

TWO HITHERTO UNKNOWN CARTOONS OF JOHN RUSKIN

Van Akin Burd

Shortly after World War II, a group of male veterans on the GI Bill attending the University of Michigan, all majoring in English, had lunch together on the second floor of Haven Hall, an old classroom-building behind stately Angell Hall. We carried our lunches from home in black lunch-buckets ordinarily used by factory workers. Conversation tended to be about the courses we were taking, or questions we would make up as possible topics on the comprehensive examinations we faced ahead for our doctorates. One of the men in our group was a cartoonist who would draw caricatures of the authors we were discussing. Ordinarily our cartoonist would hear his lunch companions talk about these writers, perhaps execute a quick sketch, and then he would complete the drawings at home, soon bringing them in for our amusement.

Hearing me talk about John Ruskin, the subject of my dissertation, he was amused by my description of Ruskin's relationship with the Pre-Raphaelite painters, particularly Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the failure of Ruskin's sex life on the honeymoon of his marriage in 1848 to Effie Gray, probably because of his dislike of babies and the importance of having Effie in good shape for their travels with Ruskin's parents late that summer to the cathedral towns of Normandy.

The cartoon of Ruskin and Rossetti at Brighton Beach (fig.1) shows Rossetti's satisfaction in finding in Ruskin a wealthy buyer of his paintings as well as a generous contributor to his support; and Ruskin so flattered by this bohemian that at least once he would think of sharing a house with Rossetti to escape his thralldom to his parents (Hilton 43). In late 1854 or early 1855, Ruskin wrote to Rossetti: "amongst all painters I know, you on