Carlyle and Ruskin, as well as the Brotherhood, seek an art that appears to be not fiction but fact. Working as historian, the figural artist strives to re-create the actuality of the past—the lives of English monks, the worship of men in rude chapels by the Adriatic, daily work in a Galilean carpenter's shop. In treating contemporary life, the artist focuses on everyday "low" subjects—men lounging in the Piazza San Marco, a confrontation in a Stockport cellar, a prostitute huddled against a London wall. Even scenes from imaginative literature, from Keats or Shakespeare, are presented by the Brotherhood as if they had occurred in historical time. From this desire for a documentary form emerges the most striking quality of this style, its wealth of minutely observed physical detail. To an audience accustomed to the scientific writing and drawing exemplified by Gosse, such a style enforces the sense that the artist is reproducing an actual specimen. The more the work departs from the idealization of the Grand Style or the abstractness of eighteenth-century poetry to include the visible detail that clusters about any event in "real life," the more it appears to be a direct record rather than a fiction.

But attention to detail cannot, in itself, suggest transcendental significance; the intrinsic symbolic meaning of a London street scene or a ruined chapel in Venice cannot be made evident simply through accumulation of closely observed fact. Although Ruskin praised the Brotherhood in his "Pre-Raphaelitism" pamphlet of 1851 for following his advice in Modern Painters I that the "young" artist "penetrate" nature's meaning by going to her "rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing" (12:339), he, as well as Carlyle and the Brotherhood, practiced an art in which the chief, but unacknowledged, formal principle is the shaping of fact into formal parallels with traditional iconography. Only through such associations can the artist indicate the sacred meaning within the events of biblical as well as postbiblical history. Thus, Carlyle suggests providential meaning in the industrialization of England through a prefigurative pattern evoking the Second Coming; Ruskin presents the history of
Venice as a divine example through a similarly prefigurative parallel to the Fall and expulsion from Eden. Similarly, the reconstruction of a Palestinian carpenter’s shop, the hut of a druid sheltering a Christian missionary, or Dante’s room in Florence acquire significance through such reference to a public symbolic system.

**Past and Present as Figural History**

In *Past and Present*, Carlyle most nearly realizes the high aim of the artist-historian set forth in the theoretical essays of the 1830s, the representation of the past, particularly the English past, in the mode of the biblical narrative.¹ *Past and Present* is figural history; the persons and events are types prefiguring later occurrences in historical time while this connection within history is seen as evidence of a providential plan outside time. Although the book uses the contemporary literary fashion of historical “contrasts” to criticize the present by setting it against an ideal in the past,² the figural method softens the attack on the industrial present. The Middle Ages, seen with a historical sensibility, becomes an imperfect world; the imperfect “Phenomena”³ of the industrial present become meaningful in prefiguring the perfected industrialism of the future. Unlike *The Stones of Venice*, which gives significance to the fallen present through reference to an earlier Edenic world, Carlyle’s book seeks to give meaning to history by constant reference to an end. Indeed, the book might more accurately have been called “Past, Present, and Future” since English history and contemporary life become significant in providing types of future events in the continuum of history.

The subject matter of the book is confined to “historical Fact” (51); the entire action occurs in historical time. With his intense historical empathy, Carlyle enters the past, feels and conveys the hard, tangible actuality of the Middle Ages. Samson struggles against drunken monks and rapacious kings, against shortages of ready cash and political factionalism. His victory, his creation of order from chaos within this one microcosm is shown as analogous to the work of God the Creator, but it is not only a hard-won but a transitory victory. Undoubtedly, Samson is a hero, an exemplar of the virtues of authoritarian rule, yet neither Samson’s society nor his community is offered as an ideal to which present society can and should return. The Abbot’s community is seen with Victorian historical relativism as adequate for its own day, yet necessarily limited by the consciousness
of the time and therefore impossible to adopt wholly in the present. Samson is treated with the sympathy given to a figure of the Old Testament like Moses, who works within his own limited dispensation, yet whose significance lies in prefiguring a perfected order.

If the past is seen as fallen, the present is perhaps more imperfect. Populated by antitypes, devoted to the false "Gospel of Mammonism" or "Gospel of Dilettantism," its emblem is the pope, the Antichrist, the "Supreme Priest" (141) who has become only a "stuffed . . . figure" (140). Yet these phenomena of the present, like those of the past, achieve significance as prefigurations. Plugson of Undershot, in particular, appears as a type; anticipated by Abbot Samson, he reveals in yet imperfect ways the virtues of the future savior, the Captain of Industry.

Events of past and present prefigure the future that Carlyle has read from the "Bible of Universal History" (240). The final section, book four, "Horoscope," then becomes a New Testament in which is revealed what was foreshadowed in the earlier sections, which become, quite explicitly, analogues of the Old Testament. Abbot Samson is clearly identified as a type, just as the biblical Samson is seen as a type of Christ in the New Testament (Luke 1:15, 2:40). The new "elect of the world" are to be "liberatory Samsons of this poor world: whom the poor Delilah-world will not always shear of their strength and eyesight, and set to grind in darkness at its poor gin-wheel" (286). The new savior, the Captain of Industry, is described in terms that make him indistinguishable from Christ: "He walks among men; loves men, with inexpressible soft pity,—as they cannot love him: but his soul dwells in solitude, in the uttermost parts of Creation" (287). In these final sections, the gospel of history and the sacred Gospel merge: "Canst thou read in the New Testament at all? The Highest Man of Genius, knowest thou him; Godlike and a God to this?" (288).

For Carlyle, the figural vision reinforces the formal necessity of establishing and conveying a sense of historicity. In his effort as historian to reproduce the phenomena of the past as they actually occurred from such shattered evidence as the ruins of Saint Edmund's monastery, Carlyle compares himself to the early-Victorian geologist who from "the old osseous fragment, a broken blackened shin-bone of the old dead Ages," reconstructs the "once gigantic Life lies buried there" (54), restores to modern sight the "extinct species" (49).

Yet Carlyle's sense of himself as artist-scientist or, to coin a Carlylean phrase, as working in a manner "artistical-scientific-
historical," only enforces the connection between realism and moral purpose. The intense feeling of actually entering the past increases the religious power in reinforcing the thoroughgoing analogy to Scripture, in showing the events to be as historical as those of the biblical narrative. And the events themselves acquire prophetic power as being not fictions but intrinsic symbols, examples of "Divine Providence and his Sermon [in] the inflexible Course of Things" (290).

Like such history paintings of the Brotherhood as Hunt's Converted British Family (plate 12), Past and Present creates the sense of historicity by ordering the work so that the audience is made to feel actually present at the historical event, so that the scene is made visible to "the very eyesight, palpable to the very fingers" (50). As narrator, Carlyle often becomes one with Jocelin by having his voice dissolve into that of the monk. The chapter entitled "Twelfth Century" opens with what is made to appear a direct quotation from the chronicle, in the voice of Jocelin describing ongoing action as seen by a contemporary: "Our Abbot being dead, the Dominus Rex, Henry II, or Ranulf de Glanvill Justiciarius of England for him, set Inspectors or Custodiars over us;—not in any breathless haste to appoint a new Abbot, our revenues coming into his own Scaccarium, or royal Exchequer, in the meanwhile" (68). Only the gloss on Custodiars and Scaccarium betrays the voice of the historian in the present. This melding of the chronicle into the text, this undifferentiated inclusion of the actual perceptions of the participant, is as close as Carlyle could come verbally to reproducing scenes as they actually occurred. And these representations of the perception of a witness in the past, untempered by the present, is the verbal equivalent of the filling of the canvas with what the painter feels are archeologically correct objects, such as the corn and fish nets in Hunt's Converted British Family.

For Carlyle, the past is part of a continuum stretching toward an end, yet simultaneously a reflection of the eternal present. As he states in this same chapter on the "Twelfth Century," "Time was, Time is, as Friar Bacon's Brass Head remarked; and withal Time will be. There are three Tenses, Tempora, or Times; and there is one Eternity" (68). Showing the relation of these three "Tenses" to the one Eternity is the task of Carlyle as artist and, in combining his two roles of scientific historian and biblical exegete, his method moves toward the pictorial. Like a Brotherhood painter, with archeological accuracy he re-creates the visible scene and through parallels to traditional symbols and later historical events relates the static visual event to the future and
to eternity. In "Twelfth Century," he exclaims, "What a historical picture, glowing visible. . . . The image of these justly offended old women, in their old wool costumes, with their angry features, and spindles brandished, lives forever in the historical memory" (69–70). Carlyle's "historical memory," his empathy for the past enables him brilliantly to imagine and re-create in visible terms this tangible scene. But he also establishes a system of verbal parallels to keep his historical insight within an Augustinian sense of history. In the same paragraph, the "image" of these women is shown as a parallel to the political events of the present. They "become Female Chartists . . . and in old Saxon, as we in modern, would fain demand some Five-point Charter" (69). Again, it must be emphasized that these parallels are not only secular comparisons; they are also meant to point to a providential order. The way in which the disorder of the scolding women brought a more beneficent rule—"Wise Lord Abbots, hearing of such phenomena, did in time abolish or commute the reap-penny" (69–70)—prefigures the way in which the disorder of the Chartists will in the present time bring forth the Christ-like reign of the Captain of Industry.

The paragraph is also pictorial in being arranged in a spatial rather than chronological order. The sentence explaining the modern parallel to Chartism precedes the establishing of the "image of the justly offended old women" (70). The parallels themselves ("in old Saxon, as we in modern") are expressed in coordinate construction in which the clause order could be reversed without a change in meaning. With past and present presented as coextensive, the event is pictured in its detailed historical actuality and as illuminated by divine purpose; it is "a historical picture, glowing visible."

The chapter "St. Edmund" exemplifies Carlyle's pictorialism. The central event of the chapter is the disinterring of Saint Edmund's body by Samson, a scene that finds a visual analogue in Millais's The Disentombment of Queen Matilda (1849). Carlyle's method is thoroughly visual: "Let the modern eye look earnestly on that old midnight hour in St. Edmundsbury Church" (122). To depict the scene itself, Carlyle gives the words of the chronicle, translated "with all the fidelity" (122) he can; the representation of the past event through the observations of a participant is as close as Carlyle can come to reproducing the event itself. Millais's drawing provides a characteristically crowded and clearly illuminated scene in which the onrush of the citizens on the right is shown as touching off hysteria within the orderly ranks of nuns on the left. Carlyle, equally attracted to the emo-
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tional intensity of communal life in the past, provides a more composed, chiaroscuro picture with the illumination at the orderly center occupied by Samson and the frenzied spectators put at the periphery: "What a scene; shining luminous effulgent, as the lamps of St. Edmund do, through the dark Night; John of Dice, with vestrymen, clambering on the roof to look through; the Convent all asleep, and the Earth all asleep" (125). Here, "shining luminous effulgent . . . through the dark Night" refers both to the chiaroscuro appearance of the actual setting and to its noumenous quality, to the transcendent irradiating the phenomenal. Even a phrase like "the Earth all asleep" describes both the night scene as well as the providential historical process in which the new authoritarian society led by the Captain of Industry is already immanent in this true worship of heroes being figured by Samson.

Carlyle, like the Brotherhood, applied this figuralism to events of the present as well as of the past. In Past and Present, he sees himself as a modern-day Dante (8,206) moving through contemporary England. Like Ruskin, he finds most congenial the persona of a guide confronting an audience with visible fact while discoursing on its symbolic meaning. In taking the reader through the "Dante's Hell" (8) of modern England, he fastens upon an actual event, reported in the Times, in which parents poisoned their children in order to get money from the burial society. As usual, he takes the event, holds it, dwells upon it as a biblical commentator might to explicate its significance: "It is an incident worth lingering on" (9). The scene is representationally as Carlyle with his marvelous empathic imagination enters into the lives and minds of these people as he does into the world of the medieval monastery: "What shall we do to escape starvation? We are sunk here, in our dark cellar; and help is far" (10).

But the scene goes beyond simple realism. Like the Brotherhood and like George Eliot, Carlyle violates decorum to show "high" moral significance in the facts of "low" life. Through a parallel to Dante, the anguish of a starving family of industrial workers is equated with the tragedy of persons in high station: "Yes, in the Ugolino Hunger-tower stern things happen; best-loved little Gaddo fallen dead on his Father's knees" (10). The biblical reference also ennobles the poor, but, in addition, reasserts the providential purpose within this contemporary event: "In starved sieged cities, in the uttermost doomed ruin of old Jerusalem fallen under the wrath of God, it was prophesied and said, 'The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children'" (10). As the horrors of the present are "prophesied"
in Lamentations, so, within the scriptural form of the book, the present must be seen, like the events of the Old Testament, to prefigure the coming of a perfected society.

In representing the Stockport cellar as figure, Carlyle's formal difficulties arise from the consecutiveness of language, which prevents any writer from fully representing the simultaneous perception of visual detail and divine meaning. The reference to Lamentations necessarily follows the pictured scene as a separate commentary. Furthermore, the daily events reported in the Times, like those in Jocelin's chronicle, do not have the associative meaning acquired over centuries that biblical events do, a meaning so deeply embodied that it is conveyed with the representation of the event itself. Carlyle thus offers a clearly realized contemporary scene accompanied by a biblical gloss, the same form used by the Brotherhood artists in moralized treatments of contemporary life such as Found.

In treating contemporary life, Carlyle's figural sensibility moves him to concentrate meaning within the humblest, most ordinary detail. Although he lacks the lingering, painterly attention to visual detail of Ruskin, his transformations of daily events into symbols of urban, capitalist England remain the most memorable portions of the book. In the chapter "Phenomena," the "great Hat seven-feet high, which now perambulates London Streets" is the "culminating and returning point, to which English Puffery has been observed to reach!" (144). In describing the Irish widow, Carlyle first creates a visible scene: "The forlorn Irish Widow applies to her fellow-creatures, as if saying, 'Behold I am sinking, bare of help: ye must help me! I am your sister, bone of your bone; one God made us: ye must help me!'" (151). He then leaps to the symbolic meaning of the pictured event: "She proves her sisterhood; her typhus-fever kills them: they actually were her brothers, though denying it! Had man ever to go lower for a proof?" (151).

Within the scriptural scheme, these Victorian facts, the "great Hat" and the Irish widow are intended as types that, as examples of shoddy labor and atomistic isolation, prefigure in their imperfect form the sacramentalized work and communal ties that will emerge in the new industrial society. "I anticipate light in the Human Chaos, glimmering, shining more and more. . . . Competition, at railway-speed, in all branches of commerce and work will then abate:—good felt-hats for the head, in every sense, instead of seven-feet lath-and-plaster hats on wheels, will then be discoverable!" (267-68). But rather than revelations of the divine, the "great Hat," the Irish widow, the "amphibious
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Pope" (141) emerge as particularized signs of the qualities of contemporary society. Although he employs a religiously suggestive vocabulary, the connection of fact to the noumenous is seriously strained. The Irish widow "proves her sisterhood" by infecting her neighbors, but the force of the passage points less to the mystical unity of humanity than to the atomistic selfishness of capitalist society. The "Hatter in the Strand" sends out his advertising "hoping to be saved thereby" (144), yet the glimpse of urban life is memorable not as an antitype of true salvation but as the emblem of the commercialization of craft. In these passages, the imaginative energy in the particularized description of contemporary life and the clear connection of event to social and economic causes overwhelms the religious resonance of the language.

It demands an intense act of faith to see unemployment, poverty, even starvation not as indicating contradictions within the present society but as prefiguring the perfected future toward which providential history moves. To Carlyle, the Irish widow "proves her sisterhood" (151) by dying; even the pope "has in him more good latent than he is himself aware of" (141). The figural method provides Carlyle with a spiritually resonant means of expressing his deep attraction to industrialism while still calling attention to the life-denying qualities of the present: "Sooty Manchester,—it too is built on the infinite Abysses; over-spanned by the skyey Firmaments; and there is birth in it, and death in it;—and it is every whit as wonderful, as fearful, unimaginable, as the oldest Salem or Prophetic City" (227).

This complex attitude toward industrial capitalism, critical yet confident of its future perfection, is expressed through a series of prefigurations of the future savior, the Captain of Industry. Like Abbot Samson in the past, Plugson of Undershot is intended as a type of the future hero of industrialism. Fusing the biblical model with the Victorian sense of historical development, Carlyle shows Plugson as existing in a continuum with William the Conqueror (193) and with "Howel Davies," a seventeenth-century English "Bucanier" who "dyes the West Indian Seas with blood, piles his decks with plunder; approves himself the expertest Seaman, the daringest Seafighter" (192). By showing Davies as a prefiguration of the contemporary millowner and the contemporary millowner as a prefiguration of the future Captain of Industry, Carlyle can not only criticize what he sees as industrial piracy in his own era but, at the same time, also express admiration for the energy and aggressiveness of the industrialist. Like Davies, Plugson is praised as a fighter. "He enlisted
his thousand men; said to them, 'Come, brothers, let us have a
dash at Cotton'" (193). This combativeness shown by Davies
and Plugson will, for Carlyle, be moralized by the Captain of
Industry: "Captains of Industry are the . . . true Fighters
against Chaos, Necessity and the Devils and Jotuns" (268).
And this fusion of energy and moral purpose in the future has
itself been prefigured in the past: "Yet even of Fighting, in reli-
gious Abbot Samson's days, see what a Feudalism there had
grown,—a 'glorious Chivalry,' much besung down to the pres-
et day" (191).

Plugson is meant to demonstrate the providential pattern of
history, yet, by definition, he is not a figure. Unlike the Stock-
port parents, the Irish widow, or Abbot Samson, he is not
based upon a specific historical person but upon Carlyle's
own generalized representation of the Victorian millowner. Al-
though based upon observations of contemporary life, Plugson
is a fiction, much like his derivative, Josiah Bounderby of
Coketown. This formal inconsistency, this unacknowledged
departure from figuralism, with the consequent weakening of
imaginative power, arises primarily because the facts of indus-
trial life in England did not provide "intrinsic" symbols for the
spiritual meaning that Carlyle desired. The "Phenomena" of the
present did much to demonstrate oppression, but little to figure
the coming moralization of the industrial system.

The dissolution of the figural scheme becomes even more
apparent in book four, "Horoscope," the description of the
future. Old Testament events become meaningful through their
demonstrated fulfillment by other events in history; Moses is a
type because of the Incarnation. Within the overall scheme of the
book, Plugson, the pope, the entire industrial present of Eng-
land are meant to reveal the divine because of an event that is to
come, the emergence of the saviour who will moralize
capitalism. But this savior has not arrived. Ultimately, Carlyle's
endowing of contemporary events with religious meaning de-
pends not on demonstration but on a faith that providence
works through all events in all time, in the present as in the
biblical past, and that within providential history the new leader
will be sent to knit the chaos of industrialism into organic fila-
ments. As in the prose of Ruskin and the art of the Brotherhood,
the divine quality of accurately depicted fact depends upon a
prior faith, a religious sensibility that must be shared by artist
and audience. But once this religious vision dissolves, the art
takes a wholly new, wholly secular form; Past and Present
becomes meaningful not in its revelation of historical fact

[24]
as figure but in its representation of fact as social symbol revealing in the concrete instance the ethical and economic forces of the society.

**The Stones of Venice**

In *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin achieves in the art of prose the ideals of a figural art that he sets forth in theory in *Modern Painters* I and II. Like Carlyle, Ruskin reconciles visual and historical accuracy with transcendental revelation by writing history within the implicit model of Scripture. As much as Carlyle’s, Ruskin’s raw material is fact; his work is that of the romantic historian reaching back into time through the power of the sympathetic imagination in order to re-create the past for the modern reader. Like Carlyle pondering the ruins of Bury St. Edmunds, Ruskin observes the stones or buildings of Venice so as to restore the life of an earlier age. These stones, these buildings are for Ruskin, like all phenomena, a form of symbolic language that must be read not only as signs of the moral attributes of their creators but as “intrinsic” symbols of Providence operating within historical time. Furthermore, the very act of reading architecture figurally, the fusion of clear visual and historical perception with the awareness of building and past event as symbols of an encompassing moral order, exemplifies for the reader the operation of the Theoretic faculty.

Like Carlyle, Ruskin organizes his figural history by parallels to traditional, public myths. His intention of writing the history of Venice in the typological mode of the Bible, so as to show the workings of a just providence, is set forth at the beginning of the first chapter of book one, “The Quarry.” He speaks of the three great thrones or kingdoms by which “dominion of men was asserted over the ocean . . . Tyre, Venice, and England” (9:17). Just as the fall of Tyre prefigures God’s judgment upon Venice, so the fall of Venice is a type of the imminent fall of England: “The exaltation, the sin, and the punishment of Tyre have been recorded for us, in perhaps the most touching words ever uttered by the Prophets of Israel against the cities of the stranger. But we read them as a lovely song; and close our ears to the sternness of their warning: for the very depth of the Fall of Tyre has blinded us to its reality, and we forget, as we watch the bleaching of the rocks between the sunshine and the sea, that they were once ‘as in Eden, the garden of God’” (9:17).

The vision of a lost Eden, of a pre-Renaissance Venice as yet uncorrupted by pride and sensuality, informs the work. And
continuous shifts from Edenic past to fallen present provide Ruskin with one of his principal means of moralizing both Venetian history and his own visual observations. But for all the contrast of past and present, there is no reference to the future. Although the book ends with hope for the revival of Gothic architecture and for the consequent moral regeneration of Victorian England, this perfected future is not described, does not give meaning to the events of the present as it does in Carlyle's work. Carlyle as historian may walk amidst a sinful England, but it is an England that, at a midpoint in the historical continuum, provides prefigurations of a perfected future. Ruskin's figurationalism diverges from Scripture in that phenomena do not stand as signs of future redemption but as symbols of the present fallen condition. Ruskin's historical perspective is always that of standing amidst corrupted mankind, in the church in Murano or in the Piazza San Marco. Carlyle sees the divine about to be incarnated anew in the industrial hero. But, Ruskin's God is the Old Testament God of Vengeance, the same God that smote Tyre, punished Venice, and will, by implication, deal similarly with England.

For Ruskin, historicism itself can become the instrument of moral regeneration. His aim, continued by the Brotherhood, is through art to re-create in the present the moralized visual sensibility that existed before the secularization of consciousness brought about by the Renaissance. To this end, Ruskin adopts the persona of a guide, in part to demonstrate that integrated or Theoretic vision is dependent upon the directing of the eye by a moral presence, in part through a lack of confidence that the materials will in themselves demonstrate their intrinsic meaning without an extensive gloss.

The structure of the "Torcello" chapter is characteristic. Ruskin, acting like a Virgil to the contemporary reader's Dante, guides the reader through the minutely pictured, fallen landscape of the present, "corrupted sea-water soaking through the roots of its acrid weeds, and gleaming hither and thither through its snaky channels" (10:17). The reader is then taken to a tower from which he perceives "an octagonal chapel, of which we can see but little more than the flat red roof with its rayed tiling, [and] a considerable church with nave and aisles, but of which, in like manner, we can see little but the long central ridge and lateral slopes of roof" (10:18). Here, the inability to see the scene in all its particularity—"we can see little"—indicates that the reader is not only outside the church, but also cut off from the religious sensibility of the past. But this journey through the demonic
world of the present acts to bring the reader into the interior of the building, to the divine world as manifested in the artifacts of the past. Ruskin as exegete explains: "The noble range of pillars which enclose the space between, terminated by the high throne for the pastor and the semicircular raised seats for the superior clergy, are expressive at once of the deep sorrow and the sacred courage of men who had no home left them upon earth" (10:21). For Ruskin, this "mute language" (10:25) of the architecture is explicitly "typical" in expressing simultaneously not only the historical circumstances of the builders but the transcendental significance of their lives: "The actual condition of the exiles who built the cathedral of Torcello is exactly typical of the spiritual condition which every Christian ought to recognize in himself, a state of homelessness on earth, except so far as he can make the Most High his habitation" (10:21–22).

Within the dramatic action, the detailed word-paintings of the interior demonstrate the careful observation that prepares the "religious spectator" (10:29) for the final moment of moralized perception. Ruskin finally asks the reader, whom he is guiding, to enter the past: "Ascend the highest tier of the stern ledges that sweep round the altar of Torcello, and then, looking as the pilot did of old along the marble ribs of the goodly temple-ship, let him re-people its veined deck with the shadows of its dead mariners, and strive to feel in himself the strength of heart that was kindled within them" (10:35). This act of historical empathy depends upon clear awareness of visual and historical fact, but its moral force lies in the transcendence of the present to re-experience, momentarily, the integrated religious sensibility of the past. 5

The role of artist as scientist provides Ruskin with another strategy for endowing physical fact with religious significance. As nineteenth-century scientist, Ruskin must explain by returning to origins and, in "The Throne," he begins his account of the history of Venice with geology, with the evolution over geological time of the city's site. The "main fact" is the "gradual" development of the Po delta by alluvial deposits (10:10). Ruskin's analysis is minutely detailed, but ordered by the model of religious science; the more minutely the physical world is examined, the more clearly it is revealed as having been created by a benevolent God: "Had there been no tide, as in other parts of the Mediterranean, the narrow canals of the city would have become noisome... Had the tide been only a foot or eighteen inches higher in its rise, the water-access to the doors of the palaces would have been impossible... Eighteen inches more of difference between the level of the flood and ebb would have
rendered the doorsteps of every palace, at low water, a treacherous mass of weeds and limpets" (10:14). His assumptions are those of natural theology, and the consequent upward movement of his prose from detailed fact to providential design resembles that of Ruskin's former teacher, William Buckland, demonstrating the hand of God at work in the placement of coal deposits in England:

"If, two thousand years ago, we had been permitted to watch the slow settling of the slime of those turbid rivers into the polluted sea . . . how little could we have known, any more than of what now seems to us most distressful, dark, and objectless, the glorious aim which was then in the mind of Him in whose hands are all the corners of the earth!" (10:14).

By seeing architecture, too, within the context of religious science, Ruskin can moralize the work of the builder by seeing it as the analogue of the divine benevolence and intelligence manifested in the physical forms of the creation. Just as the divine energy can have the earth "heave into mighty masses of leaden rock" (10:186), so the Gothic builder "heaves into the darkened air the pile of iron buttress and rugged wall" (10:187). Just as the fitting of all organisms, of shrimps as well as tigers, to their particular environment manifests, within the context of natural theology, the intelligence and benevolence of the Creator, so the harmony of Gothic style to indigenous materials and to the surrounding landscape becomes the sign of harmony with the Creator. The Northern Gothic cathedral is, for example, praised for being "instinct with work of an imagination as wild and wayward as the northern sea" (10:187).

Because of his impulse to explicate each natural and architectural fact, Ruskin, like Carlyle, moves toward a pictorial form. Ruskin often concentrates on a specific scene, a facade or sculptured tomb, to draw the fullest symbolic meaning from each detail. Yet, because he is so occupied with the process of seeing, he often employs a cinematic method that traces the progress of the eye over building or landscape, zooms in to focus on minute detail, or cuts quickly to contrasting scene. Through the work, and particularly in the climactic description of Saint Mark's, these methods are, however, turned toward figural purposes.

To reach Saint Mark's, Ruskin, continuing in the persona of guide, first leads the reader through the narrow valley of the Calle Lunga San Moise: "Full of people, and resonant with cries. . . . Overhead, an inextricable confusion of rugged shutters, and iron balconies and chimney flues. . . . On each side, a row of shops, as densely set as may be, occupying, in fact, intervals
between the square stone shafts, about eight feet high” (10:80). As in Brotherhood painting, the random multitudinousness of daily life not only enforces the actuality of the event but functions symbolically, here as an antitype of the artistic and moral harmony of the past. Ruskin leads the reader through the chaos of the present to the piazza where this sign of the past “rises a vision out of the earth” (10:82).

The cathedral is not described; it would be more accurate to say that the act of seeing the cathedral is described. Indeed, the eye is directed over the facade in a quite specific way—from the porches at the base, to the “Greek horses,” upward to the “crests of the arches” and finally “into the blue sky” (10:83). In seeing the English cathedral, to which Saint Mark’s is compared, the eye is also made to move upward, “higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture . . . higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries” (10:79). Here, the act of seeing, of observing contemporary objects, is moralized by correspondence with the traditional hierarchical pattern of Western religious art, upward from earthly life at the bottom of the painting or facade to God at the top. And to look at the facade with the eye moving ever upward toward God is to recapture, for the moment, the fusion of religious faith and structural skill in the original builders.

In this section, too, buildings are transformed into natural objects identified with the surrounding landscape. The facade of the English cathedral becomes the rugged northern landscape seen from above in “The Nature of Gothic” (10:186–87). Covered with “deep russet-orange lichen,” the northern facade is host to a “crowd of restless birds” whose cries are like “the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea” (10:79). The facade of Saint Mark’s holds eternally in static form the vital energy of the Mediterranean seascape: “The crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore had been frost-bound before they fell” (10:83). Although Ruskin remarks, “Between that grim cathedral of England and this [Saint Mark’s], what an interval!” (10:84), the identity of each building with its natural setting figures its harmony with the divine order, and thus the builders’ clear perception of and reverence for the divinely created world.

The vitalized architecture of the facade becomes a garden of “palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates” (10:82), but this is an Eden closed to the modern, fallen viewer. “The
solemn forms of angels . . . [are] indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago” (10:82–83). As in “Torcello,” the possibilities and the limitations of moralized vision for the nineteenth century are measured by the ability to perceive with minute accuracy. The viewer does not enter this Eden, but sees it as Adam and Eve did at the moment of their expulsion, “when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago.” The carved forms of the facade, of the sculptured garden of the lost Edenic world, are “indistinct . . . interrupted and dim,” and the sudden blurring of sight in what has up to this point in the passage been acute visual perception of architectural detail dramatizes in itself the interdependence of visual clarity and moral strength. The moment of transcendence through historical empathy is limited; from the indistinct and momentary vision of a past Eden, the reader returns to the fallen mankind in the Piazza San Marco.

It is in placing the richly detailed representation of Saint Mark’s within the historical process that Ruskin’s pictorial methods are closest to those of the Brotherhood. The porches of Saint Mark’s are “full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years” (10:84). Through evident iconographic reference, the minutely observed natural detail points toward the transcendent. The pigeons nesting in the cathedral facade, much like the dove in *The Carpenter’s Shop* (plate 5), become a type of the Holy Spirit. Saint Mark’s becomes, then, a type of the ancient Temple: “The foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats—not of ‘them that sell doves’ for sacrifice, but of the vendors of toys and caricatures” (10:84). The entire scene, then, reenacts in the historical present the pattern of fall and corruption prefigured in Scripture.

1. Albert LaValley, in *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), chap. 4, notes the “Puritan” quality of the work, but does not develop the idea of figural or typological structure.

2. See Robert Southey, *Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (1829); Thomas Babington Macaulay, “Southey’s Colloquies” (1830); A. W. Pugin, *Contrasts; or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; shewing the Present Decay of Taste* (1836; second and much revised ed. 1841).


5. In The Ritual of Interpretation, Stein sees this ceremony of entering the past through art as central to Ruskin’s work, chap. 3.

6. The Bridgewater Treatises on the Power Wisdom and Goodness of God as Manifested in the Creation; Treatise VI, Geology and Minerology Considered with Reference to Natural Theology (London: Pickering, 1837), 1:553-54.

7. In “Style and Sensibility in Ruskin’s Prose,” Rosenberg notes cinematic elements, pp. 185-86.