

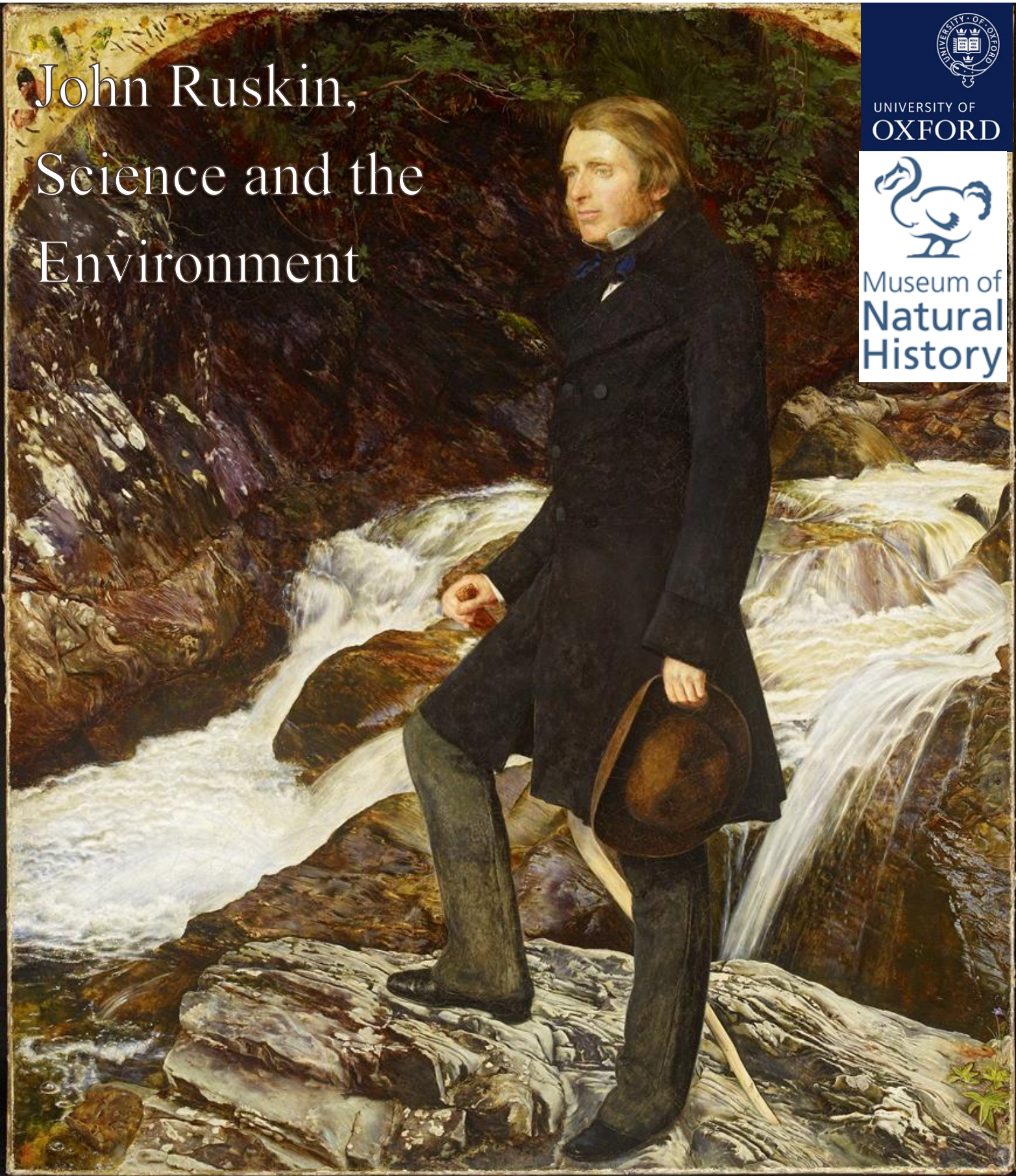
# John Ruskin, Science and the Environment



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD



Museum of  
Natural  
History



Arts & Humanities  
Research Council



CONSTRUCTING  
SCIENTIFIC  
COMMUNITIES



DISEASES OF  
MODERN LIFE



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



# Ruskin, Science and the Environment Schedule

9.30-10.00	Registration
10.00-10.10	<b>Opening Remarks</b> Prof Paul Smith (OUMNH), Prof Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford), and Prof John Holmes (Birmingham)
10.10-11.30	<b>Session 1: Ruskin's Futures</b> Ruskin: Museum of the Near Future - Prof Sandra Kemp (Lancaster) Nature's Uses: Ruskin on Trusteeship and Environmental Economy - Dr Marcus Waithe (Cambridge)
11.30-11.50	Tea and coffee
11.50-1.05	<b>Session 2: Other Sciences, Other Environments</b> Ruskin Among the Psychologists - Dr Peter Garratt (Durham) Ruskin's "Unscientific" Environments - Prof Francis O'Gorman (Edinburgh)
1.05-1.50	Lunch
1.50-3.40	<b>Session 3: Ecocritical Perspectives</b> Ruskin and Lichen - Prof Kate Flint (USC) Rock of Ages and Ages: Past, Present and Future Geologies in <i>The Stones of Venice</i> - Prof John Parham (Worcester) Divine and Defiled Waters: Ruskin, Environment, and Boundary Crises in the Victorian Age - Dr Mark Frost (Portsmouth)
3.40-4.00	Tea and coffee
4.00-4.30	<b>Ruskinian Principles in Practice 1</b> John Iles on Ruskin Land
4.30-5.00	Break to explore the museum
5.00-5.30	<b>Ruskinian Principles in Practice 2</b> A tour of the museum with Prof John Holmes (Birmingham)
5.30	Conference close. Delegates are invited to explore the museum before the Public Lecture.
6.00-7.00	<b>Public Lecture: Ruskin's Trees</b> Prof Fiona Stafford (Oxford)

The conference is accompanied by an exhibition of designs for the museum by Ruskin and others. Delegates will be invited to visit the exhibition over lunch and before the tour of the museum.

Welcome to *Ruskin, Science and the Environment*, a conference run jointly by the AHRC-funded Constructing Scientific Communities project and the ERC-funded Diseases of Modern Life project at the University of Oxford, and the Nineteenth-Century Centre at the University of Birmingham, in conjunction with the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. John Ruskin was born two-hundred years ago today on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1819. Ruskin is remembered primarily as an art critic and a social theorist, but he was also an acute observer of the natural world. Ruskin set himself against the materialism of his age, intellectually and politically. He was both a contributor to and a critic of science, and railed against the despoliation of natural environments and the damage wrought by industrialisation. To celebrate his bicentenary, we will be exploring Ruskin's many engagements with Victorian science and the legacy of his ideas for environmentalism today in a museum which was itself inspired at once by nature and by Ruskin's writings on art and architecture. The conference will be accompanied by an exhibition giving a rare opportunity to see designs for the museum by Ruskin and others, including the Pre-Raphaelite artists Thomas Woolner, Alexander Munro and John Hungerford Pollen.

Professor Sally Shuttleworth and Professor John Holmes

## Wi-Fi access and Twitter

If you have an eduroam account, you can connect to the Wi-Fi using that. However, the Museum of Natural History is also one of Oxford City Council's Wi-Fi hotspots, to provide free Wi-Fi in public buildings:

“When searching for a Wi-Fi connection simply select ‘Oxford Free Wi-Fi’ and click on ‘Get Online’. This is a free service and we are pleased to offer this to all our visitors.”

We will be live tweeting the day from our project account, **@diseasesmodlife**, using the hashtag **#Ruskin200**. Please join in the discussion if you have a twitter account, so that our work can speak beyond the confines of the conference. The handles of speakers who use Twitter are given as part of the programme.

*Diseases of Modern Life: Nineteenth Century Perspectives* is funded by the European Research Council within the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme under Grant Number 340121. *Constructing Scientific Communities: Citizen Science in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries* is supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council under grant number LH/L007010/1.

## Abstracts

### Session 1: Ruskin's Futures

#### **Ruskin: Museum of the Near Future**

*Prof Sandra Kemp (Lancaster University)*

The Ruskin Library (RL) is home to the premier collection of the epoch-defining artist, critic, environmentalist and social thinker John Ruskin (1819-1900). It houses thousands of paintings and drawings, books and manuscripts, prints, photographs and 125 daguerreotypes, including amongst the earliest known images of Venice.

To celebrate the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth in 2019, Lancaster University is launching a new cross-disciplinary Research Centre, based in the Ruskin Library. Working with visitors and scholars from across the world, the Centre aims to explore how Ruskin's ideas and work can unlock the pressing cultural, social and environmental issues of today and tomorrow.

This presentation will explore the ambitions of the new Centre as a 'Museum of the Near Future' through an examination of Ruskin as an intensely futures-orientated thinker. As a collector, curator, and conservator, Ruskin was at the forefront of his time in regarding heritage as a set of practices in the present, shaping futures in part through recovering and communicating the past. His works also embrace, resist, criticise and recontextualize the future through new technologies—including the 'most marvellous invention of the century', the daguerreotype (*Works* 3.210 n). At the same time, Ruskin was deeply aware of the dehumanizing potential of technological advance for its own sake. 'The artist is as a telescope', he remarked: 'very marvellous in himself, as an instrument. But I think, on the whole, the stars are the principal part of the affair' (*Works* 36.213).

Ruskin's synthesis of spiritual, aesthetic and scientific aspects of close looking was combined with his profound awareness of how the profusion of the material world and artworks and objects transform themselves into catalysts for ideas, philosophies, visions and re-imagined worlds in every epoch.

**Prof Sandra Kemp** is Director of The Ruskin – Library, Museum and Research Centre at Lancaster University, and Visiting Professor in the Department of Materials at Imperial College. As an academic and a curator, she led *The Future is our Business: The Visual History of Future Expertise* project at the V&A, funded by the AHRC, which investigated visual and material manifestations of futures expertise from the Renaissance to-date. She is currently PI for the AHRC/Labex *Universal Histories and Universal Museums* project which investigates how museums can shape and imagine the future.

## **Nature's Uses: Ruskin on Trusteeship and Environmental Economy**

**Dr Marcus Waithe (University of Cambridge), @MJWaithe**

The concept of 'trust' occupies an elevated position in Ruskin's hierarchy of values. Recommending in *Modern Painters* that artists go to nature 'trustingly', he extended this principle to 'the will of the Ruling Spirit, called Trust'. But his treatment of trust also encompasses a legal meaning, derived from the medieval concept of the 'use', an equitable obligation binding a trustee of property to act on behalf of a beneficially entitled third party. When Ruskin spoke of our use of ancient buildings, he observed relatedly that 'We have no right whatever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us.' This paper explores the application, and limits, of this principle as applied to the stewardship of the environment, according to which 'nature' and future generations stand as joint beneficiaries of a trusteeship performed by the world's human inhabitants.

**Dr Marcus Waithe** is a Fellow in English at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and a University Senior Lecturer. He is the author of *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (2006), and co-editor (with Michael Hurley) of *Thinking Through Style: Non-Fiction Prose of the Long Nineteenth Century* (2018), and (with Claire White) *The Labour of Literature in Britain and France, 1830-1910: Authorial Work Ethics* (2018). He is the project leader of 'Ruskin at Walkley: Reconstructing the St George's Museum' ([www.ruskinatwalkley.org](http://www.ruskinatwalkley.org)).

## **Session 2: Other Sciences, Other Environments**

### **Ruskin Among the Psychologists**

***Dr Peter Garratt (University of Durham)***

Ruskin's deep interest in geology and botany are well known, but the same cannot be said of the emerging discipline of psychology. This talk will consider Ruskin's relation to mid-Victorian scientific psychology, and its discourses of will and volition and unconscious cerebration, often obscured by his obstinate rejection of the materialism of the age.

**Peter Garratt** is Associate Professor in the Department of English Studies at Durham University. Publications include *Victorian Empiricism* (2010) and, as editor, *The Cognitive Humanities: Embodied Mind in Literature and Culture* (2016) and *The Edinburgh History of Distributed Cognition: Victorian Culture to Modernism* (forthcoming 2019).

### **Ruskin's "Unscientific" Environments**

***Prof Francis O'Gorman (University of Edinburgh), @francis\_ogorman***

My topic is Ruskin glancing at architecture in *The Stones of Venice*, a habit that often provides him with apparent evidence for his broader claims. I explore the significance of this glancing as one of Ruskin's ways of presenting a built environment that can be explained coherently. But such a technique needs must find only what it is looking for.

**Francis O'Gorman** is Saintsbury Professor of English Literature at the University of Edinburgh. He has published widely on English literature including on Ruskin. He is currently writing a book on W.B. Yeats.



### Session 3: Ecocritical Perspectives

#### **Ruskin and Lichen**

*Prof Kate Flint (University of Southern California)*

John Ruskin repeatedly returned to the beauties of lichen. He praised it – together with its fellow-traveller, moss – for contributing to the picturesque; lauded it for its endurance. The ability to paint lichen effectively was a kind of litmus test of an artist’s attention to natural detail. Yet lichen also could be made to speak to the ills of the modernity. In the 1840s, Ruskin, despite his celebration of its beauty when found on a rock surface, spoke metaphorically of ‘the lichenous stain of over-civilisation’; in *Fiction Fair or Foul* (1880) he compared the realism with which the ‘mental ruin and distress’ of urban slum-dwellers is described in novels to the ‘botany of leaf lichens’. My paper sets Ruskin’s treatment of lichen – something very ordinary and often overlooked in nature – in the broader context of today’s environmental criticism, in which lichen is frequently called upon for its properties of symbiosis, tenacity, and its capacity to register atmospheric change. Ruskin, I will show, can be understood as more prophetic in his recognition of lichen’s importance than one might, at first glance, imagine.

**Kate Flint** is Provost Professor of Art History and English at the University of Southern California, in Los Angeles. Her most recent book is *Flash! Photography, Writing, and Surprising Illumination* (2017), and earlier books have included *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, and *The Transatlantic Indian*. She works on the literary, cultural, and visual history of the C19th and early C20th, and her current research explores Victorian treatments of the ordinary and overlooked in the natural world, and how contemporary artists and writers refer back to such treatments in order to bring out long processes of environmental change.

## **Rock of Ages and Ages: Past, Present and Future Geologies in *The Stones of Venice***

***Prof John Parham (University of Worcester)***

The Anthropocene blurs boundaries between both historical periods and historical categories. This paper will argue that Ruskin's writing on rocks and stone unites geology, the most literal foundation to human existence, with architectural history positing an ecological paradigm for human life. Looking principally at *The Stones of Venice* I will explore: Ruskin's accounts of the geological foundation to architecture; how craftsmanship enacts a sense of humans' material place in nature; and, in counterbalance, how the watery, immaterial, 'uncanny' dimensions of Venice (described in his journeys by boat) signal an earth that continues to evade human control.

**John Parham** is Professor of Environmental Humanities at the University of Worcester. He is author of *Green Man Hopkins: Poetry and the Victorian Ecological Imagination* (Rodopi). He has also co-edited *A Cambridge Global History of Literature and the Environment* (CUP) and *Literature and Sustainability: Exploratory Essays* (MUP), and is editing the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Anthropocene*. He has written several essays on 'Victorian Ecology' including previous work on Disraeli and Gaskell, Hopkins, Mill, Morris, Zola, and Dickens, and is co-editor of the journal *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* (Routledge)

## **Divine and Defiled Waters: Ruskin, Environment, and Boundary Crises in the Victorian Age**

***Dr Mark Frost (University of Portsmouth)***

This paper will read some familiar moments in Ruskin's environmental writings through recent ecocritical interest in boundaries, sovereignty, and slow violence. It will consider Ruskinian thought alongside other fictional and non-fictional interventions from the period, focusing on the ways in which late-Victorian discourse draws attention to collapsing or problematised boundary formations (human/non-human; nature/culture; natural and human histories), and vindicating Allen Macduffie's claim that the period witnesses 'the stirrings of an imaginative apprehension of what the chemist Paul Crutzen has termed the Anthropocene'.

**Mark Frost** is Senior Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Portsmouth. He has published widely on Ruskin and is the author of *The Lost Companions*, a revisionary history of the Guild of St George. His next monograph will be on pastoral, environment, and modernity in early-Victorian fiction, and he also has late century interests in environmental disaster fiction. A recent scholarly edition of Richard Jefferies's *After London* is one manifestation of this.

## **Ruskinian Principles in Practice 1**

### *John Iles on Ruskin Land*

Taking Ruskin's quote '*We shall try to take some piece of English ground beautiful, peaceful and fruitful*', John will show how the Guild of St George is bringing Ruskin Land in the Wyre Forest back into life. The woodland and smallholdings were intended to be the basis for the formation of a small, rural, Utopian community. Indeed, some of Ruskin's followers from Liverpool came to Wyre at the end of the 19th century. This short talk will illustrate what is happening now, how the team in Wyre are bringing people into contact with Ruskin and his ideas and ways in which people can become involved. See [www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk](http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk) and [www.ruskinland.org.uk](http://www.ruskinland.org.uk)

**John Iles's** professional background has been in conservation and regeneration in the UK. He has been a Director of Ruskin's Guild of St George since 2006 with responsibility for the management of Ruskin Land – the Guild's estate in the Wyre Forest, Worcestershire.

As tenant farmer at the Guild's Uncllys Farm from 2004, he and his wife Linda have restored the traditional orchards and the wildflower rich meadows of this 13 acre smallholding engaging many volunteers in the process. John founded the Wyre Community Land Trust in 2007 to facilitate the management of over 200 acres of meadows and orchards in and around the forest with help from a 55 strong herd of rare breed Dexter cattle.

John oversees the management of the Guild's 100 acres of ancient semi-natural oak woodland to improve both the value and biodiversity of this asset. He completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Forestry Management at Harper Adams University in 2018.

John plays an active role in Worcestershire to help foster the development of the rural economy through the county's LEADER and Natural Networks grant funding boards.

## **Ruskinian Principles in Practice 2**

*A tour of the museum with Prof John Holmes (Birmingham)*

The Oxford University Museum was built in the 1850s on principles drawn in part from Ruskin's writings on architecture, with Ruskin himself taking an active role in its design and decoration. At the same time, it set in stone, iron and glass a mid-Victorian conception of science and nature. This tour will reveal the meanings of the museum's architecture and its art in situ, tracing the collaboration between Oxford's scientists, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelite artists which shaped one of the richest and most remarkable buildings of the Victorian age.

**John Holmes** is Professor of Victorian Literature and Culture at the University of Birmingham and an Honorary Associate of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. His books include *The Pre-Raphaelites and Science* (Yale UP, 2018), *Darwin's Bards: British and American Poetry in the Age of Evolution* (Edinburgh UP, 2009) and *The Routledge Research Companion to Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Science*, co-edited with Sharon Ruston (2017).

We warmly invite you to stay for Professor Fiona Stafford's public lecture, **Ruskin's Trees**, from 6-7pm:

This lecture explores Ruskin's lifelong love of trees, from the idyllic garden at his family home in Herne Hill to his Lake District estate at Brantwood. Ruskin looked at trees with an eye trained by painting, a mind coloured by literature, a heart lifted by a sense of the divine manifest in the natural world. Above all, he looked at trees as trees and urged his audiences to see the world afresh.

**Fiona Stafford** is Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford, where she works on eighteenth and nineteenth-century literature, especially Romantic poetry; Literature and the Visual Arts; Place and Nature Writing; Scottish and Irish poetry. Recent books include *The Long, Long Life of Trees*; *The Brief Life of Flowers*; *Jane Austen: A Brief Life*; *Local Attachments* and an edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

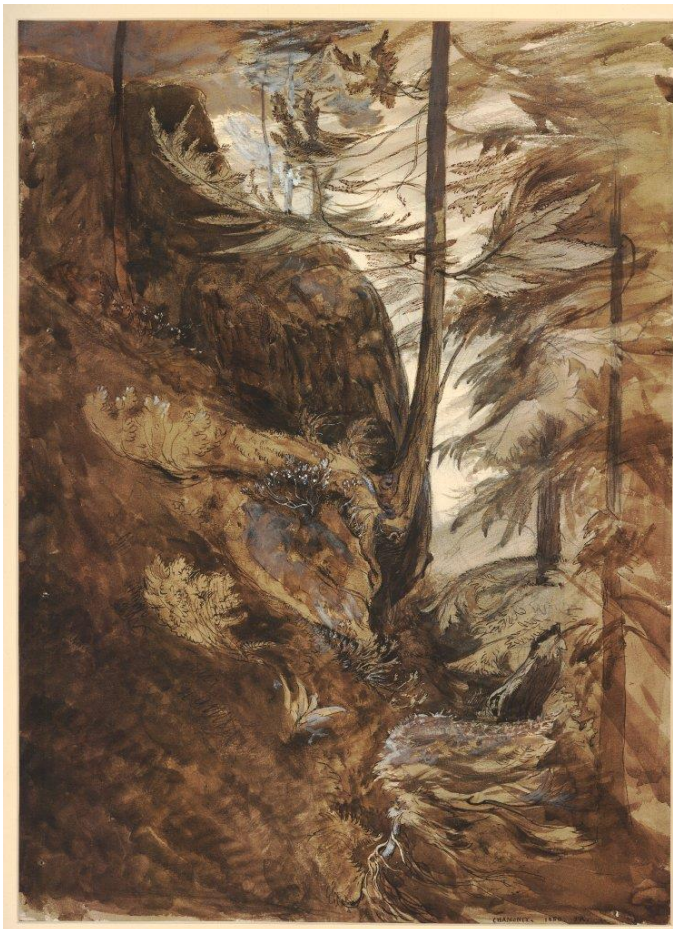


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John Ruskin, Chamonix; hill with trees sloping upwards to l. 1850 Pen and brown ink, with brown wash, touched with white, over graphite

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