

*Ruskin's Venice: The Stones Revisited* by Sarah Quill. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000. 206 pp. 280 illus. (210 in colour). ISBN 1-84104-697-4. \$34.97.

This addition to the continual flood of books celebrating the centennial of John Ruskin's death will prove valuable to those wishing a poetic glimpse of the floating city that absorbed Ruskin's attention more than any other place during his productive writing career; he paid visits to Venice on six separate occasions. The great merit of Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* is his many original analyses of the techniques of construction employed by Venetian builders and of the uses of materials and various architectural decorative embellishments. The three volumes published between 1851 and 1853 afforded Ruskin an opportunity, as well, to question the dangers of nineteenth-century methods of preservation and restoration. His own watercolours and the daguerreotypes he purchased of buildings he admired, wedded to his elegant text, have been an important contribution to our knowledge of medieval architecture in Venice.

Ninety-four of the buildings listed by Ruskin in his *Venetian Index* are presented in clear, handsomely composed photographs taken by Sarah Quill. For a quarter of a century Quill has created an impressive archive of the buildings of Venice. One of the stated purposes of the book is to juxtapose views of the buildings as they exist today with the drawings made by Ruskin so that the reader may appreciate the ravages of time on Venice. While it is true that Ruskin rarely drew the entire facade of a building, preferring to focus on ornamental details he found interesting, in this volume only two Ruskin impressions of complete designs, the Ducal Palace and the basilica of St. Mark, are included. One wishes that the compilers of this photographic odyssey of Venice had included such drawings as the oblique view of the Palazzo Contarini-Fasan (1841; Ashmolean Museum). For Ruskin this palazzo was "the most elaborate piece of architecture in Venice" (*Collected Works*, eds. Cook and Wedderburn, 8: 228). It served as an extended opportunity for Ruskin to comment on the distinctive nature of Venetian architecture. Too few of these comparative studies are offered to the reader. Given the photographic skills of Quill it seems odd that she would omit any photographs of the interiors of Venetian buildings, especially the Doge's Palace. Ruskin's vivid descriptions of interiors are integral parts of the complete verbal portraits of the structures that fascinated him.

Quill's book will serve well the contemporary tourist of Venice who wishes to enjoy the tired but resplendent beauties of Venice through the sensitive and poetic eye of Ruskin. The descriptions of the historic buildings composed by him for his several books and those in private letters, extracted as text to accompany Quill's colour photographs, draw our attention to the rich ornamentation of these historic buildings.

The prevailing weakness of the volume, however, is the absence of Ruskin's deeply-felt motivations behind his exploration of Venetian architecture. The reader is denied access to Ruskin's thoughtful analyses of the history of Venetian