpine narratives as they settled into predictable patterns and displays of bravado:

I will not trouble my readers with a repetition in inverse order of the description of our previous adventures. I will not tell at length how I was sometimes half-suspended like a bundle of goods by the rope; ... how at one point, I conceived myself to be resting entirely on the point of one toe upon a stone coated with ice and fixed very loosely in the face of a tremendous cliff (Stephen 109).

By this time, as he wrote up his account of being the first to climb Zinalrothorn (1864), Stephen had already been the first to ascend Wildstrubel (1858), Bietschhorn (1859), Rimpfischhorn (1859), Alphubel (1860), Blüemlisalp (1860), Schreckhorn (1861) and Monte Disgrazia (1864). As early as the first volume of the Alpine Journal, there is evidence that interest was broadening to encompass other mountain ranges now that ‘so many of the great peaks of Switzerland have been already climbed, and the successful expeditions described’ (George, “Introductory Address” 2). This introductory address continues with ‘Moreover, the Himalayas, which are daily becoming more accessible to enterprise, offer an unlimited field for adventure and scientific observation, not to mention the numerous ranges in all parts of the world which the Englishman’s foot is some day destined to scale’ (George, “Introductory Address” 2). The patriotism displayed in successful climbs of Alpine peaks was now widening to incorporate victorious ascents of mountains from other continents. By the beginning of 1865, the Matterhorn was one of a very few significant peaks that had yet to be conquered. At the same time, articles in the Alpine Journal about mountaineering exploits further afield began to increase in number.

The September 1865 issue of the Alpine Journal reported fatal accidents on the Riffelhorn and Monte Rosa as well as those that occurred on Whypmer’s expedition on the

Matterhorn. The summit of the Matterhorn had been reached at tragic cost, and the incident marked a degree of closure to pioneering exploration in the Alps in this phase. Nevertheless, the perception of the Alps had undergone a transformation in the small space of a decade from the mid-1850s to the mid-1860s. During this period, the conquering of Alpine peaks had been synonymous with British masculine identity asserted by a new class of largely professional men able to afford the time and cost to travel to the Continent. Although there would always be scientific works surrounding the Alps, by the mid-1860s there was no need to be abashed about writing Alpine narratives that focused on issues of athleticism, adventure and high altitude aesthetics. The mountaineers represented a kind of bridge between all these various worlds adopting and extending perspectives from Ruskin, Turner and the Romantics from earlier in the century.

4.2 Thomas Cook and Alpine Tourism

‘It seems like the dawning of a new era in the great work of nearly a quarter of a century’ wrote Thomas Cook in 1864 after he had successfully organised continental expeditions to France, Switzerland and Italy (qtd. in Buzard 56). A new class of travellers was beginning to undertake excursions abroad using the newly-established rail network to get them to and across France. The fashionable appeal of the Alps through its portrayal in poetry, scientific monographs, poetic prose, and theatre, combined with narratives by English mountaineers, had served as inspiration for many to explore the Alpine terrain. The Alps were of interest to many for a variety of reasons: from those wishing to undertake geological investigations or stimulated by its literary and artistic heritage to those wishing a simple escape from an industrial climate; from those wishing to enjoy the peace and solitude of the environment, perhaps at high altitude, to those wishing to enjoy a merry and boisterous expedition with family and friends. The latter approach to exploring the Alps in particular caused consternation and antagonism in certain quarters as debates persisted into how one should interact with the landscape. These dialogues intensified once Thomas Cook established his trips abroad due to their instant popularity leading to a steady increase in tourists to environments that had previously been explored by a minority.

Thomas Cook, a temperance campaigner, initially conceived the idea of excursion travel as a means of distracting people from the temptations of alcohol. He was not the first to offer excursion travel to the Alps. From 1818 there were coach tours to and around Switzerland (Brendon 8), which, as Albert Smith proved, could be done reasonably cheaply if one was willing to make sacrifices on food and accommodation. Smith however undertook his first expeditions to the Alps whilst living in Paris; the journey from England

was time-consuming, expensive and impractical for many. For those who could afford the time and costs, there was the daunting prospect of sorting out suitable and safe transport and accommodation en route in a foreign language.

Cook was the first to realise the potential size of the market for organised travel both at home and abroad (Flanders 225), amplified by interest in the exotic and the foreign generated by the Great Exhibition. Before examining the possibility of travel to the continent, Cook had naturally concentrated on offering excursions around England and to Scotland and Ireland. The popularity of the Great Exhibition seemed an ideal occasion to promote and publicise his trips. To ensure as many as possible could attend, he had investigated new possibilities including ‘accepting watches, gold chains and other objects of value as collateral for tickets’, and requesting (unsuccessfully) ‘that in the interests of visitors from the regions the one shilling Exhibition ticket should be valid for four days instead of one’ (Swinglehurst 25). Significantly, Cook liaised with railway companies to make special arrangements to allow the greatest number to travel to London and had solidified his reputation for almost magically controlling the many disparate elements involved in transporting and accommodating large numbers of tourists. In The Making of Leisure, c.1850-1880, Cunningham argues that

[i]t was the Great Exhibition which made people aware of the full potentiality of the railway, and its ability to transform the leisure of the nation. The impact of the railway is in some ways the strongest evidence that there was a turning-point in the history of leisure at mid-century, and scarcely any form of leisure escaped its influence. What the Great Exhibition did was to familiarise people with the notion of travelling considerable

distances for the sake of leisure, and to give boost to the excursion business (157).

By 1851, there was 6,621 miles of railway line in operation in Britain, compared to 490 in 1838 (Ring 49-50). The interest and availability of travel in Britain would soon spread abroad. Though the continent was slower in constructing the rail network, there was marked progress by the early 1860s when Cook offered trips to Switzerland. Smith's Alpine shows, Ruskin's Of Mountain Beauty, the re-issue of Forbes' scientific travels, and climbing narratives by members of the Alpine Club all served to increase interest in travelling to the Alps by this time. Cook made his own contribution to the printed literature.

In 1851, he had published the first edition of Cook's Exhibition Herald and Excursion Advertiser which later became Cook's Excursionist. In the opening number, Cook emphasised how the journal aimed to be a 'practical worker rather than a sentimental traveller' (qtd in Brendon 60), expressing an outlook similar to that in Smith's The Story of Mont Blanc (1853) which had given advice of the best method of travelling to the Alps and where to stay in Chamonix. Cook's publication promoted new excursions, particularly those to new destinations, and advertised the arrangements available on behalf of the tourist with regard to travel and accommodation. In the same period that the Alpine Club was inspiring the new professional and middle classes to explore the Alps at high altitude, Cook was encouraging the less adventurous members of this class to journey abroad. Nonetheless, Cook expected his clientele (both male and female) to be active and energetic; the journey from Geneva to view the Mer de Glace above Chamonix for example was done in a day, giving the company a taste of high alpine exploration. In a way similar to Smith's timely Alpine shows a decade earlier, Cook's achievement was, as Brendon writes,

... to associate himself with the spirit of the age and to foster its most thrilling development. He not only appreciated the new opportunities for rational recreation that the railway offered but he learnt how to make use of them ... a specialist travel agent was still needed to organize complex journeys over several lines and to issue tickets for them at favourable rates. This is what Thomas Cook eventually became this making his unique contribution to simplifying, popularising and cheapening travel (17).

In the summer of 1863, Cook conducted his first organised trips to the Alps. By September of that year, over five hundred had travelled to Switzerland. The journey from Paris to Geneva was made by rail; the circuitous trip to Chamonix and the Mer de Glace combined hiking with carriages and mules. Many of these initial tourists went in personally conducted parties although about a quarter managed their own routes and schedules (Brendon 79). However, a combination of the popularity of the Alpine destinations, and controversy over the impact of these tours, meant that the majority travelled independently by 1865. Repeated excursions allowed Cook to establish contacts with railway officials, hotel owners, and local guides (Swinglehurst 41). This served a number of functions. Firstly, Cook could offer and deliver a precise description of the programme of trips to future tourists and produce an exact itinerary in Cook's Excursionist. Secondly, he could use the popularity of the trips to manipulate hotel keepers into catering for, as described in Cook's Excursionist, 'a thorough roast-beef-and-pudding-eating-Englishman' (qtd in Brendon 79). In her Swiss journal about her trip with Thomas Cook, Jemima Morrell records the typically English menu of the ten course lunch at a hotel in Geneva that consisted of 'vegetable soup (mild); salmon, with cream sauce; sliced roast beef with brown potatoes;

boiled fowl, served on rice; sweetbreads; roast fowl with salad; artichokes; plum pudding, steeped in brandy; sponge cakes and stewed fruit; sweet pudding in iced cream; two varieties of creams and ripe cherries' (Morrell 15-16). It was also possible to travel more cheaply. In 1863, an eighteen-day tour that included all hotel and travel expenses cost £15 12s 7d (Brendon 79), but Cook only used upmarket establishments that respectably catered for the needs and the wants of his respectable clientele.

The ostensibly upright nature of these continental tours did not prevent criticism of the character and quantity of the new tourists from other quarters of English society. A great deal of the criticism had little bearing on many individuals who travelled with Cook; most was based on issues of class, or the simple fact that the Alps were becoming significantly more populated through the summer months. As seen in the previous section, climbers like Leslie Stephen decried these 'very objectionable neighbours at an hotel' who 'spoil and trample under foot some of the loveliest of Alpine regions, such as Chamonix or Interlaken' (Stephen, 194). Similarly the Pall Mall Gazette was a severe critic. An 1865 article described a representative individual taking Cook's excursions as:

loud, vulgar, and self-sufficient, treating everything before him as if it had been produced solely for his gratification and criticism, showing his sense of being in "foreign parts" by a demeanour he would not dream of adopting at home, doing his best to spoil your enjoyment of art and nature, and exhibiting his own ignorance, stupidity, and incapacity for enjoyment with the utmost naïveté ("Cook v. Cornelius O'Dowd" 633).

The article rejects the idea that this is a matter of class, although the question of class is evidently one that pervades the argument. Instead the author argues that Cook's travels, by enlarging the numbers who can go abroad, simply increased the number who displayed 'boorishness, vulgarity and bad manners' (633).

The issue of who should go abroad had been most prominently taken up the novelist Charles Lever who was at the time living in Italy. Under the pseudonym of Cornelius O'Dowd, he submitted a vitriolic article to Blackwood's Magazine at the beginning of 1865.

It seems that some enterprising and unscrupulous man has devised the project of conducting some forty or fifty persons, irrespective of age or sex, from London to Naples and back for a fixed sum. He contracts to carry them, feed them, lodge them, and amuse them ... In a word, they are to be 'done for' in the most complete manner, and nothing called for on their part but a payment of so many pounds sterling, and all the details of the road or the inn, the playhouse, the gallery, or the museum, will be carefully attended to by this providential personage, whose name assuredly ought to be called Barnum! (230).

There is the implicit connection here to Smith's popular showmanship as Barnum was his friend and mentor. The argument also targets Cook as bringing an inferior cultural group into Europe who are willing to travel en masse, who contain both sexes and all ages to be entertained as one would be as a spectator in a circus, and who have little engagement with, or knowledge of, the areas through which they travel. Indeed the theatrical display of

Europe by Albert Smith and others made the association between foreignness and spectacle inevitable whether in terms of culture or landscape. Indeed, Lever associated cultural ignorance with cultural arrogance and chauvinism. He continues:

It is not merely that England swamps us with everything that is low-bred, vulgar, and ridiculous, but these people, from the hour they set out, regard all foreign countries and their inhabitants as something in which they have a vested right. They have paid for the Continent ... and they will have the worth of their money. ... Europe, in their eyes, is a great spectacle, like a show-piece at Convent Garden; and it is theirs to criticise the performance and laugh at will (231-2).

This kind of attack appears to have affected many people's decision about how to travel abroad. By the mid-1860s many would only purchase Cook's tickets providing they could travel independently (Brendon 91) thus encouraging the illusion of being (in modern parlance) travellers rather than tourists. For his part, Lever seems to believe that the continent is for the occupancy of local inhabitants and those few from a superior group who had the money and time to immerse themselves in the language and culture (Lever himself could speak the language and was acquainted with the customs).

Admittedly, there were some affiliated with Cook who treated the continental experience as spectacle, who would 'pay a franc to fire a cannon and make the Alps echo, and then go, in parties of fifty, up to the Mer de Glace, where, scarcely more than a century before, Boxing Windham and Richard Pococke [two early English explorers of the region] had sat and sipped their wine in the absolute silence of the glacial rift' (Schama 502).

However, the character of certain Englishman abroad had been questionable long before Cook's tourists appeared and before many could afford to spend any time on the Continent. Smith himself experienced the arrogant and abusive manner of the English tourist whilst staying at the hospice on the Great St. Bernard Pass in 1838 (Fitzsimons 36), whilst earlier in the century Thackeray writes in a chapter on continental snobbery in The Book of Snobs how 'I am inclined think that it is this conviction, and the consequent bearing of the Englishman towards the foreigner which holds up the head of the owner of every English hat-box from Sicily to St. Petersburg, that makes us so magnificently hated throughout Europe as we are' (92-93). The poor reputation of some of the new tourists merely built upon that established by those travelling through Europe in previous decades.

Concern about tourism in the Alps came in part because of the rapid development and popularity of these tours. Cook had been forced to refuse tickets to many applicants due to limited numbers of places available (Buzard 56). His earlier excursions to Scotland in the 1840s had suffered because rail travel was then inadequately equipped to transport people over long distances. Despite forward planning, further problems of accommodation and food en route marred the journey. Nonetheless, Cook persevered and undertook many journeys with tourists over a period of sixteen years to establish Scotland as a popular destination. By the early 1860s, the combination of Cook's experience and the popularity of the Alps not least through the likes of Albert Smith, ensured the instant appeal of the newly marketed continental trips, assisted by the co-operation of the Swiss authorities and hoteliers who, as interested parties, 'were particularly willing to co-operate – in marked contrast to the Scottish railway officials whose conservative business methods had stymied Cook's efforts' (Buzard 45). Shortly after he had established trips to Switzerland, Cook had

crossed the Alps and now offered tourists the opportunity of travelling to northern Italy, much to the consternation of Lever.

In contrast to those who distained this new influx of English sightseers to the Alps, Henry James had a more positive attitude to Alpine tourism. In Italian Hours he wrote of his experiences of travelling through Switzerland in September 1873, a time of the year when tourists ('chiefly English') were 'all flocking out of Switzerland, as in July they were flocking in, and the main channels of egress are terribly choked' (94). Rather than complaining about this invasion however, he writes:

...here are[,] I don't know how many hundred Cook's tourists a day looking at it through the smoke of their pipes. Is it really the 'masses,' however that I see every day at the table d'hôte? They have rather too few h's to the dozen, but their good-nature is great. Some people complain that they 'vulgarise' Switzerland; but as far as I am concerned I freely give it up to them, and offer them a personal welcome and take a peculiar satisfaction in seeing them here. Switzerland is a 'show country' – and I am more and more struck with the bearings of that truth; and its use in the world is to reassure persons of a benevolent imagination when they begin to wish for the drudging millions a greater supply of elevating amusement (95).

Fifteen years earlier, James had seen Albert Smith's 'Ascent of Mont Blanc' and now aligned the show with the degree of commodification that Switzerland and the Alps had undergone following its popular representation in the 1850s. James argues that the same pleasures of 'snow-peaks and glaciers and passes and lakes and chalets and sunsets'

appreciated by these tourists echoes those enjoyments that ‘lords and nabobs monopolised’ in the not too distant past’ (94). The point is important; the Alps were being appreciated in just as diverse a way as they had been before Smith and Cook, with people travelling for recreational, athletic, artistic, scientific or literary motives. The difference was the scale and number of travellers to the region, and the offshoot of this popularity in terms of hotel construction and developments in transport, much to the chagrin of Ruskin. Brendon argues that ‘there was something to Ruskin’s criticism. For Cook helped to domesticate Switzerland. Hotels did spring up to cater for the tourists ... By making Switzerland more comfortable Cook contrived to make it less exotic’ (82), although, as Stephen argues in A Playground of Europe, it was actually still not too difficult to escape and find peace and solitude (195).

The diversity of tourists to the Alpine region is exemplified in ‘My Excursion Agent’ by Edmund Yates in an 1864 number of All the Year Round. Yates had been a close friend of Albert Smith and championed his books and shows following Smith’s death in 1860. Here, he discusses the type of tourist inspired by, and associated with, performances by Smith, that so antagonised the Pall Mall Gazette. However, Yates also identifies another category of sightseer. In an article that contains a discussion with Thomas Cook, Yates writes:

As to Swiss excursions, ... the Whitsuntide trip has a good deal of the Cockney element in it, and is mostly composed of very high-spirited people, whose great delight in life is ‘having a fling,’ and who do Paris, and rush through France, and through Switzerland to Chamonix, compare every place they are taken to with the views which formed part of the exhibition at the

Egyptian Hall, carry London everywhere about with them in dress, habits and conversation, and rush back, convinced that they are great travellers. From these roysterers the July and September excursionists differ greatly: ushers and governesses, practical people from the provinces, and representatives of the better style of the London mercantile community who form the component parts, all travel as if impressed with the notion that they are engaged in fulfilling the wishes of a lifetime, in a pleasant duty never to be repeated. They stop at all the provincial towns, visiting all the curiosities to be seen in them, and are full of discussion among themselves, proving that they are nearly all thoroughly well-up in the subject. Many of them carry books of reference with them, and nearly all take notes. (302-2)

This second category of person who began visiting the Alps in the late 1850s and early 1860s, including those who went under Cook's guidance, included professors, schoolmasters, scientists, tradesmen, manufacturers and lawyers. In other words they overlapped in social terms with the same class that mountaineered in the region inspired by, or as a member of, the Alpine Club. Brendon claims that rather than having a disreputable character (according to critics) 'most of those joining Cook's parties were serious-minded persons who consulted their Baedekers and took notes on what they saw' (87).

One member of Thomas Cook's first party of tourists to Switzerland and through the Alps (accompanied by her 'faithful Baedeker' (Morrell 23)) was Jemima Morrell. The transcript of her diary was published as Miss Jemima's Swiss Journal: The First Conducted Tour of Switzerland in 1963 (a century after it was written). It contains a detailed account of her travels, with comments on the landscape, the route taken, modes of transport and

accommodation. Significantly it contradicts those critics who believed that tourism could not and was not used as a learning experience. Evidence from Morrell's diary demonstrates how travel could stimulate curiosity and appreciation of the Alpine landscape and cultivate enthusiasm for the arts, aligning with Cook's aim of 'opening up unprecedented opportunities for ordinary people to enrich and morally to uplift themselves through excursions' (Buzard 49). There are frequent references to literary sources juxtaposed with descriptions of the Alpine scenery. She quotes an appropriate piece from Wordsworth's poem Memorials of a tour on the Continent, 1820 entitled 'Echo, upon the Gemmi' as Morrell traces Wordsworth's trek across the Gemmi Pass

Stern GEMMI listens to as full a cry,
As multitudinous a harmony
Of sounds ... ranging on
Through the bleak concave, wakes this wondrous chime
Of aery voices locked in unison,--
Faint--far-off--near--deep--solemn and sublime! (2-4, 9-12)

Morrell also quotes from Ruskin, including 'Of Mountain Beauty' from Modern Painters on an area between Valorcine and Martigny: 'I do not know any district possessing a more pure or uninterrupted fullness of mountain character (and that of the highest order), or which appears to have been less disturbed by foreign agencies ...' (386). Unfortunately for Ruskin, the popularity of 'Of Mountain Beauty' and its powerful evocation of the Alpine landscape encouraged others to follow in his footsteps as he himself had done with Turner. The same had happened earlier following Wordsworth's A Guide through the District of

the Lakes in the North of England (1835). But the new numbers of tourists could make it harder for those wishing to appreciate the isolation and sublimity of the environment.

In opposition to the Ruskinian line is a revealing quotation from Morrell's diary. She writes:

Our lives needed no other romance than was afforded by the perfect freedom we enjoyed. It was an entire change; the usual routine of life was gone. All memory of times and seasons faded away and we lived only in the enjoyment of the present. We all felt that the recollection of these pleasant days would form a precious possession for the rest of our life (67-68).

The gender aspect of this is not unimportant. Cook's tours were an opportunity for women to undertake an energetic expedition through the Alpine landscape that combined a sense of freedom immersed in the scenery with the assurance that, if required, there was adequate guidance and supervision. Writing in Cook's Excursionist, a satisfied customer, Jane Dewing, lauds Cook in the summer of 1865 for 'the numerous places of interest we visited under your supervision and care, the beautiful scenery through which we passed, more lovely than anything we had ever imagined! – the presence of pleasant companions and kind friends, together with a total absence of anxiety on our parts (thanks to your admirable arrangements,) ...' (qtd in Buzard, p.58). The option for women to travel was now readily available and popular. However for Dewing, and her sister and mother, Cook's tours provided an ideal opportunity to explore foreign climes, safe from potential intrusions and inconveniences. One of Cook's objectives when establishing the Swiss tours had been to combine a feeling of freedom (there were choices in itinerary once the Alps had been

reached) with a structure that allowed Cook to organise the travel and accommodation. As the first Swiss tour was underway, he writes that ‘our aim has been to promote the easiest, simplest, and cheapest method of getting into Switzerland, and then offering the most perfect freedom compatible with a combined arrangement’ (qtd in Buzard 57-8).

In the mid 1860s, Thomas Cook had no comprehension of the possibility that his business might eventually become a vast commercial empire; indeed he continued his personal tours of the continent and retained his interest in travelling (Brendon, 98). He also gained in social respectability. By the late 1860s, and certainly in the concluding decades on the century, Cook’s tours appealed increasingly to members of the upper class. By the 1880s, ‘Cook had become an institution’ (Brendon, 97) and received acceptance and praise from the likes of Punch and the Illustrated London News. The former had made particular satirical attacks on Cook in the past. In the same summer of 1863 as Cook conducted his guided tour of the Alps, Punch ran a series of articles titled ‘How, When, and Where? Or, the Modern Tourist’s Guide to the Continent’. In these Punch criticised a perceived overprotection and lack of freedom on these excursions. An exaggerated inventory of necessary items included ‘panes of glass, in case any of the windows in your bedroom are broken’ (‘How, When and Where?’ 8 Aug. 1863, 61) whilst, on finally arriving at the Alps, Punch urges the tourists to be ‘as quick as possible if you please, as there’s not much time to be lost, for the Vacation is just coming to a close’ (‘How, When and Where?’ 24 Oct. 1863, 172). Indeed, the humour is akin to that displayed by Smith’s shows, ridiculing people for going abroad for anything, except to appreciate the landscape. But by the 1880s, these attacks in the media had been quelled now that Cook’s tours were popular with a spectrum of people that included the upper classes.

From an exclusive domain that was available to only a privileged few a couple of decades earlier, by the 1860s the Alps were now being explored by a wider class of people and by both genders, thus raising cultural anxieties over who should be allowed to travel through the continent and how places like the Alps should be experienced. Though the influx brought the detrimental effects of mass tourism in the establishment of hotels and other facilities to accommodate the new travellers, Cook's timely intervention into the European market, with improved accessibility, greater structure and heightened interest, allowed more people to experience an environment that many had earlier indirectly appreciated through poetry, prose or theatre.

4.3 Ruskin's Storm Clouds

The beginning of the 1860s and the publication of Modern Painters V marked a time when Ruskin 'turned his attention from the visual economy to the political economy that supported it, beginning with his most celebrated work of social criticism, Unto this Last' (Hewison Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 231). By this time Ruskin's interest in the Alps had diminished – or, more accurately, his interest in the present-day Alps frequented by climbers and tourists with the consequent expansion and commercialisation of towns including his cherished Chamonix had weakened. In Unto this Last, written high in the Alpine mountains in the summer of 1860, Ruskin criticised Albert Smith and those who followed in his footsteps, for treating the Alps like 'soaped poles in a bear garden' (Sesame and Lilies 89-90). However, at a more personal level, Ruskin found it increasingly difficult to discover meaning in the Alps in terms of the aesthetic beauty and spiritual significance he had earlier experienced, a condition exacerbated by his recent renunciation of Evangelical Protestantism. Having to venture further and further away from the tourist centres of Zermatt, Chamonix and Grindelwald, there seemed no escape from the 'storm-clouds' that Ruskin pictured in later trips to the Alps which symbolised man's propensity to pollute and destroy.

For Ruskin, many of the new travellers to the region, in numbers impossible to conceive a decade earlier, had little of the respect and reverence that the landscape deserved. Writing Fors Clavigera in the early 1870s, around the time he suffered one of his severe mental breakdowns, Ruskin censured two American travellers with whom he had shared a carriage whilst travelling through Europe. The Americans 'pulled down the blinds the moment they entered the carriage, and then sprawled and writhed; and tossed among the

cushions of it, in vain contest, during the whole fifty miles, with every miserable sensation of bodily affliction that could make time intolerable' (346). Ruskin was convinced that for many visitors to the area, the Alps were increasingly a fashionable backdrop for those with little time or inclination to appreciate their merits fully.

As we have seen, the sudden surge of people to the Alps, whether as climbers, artists, geologists, Cook's tourists or with other desires or purposes prompted a constant reassessment of the value of the mountains and of how they should be considered and treated. Furthermore, there were arguments about the numbers and class of travellers and tourists who were now exploring the area and the impact that they were having on the landscape. All these issues were considered by Ruskin in public and in private as he perceived both the obvious and subtle changes in the region. Increasingly for him there was a disjunction between the Alps of the present time and the idealised, sacred, but above all vanishing beauty of the past to which he continually referred in later work. After 1860 he never gave the Alps the protracted attention he had previously given, when hours of study had resulted in drawings, geological analysis and works such as Modern Painters. Now, when he considered them at all, it was usually to condemn their present condition, or to find sanctuary in the nostalgia of past encounters.

In 1860, Ruskin published the fifth and last volume of Modern Painters which continued his exploration of ideas concerning art and nature, and was the result of months spent examining meteorological changes in and around the Alps in addition to a detailed examination of the landscape. However, his perception of deterioration in the splendour of the landscape made it increasingly complicated for him to use the Alps to discuss how 'the perfectness [sic] and eternal beauty of the work of God' governs the natural world (Modern

Painter V 9). Walton argues that ‘he had lost his old delight in nature’ (98) which is true, although he continued to immerse himself in the natural world as a respite from the economic and social abuses he was recording elsewhere. He returned to his architectural interests and undertook intense drawing sessions in Italy at the end of the 1860s and the late 1870s as he prepared to revise The Seven Lamps of Architecture and The Stones of Venice respectively. However there was never the same extent of research carried out in the Alps. When he did draw the landscape it was no longer to convey authoritative ideas of truths in art and nature. Instead, as Walton notes,

it is characteristic of all his late drawings that they were made in the hope of regaining self-confidence and mental balance through the re-examination of subjects that had earlier provided happiness and security. This is why the work of this period has an intensified personal quality in its purpose, development, and style, which provides a striking contrast with the earlier drawings (Walton 98).

Positive reference to the Alpine landscape frequently referred back to past explorations of the area and its representation in art and poetry by the likes of Turner and Wordsworth, now both deceased. Alternatively, he construed the landscape through geological scrutiny combined with myth and symbolism that attempted to ignore the contemporary geological and evolutionary ideas that challenged Creationist doctrine. His painting and drawing in works such as The Elements of Drawing (1857) and later volumes of Modern Painters show a movement from detail and accuracy to the subjective and emotional rendition of the object. These approaches determinedly disregarded the Alps as they presented themselves to many newcomers in the 1860s.

In 1858, Ruskin painted the Alps of the Val d'Aosta as seen from Turin as he prepared for Modern Painters V. Rather than the mountains, however, it is the clouds, which all but conceal the Alps, that first strike one on viewing the watercolour. Ruskin devoted a whole section to cloud beauty in this volume, and, when analysing their configuration over the Alps of the Val d'Aosta, he writes:

It has a grand volcanic look, but I believe its aspect of rising from the peak to be almost, if not altogether, deceptive; and that the apparently gigantic column is a nearly horizontal stream of lee-side cloud, tapered into the distance by perspective, and thus rising at its apparently lowest, but in reality most distant point, from the mountain summit whose shade calls it into being out of the clear winds (168-9).

The quotation exemplifies his increasingly detailed analysis of cloud movement. The section as a whole explores how clouds had been artistically recreated in the past with, perhaps more significantly, his analysis of how they should be now represented in art. The period spent in Turin when he produced the watercolour 'July Thundercloud in the Val d'Aosta' (see fig. 9 below), and its subsequent use and interpretation in Ruskin's later life, are significant. In contrast to the confident tone in the final volume of Modern Painters, that proclaims 'the clouds, prepared by the hands of God for the help of man, varied in their ministration – veiling the inner splendour – show, not His eternal Glory, but His daily handiwork' (196), this was the time that he finally conceded in private that his faith in Evangelical Protestantism, powerfully held from his youth, had dissolved.



Fig. 11. John Ruskin, 'July Thundercloud in the Val d'Aosta' (1858).

Ruskin's loss of faith in the late 1850s affected his outlook on the Alps and other natural phenomena. A need to re-evaluate the symbolic power and meaning of the mountains also coincided with a decade that saw extensive alterations to the landscape by the new influx of tourists. By 1860, Modern Painters V makes the revealing assertion that 'Wherever I look in England or abroad, I see that men, wherever they can reach, destroy all beauty. They seem to have no other desire or hope but to have large houses and to be able to move fast. Every perfect and lovely spot which they can touch, they defile' (423). The foundation for Ruskin's grievance in this instance is made explicit in his notes for this complaint 'Thus, the railroad bridge over the Fall of Schaffhausen, and that round the Clarens shore of the lake of Geneva, have destroyed the power of two pieces of scenery of which nothing can ever supply the place, in appeal to the higher ranks of European mind' (Modern Painters V 423). Cook's tourists were implied in this criticism, including Jemima Morrell (a member of Thomas Cook's first Alpine excursion) who followed in Ruskin's footsteps across the Gemmi Pass in Switzerland and who made several references to him in her diary.

Ruskin's distaste for new constructions in popular towns such as Grindelwald and Chamonix has already been commented upon in section 2.2 and Ruskin advocated that they

should be excluded from drawings made of the area. His dislike of characters such as Smith has also been noted in dismissive reference to that part of 'our modern society ... [that] goes to the mountains, not to fast, but to feast, and leaves their glaciers covered in chicken-bones and egg-shells' (Modern Painters III 320). On excursions to the Alps from the 1860s onwards, Ruskin sought refuge from the increasing numbers of visitors to the Alps, and advocated that others did the same. To explore the Alps independently and not through an organised excursion was to immerse oneself fully in the environment. This included expeditions made for artistic purposes and to examine the geology of the region. The latter is explored in Deucalion in a piece taken from a lecture given in the Museum of Oxford in 1874. Having criticised the presumption that Alpine climbing is the only true way to appreciate the Alps, Ruskin continues:

You can no more see the Alps from the Col du Géant, or the top of the Matterhorn, than the pastoral scenery of Switzerland from the railway carriage. If you want to see the skeletons of the Alps, you may go to Zermatt or Chamouni; but if you want to see the body and soul of the Alps, you must stay awhile among the Jura, and in the Bernese plain. And, in general, the way to see the mountains is to take a knapsack and a walking-stick, leave alpenstocks to be flourished in each other's faces, and between one another's legs, by Cook's tourists, and try to find some companionship in yourself with yourself; and not to be dependent for your good cheer either on the gossip of the table-d'hôte, the hail-fellow and well met, hearty though it may be, or even the pleasantest of celebrated guides (103-4).

Whilst every encouragement is made to seek relatively unchanged areas of the Alpine landscape for geological investigation, Ruskin argues that one should not make too many connections between the present and the distant past, as Charles Lyell had advocated. Ruskin proposes that one should not care about ‘deep histories’ and issues surrounding the creation of the Alps, but should rather concentrate on their history since man has lived there. As the title of the work implies, and as Hilton points out (591-2), Deucalion does not focus on topical issues in materialistic science concerning origins, but rather expands on ideas of myth as well as geology and botany. In Greek legend, Deucalion, the son of Prometheus, and his wife Pyrrha are the only survivors of a flood. To repopulate the land they were instructed to throw stones over their shoulders, which became men and women. Ruskin’s reason for the title Deucalion was ‘because I think it well that the young student should first of all learn the myths of the betrayal and redemption, as the Spirit which moved on the face of wide first waters, taught them to the heathen world. And because, in this power, Prosperine and Deucalion are at least as true as Eve or Noah; and all four incomparably truer than the Darwinian theory ...’ (Deucalion 98-9). Ruskin seems not only to detach himself from the Alpinists and tourists but also the modern geological debates surrounding the formation of land forms, a science, he argues, which has usurped zoology in ‘name and interest’ (Lectures on Art 102). Ruskin’s argument in both Deucalion and Lectures on Art is clear, that before one attempts to uncover issues surrounding geological evidence for the Earth’s protracted history, ‘questions of which there are yet no data even for the clear statement’ (Lectures on Art 102), one needs to undertake a detailed examination of the landscape oneself: ‘half the educated society of London travel every summer over the great plain of Switzerland, none know, or care to know, why that is a plain, and the Alps to the south of it are Alps’ (Lectures on Art, 102). Meanwhile, the understanding of such a landscape, he argued, must include consideration of their spiritual

and cultural significance as well as their material structure. One will see later how such concerns led Ruskin to criticise the scientist and mountaineer John Tyndall's writing on the Alps based on accusation of his relative superficiality.

Ruskin's desire to seclude himself in an isolated region of the Alps led him in 1863 to purchase land on top of the Brezon mountain in Bonneville, near Chamonix. This coincided with a period when his beloved Rose la Touche was severely ill and suggests that the Alps were used, in part at least, as an escapist sanctuary (Hilton 344). The location also indicates Ruskin's aim in selecting an environment unspoiled by development and far from human activity. Friends and colleagues argued that such a remote area, with no road or water, was unsuitable, and that it would take a long, laborious amount of time and much money to transport building materials. In the end, the project never materialised for a variety of reasons. The appeal of the area was that he believed it to be untouched, but he returned once to find 'the place covered with charcoal burners' refuse – many of my favourite trees destroyed' (Ruskin, Letters Volume I 513). His attempt to isolate himself from the devastation he perceived around him in the Alps had failed once more. In a revealing letter to his father in September 1863, Ruskin discussed the financial intricacies of the land purchase, and went on to highlight the long-term environmental damage caused by the destruction of the natural landscape:

The only thing that grieves me is when these old mountain feelings pass from me. It is a cloudless day, and at this moment ... a little black cluster of five people are just visible creeping up the last snow wreath of the Mont Blanc summit – it is all glittering and smooth about them and blue above. The glaciers below have sunk and retired to a point at which I never saw

them till this year; if they continue to retire thus, another summer or two will melt the lower extremity of the Glacier des Bois quite off the rocks. This is of no advantage, as large spaces of fearful rubbish are left bare (Letters Volume I 453-4).

As a result of decades spent exploring, painting and writing about the alpine region, Ruskin perceived not only the material impact brought about by the arrival of mass tourism and associated developments in the popular destinations, but also the more subtle environmental changes. The effect of climate change on the glaciers resurfaced in Fors Clavigera where Ruskin reiterated his concerns about change within the Alpine mountains. Almost a decade after his aborted attempt to establish a home in the mountains he writes with extraordinary prescience: ‘One-third, at least, in the depth of all the ice of the Alps has been lost in the last twenty years; and the change of climate thus indicated is without parallel in authentic history. In its bearings on the water supply and atmospheric conditions of central Europe, it is the most important phenomenon, by far, of all that offer themselves to the study of living men of science’ (636). This follows an idealistic, pastoral story of a ‘Swiss life now fast passing away’ (635) illustrating the comparison he continually made between the contemporary state of the Alps and the landscape as it appeared to him before its popularisation.

The importance of the environmental changes affecting the Alps were not, Ruskin believed, taken seriously enough by those with scientific interests in the region. He directed particularly criticism towards John Tyndall despite Tyndall’s similar concern about the receding glaciers. Tyndall visited the Mer de Glace in June 1872 after a period of twelve years and wrote that ‘It exhibited in a striking degree that excess of consumption over

supply which, if continued, will eventually reduce the Swiss glaciers to the mere spectres of their former selves. ... the ice-cliffs and séracs of former days are but poorly represented to-day' (Tyndall, The Forms of Water xiii-xiv). As seen in chapter 4.1, Tyndall wrote for both a scientific audience and also for those with an interest in the new sport of mountaineering. Ruskin disliked the mixed messages. In Deucalion (written spasmodically between 1875-1883) he complains that, in Glaciers of the Alps (published in 1860 during the height of 'The Golden Age of Mountaineering'), Tyndall 'ought more clearly to understand that scientific writing is one thing, and pleasant autobiography another' (144), and that he had to 'read through three pages of narrative describing the Professor's dangers and address, before I can get at the two observations which are the sum of the scientific contents of the chapter' (145).

Ruskin also targeted Tyndall's The Forms of Water in Clouds and Rivers, Ice and Glaciers (1872) developed from a series of lectures at the Royal Institution delivered to a young audience. Ruskin's criticism here is more severe, and he berates Tyndall for writing 'for entirely ignorant people – and entirely idle ones, who cannot be got to read without being coaxed and flattered into the unusual exertion' (636). This is perhaps too harsh on the intended audience. Ruskin however sees Tyndall's writings as a poor replacement for works by Saussure and Forbes. In addition to his tone, style and general attitude, Ruskin was opposed to Tyndall's Regelation Theory of glacial movement, one which he had been advocating since the 1850s: 'the gist of the Regelation is that the ice of glaciers changes its form and preserves its continuity under *pressure* which keeps its particles together. But when subjected to *tension*, sooner than stretch it *breaks*, and behaves no longer as a viscous body' (Tyndall, The Forms of Water 167). The theory, published jointly by Tyndall and Thomas Huxley in 1857, was based upon experiments conducted by Tyndall in the Alps

including a trip to the Glacier des Bois near Chamonix where ‘the rocks alongside the glacier were beautifully scratched and polished, and I paid particular attention to them, for the purpose of furnishing myself with a key to ancient glacier action’ (Tyndall, The Glaciers of the Alps 36). Tyndall’s hypothesis opposed Forbes’ theory that ‘a glacier is an imperfect fluid, or a viscous body, which is urged down slopes of a certain inclination by the mutual pressure of its parts’ (Forbes, Travels through the Alps 366). The conflict was not purely technical; there were issues of scientific priority. Tyndall accused Forbes of capitalising on a theory already established by M. le Chanoine Rendu in Théorie des Glaciers de la Savoie (1840) who again used the Glacier des Bois, but here to exemplify his ideas on the fluidity of ice: ‘There is between the Glacier des Bois and a river a resemblance so complete that it is impossible to find in the glacier a circumstance which does not exist in the river’ (qtd in Ruskin, Deucalion xxxiv).

Rendu was the first to conceive of ice as not a wholly solid substance, although by 1840 it was generally agreed that glaciers moved. In Manfred (1817), Byron wrote ‘The glacier’s cold and restless mass / Moves onward day by day’ (68-69) basing his claim on observations made by Shelley on a trip to Mont Blanc and Chamonix (Wu 720). One theory of this movement was the Dilatation Theory which held that, when rain falls onto a glacier, it freezes and causes the glacier to expand. The second was the Sliding Theory of Saussure that assumed, as Ruskin points out, ‘that all mountains are as smooth as house-roofs’ (Deucalion, 229). Despite his challenge to conventional ideas, Rendu conceded that ‘the fact of motion exists, but the mode of motion is entirely unknown. Perhaps with long observation with experiments of ice and snow carefully made, we shall succeed in grasping it; but we are still in want of these first elements’ (qtd in Deucalion xxxiv). In Travels through the Alps, Forbes provided the observations based upon his many expeditions in the

Alps from which he could expound his viscous theory that, in the words of Ruskin, ‘glaciers were not solid bodies at all, but semi-liquid ones, and ran down in their beds like so much treacle’ (Fors Clavigera: Letters 1-36 639). Even Tyndall recognised the empirical research of Forbes: his use of a theodolite to determine the movement of a glacier over a brief period of time and to propose that motion was continuous, as well as his mapping of glacial regions, were key sources ‘of our knowledge of glacier phenomena’ (The Forms of Water 62).

Tyndall however was less complimentary about Forbes’s viscous theory making various criticisms about its viability and also belittling Forbes’s contribution to the debate: ‘To a Savoyard priest [Rendu] ... we are indebted for the first clear enunciation of the truth that a glacier moves as a river; an idea which, as you know, was subsequently maintained with energy and success by a distinguished countryman of our own’ (Tyndall, The Glaciers of the Alps 248-9). Cook and Wedderburn, in their introduction to Ruskin’s Deucalion, claim that in The Glaciers of the Alps ‘Tyndall’s quotations omitted Forbes’s own acknowledgement of Rendu’s researches’ (Deucalion xxxvii), but the professional and personal quarrel continued until Forbes’s death in 1868, and resurfaced with the publication of Tyndall’s The Forms of Water with Ruskin taking the side of Forbes. Ruskin had been convinced of Forbes’s theory on glacial movement and believed Travels through the Alps to be the definitive work on the subject based upon ‘conclusive experiments’ (Deucalion 139). Consequently, his work is quoted often in Modern Painters IV when Ruskin makes detailed examinations of the Alpine landscape. He met Forbes once in 1844 and ‘greatly respected and admired his character’ (Deucalion, xxxviii) perhaps seeing an affinity with this dedicated scientist in contrast to Tyndall who wrote about ‘how light a value I set on my scientific labours in the Alps’ (Tyndall, The Glaciers of the Alps 249) and who also

perceived the Alpine landscape with anthropocentric eyes: ‘They make me feel in all my fibres the blessedness of perfect manhood, causing mind, soul, and body, to work together with a harmony and strength unqualified by infirmity or ennui’ (The Glaciers of the Alps 249).

Ruskin saw in Tyndall an example of the materialistically-minded cheapening of his cherished Alpine landscape at a time when it was more important than ever to study the environment in order to attempt to comprehend the climatic changes that were taking place. Leslie Stephen had argued that any scientific analysis by Alpine climbers tended to mask the true reasons why climbers explored at high altitude, which centred on man’s physical relationship with the mountain. Ruskin wished for successors to Saussure and Forbes but saw in Tyndall one who concurred with Stephen’s theory rather than being preoccupied with scientific investigation. His intervention in a rather technical dispute really reflected the passing of his generation, and cultural style, to those with whom he had little or no sympathy.

Ruskin’s concern at the state of the receding Alpine glaciers was just part of his overall consternation over the environmental impact that man was having on the natural landscape. This had its origins around the turn of the 1860s when his interest turned away from nature and its artistic representation to a critique of the political economy of what he perceived to be a corrupt society. In 1860, Ruskin commented on the pollution in London where one ‘now entirely loses at least two out of three sunrises owing to the environing smoke’ (Modern Painters V 146). From his studies of sky and cloud, Ruskin later discerned evidence that pollution was affecting the natural landscape in the Lake District where he lived from the early 1870s. As Hewison points out, ‘Ruskin was right, industrial pollution

had indeed darkened the skies over his home in the Lake District as it had over London, as meteorological records confirm' (Ruskin, Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites 245). In 1869 he was making similar observations abroad, as detailed in the preface to The Queen of the Air:

This first day of May, 1869, I am writing where my work was begun thirty-five years ago, - within sight of the snows of the higher Alps. In that half of the permitted life of man, I have seen strange evil brought upon every scene that I best loved, or tried to make beloved by others. The light which once flushed those pale summits with its rose at dawn, and purple at sunset, is now umbered and faint; the air which once inlaid the clefts of all their golden crags with azure is now defiled with languid coils of smoke, belched from worse than volcanic fires; their very glacier waves are ebbing, and their snows fading, as if hell had breathed on them; the waters that once sank at their feet into crystalline rest are now dimmed and foul, from deep to deep, and shore to shore. These are no careless words - they are accurately - horribly - true. I know what the Swiss lakes were; no pool of Alpine fountain at its source was clearer. This morning, on the Lake of Geneva, at half a mile from the beach, I could scarcely see my oar-blade a fathom deep [sic] (293).

The language is powerful and vehement and blame is firmly attributed to human activity.

Detecting how pollution was affecting the Alps, Ruskin also used its impact as a moral metaphor for the inhumanity, injustice and economic exploitation that forms the subject of such works as Unto this Last. Specifically, the environmental damage that

Ruskin witnessed in the Alps was enfolded into the idea of ‘storm-clouds’ that had both actual and allegorical significance in his later writings. The painting ‘July Thundercloud in the Val d’Aosta’ discussed earlier (fig. 11) was later used to illustrate how the effects of pollution and climate change affected the Alpine landscape. The clouds which had innocently illustrated Modern Painters took on a more threatening role when used to illustrate his lecture The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century in 1884 echoing the ominous statement made in 1860 that ‘To him [Turner], as to the Greek, the storm-clouds seemed messengers of fate’ (Modern Painters V 189). In The Storm-Cloud he comments on a trip made to the Sallenches at the beginning of the 1880s:

This morning, at half-past five, the Mont Blanc summit was clear, and the greater part of the Aiguilles du Plan and Midi clear dark – all, against pure cirri, lighted beneath by sunrise; the sun of course not visible yet from the valley.

By seven o’clock, the plague-clouds had formed in *brown* flakes, down to the base of the Aiguilles de Bionassay, entirely covering the snowy ranges; the sun, as it rose to us here, shone only for about ten minutes – gilding in its old glory the range of the Dorons; –before one had time to look from peak to peak of it, the plague-cloud formed from the west, hid Mont Joli, and steadily choked the valley with advancing streaks of dun-coloured mist. Now – twenty minutes to nine – there is not *one ray* of sunshine on the whole valley, or on its mountains, from the Forclaz down to Cluse. (The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century 70-71).

By the time of writing this lecture, Ruskin had already suffered from a major psychological collapse in the late 1870s and further breakdowns in the early 1880s. The deterioration of his mental state however stretched further back. In Ariadne Florentina he records how in 1871 he ‘was stuck by an acute inflammatory illness at Matlock, and reduced to a state of extreme weakness; lying at one time unconscious for some hours, those about me having no hope of my life’ (Lectures on Landscape 444-5). In this state he dreamt of the preparation for an

exhibition of a religious drama. Part of the sky was to be a scene in which demons were to appear in the sky; and the stage servants were arranging grey fictitious clouds, and painting fiends, for it, under the direction of the priests ... And I waited; and when the scene came on, the clouds became real clouds, and the fiends real fiends, agitating them in slow quivering, wild and terrible, over the heads of the people and priests (446).

The dream seems to indicate an apocalyptic premonition based upon encroaching clouds that, in waking reality, had become associated in his mind with man’s destructive capacities.

It was this complex amalgamation of dream and reality that affected Ruskin’s later vision of the Alps and the associated meteorological conditions that had been a fundamental part of his landscape studies in earlier years. In later life he records in his diary how ‘the bad weather is the very Devil in visible form to me’ (The Diaries of John Ruskin 1848-1873 720) as the plague clouds and plague winds blow ‘with increasing intensity through Ruskin’s mind’ combining actual pollution within the landscape with his

psychological instability (Hewison, John Ruskin: The Argument of the Eye 160). All this is in marked contrast to his earlier examination of clouds in the 1830s and early 1840s that formed the basis of Modern Painters I. Here, changes in the shape and form of clouds are seen to be by solely natural causes and provide witness to the glory of God. In his chapter on 'Of Truth of Clouds' he writes of how the distance between the observer and the cloud in the central region of the Alps 'permits a multitude of local phenomena capable of influencing colour, such as accidental sunbeams, refractions, transparencies, or local mists and showers, to be collected into a space apparently small, the colours of these clouds are always changeful and palpitating; and whatever degree of grey or of gloom may be mixed with them is invariably pure and aërial' (393-4).

Ruskin's last trip to Chamonix and the Alps in the late 1880s, shortly before his final debilitating breakdown in 1889, coincided with a study of clouded skies. This resulted in a series of water-colours designed for a new edition of the section on clouds written for Modern Painters. This is the final significant example of Ruskin's engagement with the Alps and one that typically attempts to find solace in the region by reminiscing on former times. The transformation of the Alps from the mid-nineteenth century onwards affected Ruskin more than most because he had spent so many years writing, drawing, analysing and appreciating the Alps before Smith, Cook and the concurrent advances in mass transport revolutionised the region. Paradoxically, Ruskin himself contributed to the rising interest not least through the powerful, lyrical prose of 'Of Mountain Glory' that concluded the fourth volume of Modern Painters (1856).

A generation earlier, in the final paragraph of A Guide through the District of the Lakes in the North of England (1835), Wordsworth aired similar concerns about the future

of the Lake District. The popularity of the region by the 1830s led to both an increase in the number of tourists and in those wishing to move to the area:

... it is probable, that in a few years the country on the margin of the Lakes will fall almost entirely into the possession of gentry, either strangers or natives. It is then much to be wished, that a better taste should prevail among new proprietors; and, as they cannot be expected to leave things to themselves, that skill and knowledge should prevent unnecessary deviations from the path of simplicity and beauty along which, without design and unconsciously, their humble predecessors have moved. In this wish the author will be joined by persons of pure taste throughout the whole island, who, by their visits (often repeated) to the Lakes in the North of England, testify that they deem the district a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy (The Prose Works II, 286).

The mood here is largely optimistic, registering only a residual concern for the future of the Lake District. However, only ten years later Wordsworth writes with consternation at the proposed railway that would go through Kendal and on to Windermere. In a letter to the Morning Post, he questions ‘What can, in truth, be more absurd, than that either rich or poor should be spared the trouble of travelling by the high roads over so short a space, according to their respective means, if the unavoidable consequence must be a great disturbance of the retirement, and in many places the destruction of the beauty of the country, which the parties are come in search of?’ (Wordsworth, Prose II 331). Wordsworth saw serious threats to the aesthetic beauty of the Lake District in the very way that Ruskin

perceived similar concerns about the Alps from the 1850s. Ruskin sought solace in any study of the region that dissociated itself from these changes, including drawing, geological investigations and updating previous written works. But the changes in the Alps symbolised more widespread abuses against which Ruskin railed during the second half of his life.

Conclusion

‘The veneration of height was almost automatic’ (161) claims MacFarlane in Mountains of the Mind when examining attitudes to mountains towards the end of the nineteenth century. After the speculation and debate over the dangers of mountaineering had settled following Whymper’s tragic descent of the Matterhorn, the final decades of the nineteenth century saw a more favourable outlook to exploring at altitude (see Fleming, Killing Dragons 292-301). By the end of the century, all the Alpine peaks had been climbed, mostly by the British, who continued to write of their exploits in publications like The Alpine Journal which maintained the association between successful climbs and notions of nationalism and imperial superiority. Jim Ring points out that in the final three decades of the nineteenth century, climbers were moving away from the Matterhorn, Mont Blanc and the Bernese Oberland to explore less frequented districts (100). However, articles from The Alpine Journal from the late 1860s onwards also show an increasing interest in conquering mountains around the world echoing Britain’s emergence as an imperial power. As already seen in chapter three of this thesis, and reinforced by Hansen in his article ‘Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain’, this jingoism followed the shows of Albert Smith who, according to Hansen, ‘embodied a set of related social and cultural changes which the middle-class members of the Alpine Club later institutionalized as a form of imperial exploration in Victorian mountaineering’ (301).

Popular interest in exploring Alpine regions steadily increased following Thomas Cook’s first conducted tour in 1863. By the end of the century, tourism in the Alps had become firmly established attracting many from the upper classes in addition to the middle

classes who had been originally escorted abroad by Cook. Interest in the region had been aided by Queen Victoria who, in the summer of 1868, made her first trip to the Alps (in the previous decade she had commissioned a private performance of Albert Smith's Mont Blanc show); meanwhile, Dickens' and Wilkie Collins' Alpine story No Thoroughfare (1867) was made into a play and performed to great commercial success at the Adelphi Theatre in London during the Christmas season of 1867. In a letter to his daughter, Mary, Dickens wrote: 'From a letter Wilkie has written to me, it seems there can be no doubt that the 'No Thoroughfare' drama is a real, genuine, and great success. It is drawing immensely, and seems to 'go' with great effect and applause' (Dickens, Letters 31). From the mid nineteenth century, the Alps were also held to have cleaner and purer air appropriate for the various health treatments, especially respiratory conditions including tuberculosis. Sanatoria were opened in resorts like Davos that received patients including Elizabeth Gaskell and, later, Robert Louis Stevenson. The sick, the healthy and the fashionable converged.

The popularity and diversity of these developments in the Alps went beyond anything that could have been conceived by Ruskin or Smith. Both instigated cultural changes by challenging previous ideas of the sublime and, particularly in Smith's case, the romantic appreciation of nature. Ruskin had advocated a more intimate knowledge with the region that aligned scientific understanding and aesthetic appreciation. This meant simultaneously becoming familiar with the geology of the mountains as well as their aesthetic beauty viewed from below at a respectable, low-level distance from the heights. Smith, on the other hand, instigated a more aggressive and populist approach to the mountains, conquering the highest available and then presenting a show that celebrated man's dominance over nature.

In terms of influence over future generations of climbers and tourists, it would initially seem that Smith had the greatest influence. But, by the time of his death in 1860, many who explored the region had distanced themselves from his legacy. He is ignored in the narratives in the Alpine Club journal and also in Stephen's The Playground of Europe, despite the fact that it has an introductory couple of chapters outlining the rise in popularity of the region. In subsequent accounts of the history of the Alps, including Gavin de Beer's Early Travellers in the Alps (1930), Travellers in Switzerland (1949) and Speaking of Switzerland (1952), Ronald Clark's The Victorian Mountaineers (1953) and The Alps (1973), and Arnold Lunn's The Alps (1914) and A Century of Mountaineering 1857-1957 (1957), Smith is either disregarded or ignored completely. Instead, Ruskin is championed as the cultural link between the Romantic appreciation of the Alpine aesthetic and early scientists in the region including Forbes and Saussure, and the later Alpinists who claim to have an intense and respectful relationship with the peaks. The apparently vulgar Smith, with his populist tastes and media orientation, is omitted from the tale of the Victorian 'discoveries' of the Alps. Yet his attitudes and achievements, including the fascination with danger, elevation, and narratives of achievement, which, however high minded, are an essential part of the armoury of mountaineering story-telling, are ignored. And yet such activities – the lecture tour, the tie-in book, the TV programme – by celebrity climbers and adventurers are the lineal descendants of Albert Smith's showmanship in London's Egyptian Hall.

More recently, in Band's Summit: 150 Years of the Alpine Club (2006) Schama's Landscape and Memory (1996), Hansen's 'Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain' (1995), Ring's How the English

Made the Alps (2000), Fleming's Killing Dragons (2001) and McFarlane's Mountains of the Mind (2003), Smith is been recognised as a key influence in the developing interest in the Alps and has been given a place alongside Ruskin and other luminaries. It is fair to credit both with raising awareness of, and popularising, the landscape, and encouraging many actively to seek out the sights that both presented so vividly in their disparate works.

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