

# “Aesthetics of Geology in *Modern Painters* : Ruskin reading the Mountain Landscapes”

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## Prologue

At the beginning of my paper, as a sort of the prologue, I would like to show you my original motivation of this theme. As you can see, I have entitled my paper: “Aesthetics of Geology in *Modern Painters* ” (=MP). Of course the word ‘geo-logy’ means a science of the earth, or exactly a logic of the earth (地質学). Now I can imagine and I am afraid that most of you maybe a little embarrassed at this strange combination of the two disciplines: the very rare combination of aesthetics with geology.

In my mind, however, this combination is very natural one. And I can say that it is a fuel of the motive power to wrestle with a discipline of aesthetics. By the word ‘aesthetics’ (美学), I mean a science of sensibility in general, and in other words I mean a SCIENTIA of AISTHESIS (感性学) etymologically.

In my childhood I had lived and grown up at a rural part of the midland of the mainland of Japan: the very edge of Kanto Plain (関東平野) including the Tokyo Metropolitan district, Shibukawa, Gumma prefecture (群馬県渋川市). My hometown has no marine beach and is surrounded by some active and inactive volcanic mountains in every direction. When I was raised up more and lived in my boyhood life, I found myself devoted in stone collection, especially fossil collection. the ‘Fossil’ (化石) is a stoned creature buried in the rocks and layers of the earth. I used to go up and down around the mountains. With a hammer in right hand and a chisel in left, I used to break rolling stones and massive rocks, or used to dig and dig the layered bedrocks, being eager for the marvelous trace of ancient creatures.

Even today my heart still remains excited and interested in the fossil with a bit of sweet memory about my boyhood. Yet, as I learned various kinds of the literature, arts and philosophical thoughts throughout my adolescence, my love for it had been modified gradually and deepened sophisticatedly in my mind. And now eventually I recognize a problem of the fossil as a problem of the representation-historiography about the earth, or cultural history of the earth (地球表象文化史). By my paper’s title I hope that you shall come to exercise the imagination of this kind.

Academically the main subject of my study has ever been aesthetics of the sublime (崇高美学), especially the aesthetics of Edmund Burke’s in the 18<sup>th</sup> century of Ireland and Britain. This paper’s aim is related to this subject. But I hope that my paper will prepare for the first springboard to leap

into some new and unique research-field within 'aesthetics' in the future of you all.

## Introduction

In this paper, I will demonstrate that John Ruskin (1819-1900) drastically develops an 'aesthetics of geology', as well as an 'aesthetics of optics or meteorology': an aesthetics about a science of light and colours or a science of air, vapor and clouds in his work *Modern Painters* (近代画家論, originally published in 1843-1860). In this writing, he eagerly admires the mountain paintings and drawings (山岳風景画) mainly by Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851). And here Turner as one of the best "Modern Painters" is compared with the "Old Masters", such as Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) and Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), that is to say, the famous 17<sup>th</sup> century-landscape painters in Italy. Ruskin classified "the component parts of landscape" into the four elements: Sky (空), Earth (地), Water (水), Vegetation (木) (MP. p. 137: Part 1, Section 1, Chapter 7). And his fundamental analysis of the mountain landscapes is located in the section entitled "Truth of the Earth" in Part Two of *Modern Painters*.

According to Ruskin, the most faithful idea of appearance of "the structure of primary hills" is given, not by lectures on geology in the classes at university, but by careful observation just on a Turner's painting of the Alps. Because Turner is to be regarded as those who have an insight into the "laws of the organization of the earth", or insight into the "bones of the earth", "anatomy of the earth", or "internal structure of the earth" and so on.

I will specifically examine here that a fundamental discussion on "Truth of the Earth" in Part Two of *Modern Painters*, where Ruskin makes an inquiry into the substantial forms of hills and grounds in general, even though in Part Five he follows more detailed discussions on the "Mountain Beauty".

I hope that I will give you to a new criterion of your estimating the landscape paintings, especially about mountains. When this critical view of the "aesthetics of geology" is employed, you can more distinctively and comprehensively understand a suggestive meaning of such 'modernity' represented in various kinds of landscape paintings, as Ruskin finds and defines within Turner's works limitedly.

Finally I conclude that the geological viewpoint is a new breakthrough to define the modernity in aesthetics. All through my paper, the crucial point is two: the first is why Ruskin employed a sort of 'geological' model in evaluating a 'modern' artistic expression of the landscapes, and the second is what is the connotation with a word 'modern' in his *Modern Painters*.

## Body

Geology as a modern discipline was founded in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century by Charles Lyell

(1797-1875), who was a close friend and mentor of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the author of *The Origin of Species*. Ruskin is a contemporary of them. The establishment of the modern geology was to wipe the mystical and the Biblical conceptions off their minds.

And then, what kind of geology was employed by Ruskin in his *Modern Painters*? And did Ruskin get rid of the Holiness, in adopting the geological model into his aesthetics? More limitedly speaking, did he remove the idea of God in Christianity from their contemporaries?

Let me give an answer to these questions. As a criterion of his aesthetics Ruskin rightly adopted the very 'scientific' and therefore very 'modern' geological viewpoint into the artistic estimation of contemporary painters, such as J. M. W. Turner and so on. This adoption of 'scientific and modern' geology wiped the mythical image of ARCADIA off their scenery in a sense.

### 1. The Central Mountains

Ruskin's description on paintings or drawings of the high "Central Mountains" (中央高山脈), such as Jungfrau or so, however, sounds very lofty and sublime. I will show you one example of his paragraphs. (See the Figure 1: Turner's Daybreak at the Alps, in comparison with the Figure 4: Claude Lorrain's The Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, as well as the Comparison-List of the Modern Painters with the Old Masters at the end of my paper.) That comparison list tells us Ruskin was eager to assert the excellency of artistic modernity in England, or more exactly speaking, excellent culture in the Great Britain in his *Modern Painters*. This reminds us of the fact that geology as a modern science was founded by James Hutton and Charles Lyell around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain.

Let me go back to the description of the high central mountains, as follows:

" ..... and their great and prevailing characteristic (of the high central mountains) , as distinguished from other mountains, is want of solidity. They (=the high central mountains) rise in the morning light rather like sharp shade, cast up into the sky, than solid earth. Their lights are pure, roseate, and cloud-like; their shadows transparent, pale and opalescent, and often undistinguishable from the air around them, so that the mountain-top is seen in the heaven only by its flakes of motionless fire. " (MP. p. 273: Section 4, Chapter2) ※ Underlined by KUWAJIMA.

As we have seen now, the very high central mountains are represented in the want of solidity, cloud-like or air-like. And so that, those kinds of central mountains carry with the static holiness in the heaven.

This description of those mountains reflects the previous description of removing the rain- cloud and coming back to the sunlight at the high central mountains as follows:

“ And then wait yet for one hour, until the east again becomes purple, and the heaving mountains, rolling against it in darkness, like waves of wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burning: watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire: …… their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow, like alter-smoke, up to the heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flushing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer light through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven, one scarlet canopy, is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angles: and then, …… when you are bowed down with fear and love of the Maker and Doer of this, tell me who has best delivered this His message unto men ! ” (MP. p. 260: Section 3, Chapter 4) ※ Underlined by KUWAJIMA.

It is without saying any more that here is the analogous imagination of great domed cathedral of Christianity, that is to say, the admiration of the glorious and awful God. In the high central mountains, as Ruskin describes, you can recognize the Christian sublimity. In this, however, the sublimity belongs to the heaven. In other words, it belongs to the transcendent world above us. Then, the representation of those high mountains is undistinguished from that of the aerial. I think that this sort of the sublimity about the high mountains is not concerned with the most unique point of the geological aesthetics by Ruskin. Where is the most unique point of Ruskin ?

The most unique point of Ruskin's geological aesthetics is to be developed in the second Chapter of the “Inferior Mountains” , and much more developed in the third Chapter of the “Foreground” in the landscape paintings.

## 2. The Inferior Mountains

Firstly I will take one example of the “Inferior Mountains” (傍系低山地). ( Please see the figure 5: The Lake, or Loch Koriskin, and compare with the Figure 7: Salvator Rosa's River Landscape. )

“ Now, as in the case of the structure of the central peaks described above, so also here, if I had to give a clear idea of this organization of the lower hills, where it is seen in its greatest perfection, with a mere view to geological truth, I should not refer to any geological drawings, but I should take the Lake Coriskin of Turner. …… ” (MP. pp. 287-288: Section 4, Chapter 3) ※ Underlined by KUWAJIMA.

It is a Turner's drawing, Lake Coriskin, that shows the more geological truth, than the graphical illustrations on the textbook of geology at schools.

In another paragraph of this Chapter Ruskin also said as follows:

“ Put what mountain painting you will beside this (=Turner’s Lake Coriskin) , of any other artist, and its (=the other artist’s mountain) heights will look like mole-hill in comparison, because it will not have the unity and the multiplicity which are in nature, and with Turner, the signs of size. ” (MP. p. 295: Section 4, Chapter 3)

According to this passages by Ruskin, the other painter’s mountains, such as Salvator Rosa’s, look like just a mole-hill in Ruskin’s aesthetics. Then, Ruskin orders us to do as follows:

“ …… Observe, first, how nobly Turner has given us the perfect unity of the whole mass of hill, making us understand that every ravine in it has been cut gradually by streams. …… ” (MP. p. 297: Section 4, Chapter 3)

The point is that this detailed observation of the organization of the earth and layers of bedrocks. At the closing of this chapter Ruskin confessed the following fact:

“ I do not mean to assert that this great painter (=Turner) is acquired with the geological laws and facts he has thus illustrated; I am not aware whether he be or not: I merely wish to demonstrate, in points admitting of demonstration, that intense observation of, and strict adherence to, truth, which it is impossible to demonstrate in its less tangible and more delicate manifestations. …… ” (MP. p. 298: Section 4, Chapter 3)

According to Ruskin, the truth of the earth at the inferior mountains can be acquired by our intense observations and very tangible descriptions, as Turner did in his mountain landscapes.

### 3 . The Foreground

Secondly, I will take the “Foreground” (前景大地). This is the last Chapter of The Section entitled the “Truth of Earth” . Here Ruskin admired especially a series of Yorkshire Landscapes in England by Turner, in comparison with landscapes by Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa and the other “Old Masters”, including also Flemish and Dutch ones. ( See the Figure 8-a, 8-b, 8-c: Fall series by Turner, comparing with Figure 11, 12 by the Old Masters. )

“ …… we can …… tell you to observe how the eye is kept throughout on solid and retiring surfaces, instead of being thrown, as by Claude, on flat and equal edges. …… ” (MP. p. 317: Section 4, Chapter 4)

And Ruskin concluded this chapter as follows:

“ …… but the foregrounds of Turner are so united in all their parts that the eye cannot take them by divisions, but is guided from stone to stone and bank to bank discovering truths totally different inspect according to the direction in which it approaches them, and approach in them in a different direction, and viewing them as part of a new system every time that it begins its course at a new point. One lesson, however, we are invariably taught by all, however approached or viewed, that the work of the Great Spirit of nature is as deep and unapproachable as visible in its full energy of operation on every lowly bank and mouldering stone, as in the lifting of pillars of heaven, and settling the foundation of the earth; and that to the rightly perceiving mind, there is the same unity, and the same perfection, manifest in the casting of clay as in the scattering of the cloud, in the mouldering of the dust as in the kindling of the day-star. ” (MP. pp. 318-319: Section 4, Chapter 4) ※ Underlined by KUWAJIMA.

Consequently, Ruskin claims that the very inferior earthy world of Rock, stone, clay, sand and mud should be designed, as well as heaven or aerial transcendent world.

I will put emphasis on this statement of Ruskin. Here is Ruskin's uniqueness of his 'geological' aesthetics.

## Conclusion

I conclude my paper, expanding Ruskin's aesthetics of geology. In this extension of me, the key conception is a 'sublimation' (崇高化=莊嚴化) of the world by employing the modern geological model as a drastic in-organism (無機質化).

Ruskin has already developed his theory of the sublime in his *Modern Painters*, , Chapter III: "Of the Sublime", Section II: "Of Power", Part I: "Of General Principles". Here he cites Edmund Burke's theory of the sublime (崇高), and re-interpreted it in his own way. Ruskin accept Burke's statement that the principal cause of the sublime is ideas related to the self-preservation (自己保存), that is to say, to the death (死). Ruskin insist not on the 'fear' (恐怖) of death by Burke, but on the 'contemplation' (觀想=凝視) of death by Ruskin himself. Ruskin said as follows:

“ …… It is not while we shrink, but while we defy, that we receive or convey the highest conceptions of the fate. There is no sublimity in the agony of terror. …… I take the widest possible ground of investigation, that sublimity is found wherever it (=mind) contemplates anything above itself (=mind itself). …… ” (MP. pp. 40-41: Part 1, Section 2, Chapter 3)

※ Underlined by KUWAJIMA.

Probably Ruskin's conception of the 'contemplation' is closely related to Greek term THEORIA by Aristotle. And it was interpreted into Ruskin's idea of the 'theoretic faculty' and his idea of 'contemplation', as we have already seen.

In Kenji MIYAZAWA (宮沢賢治, 1896-1933) 's literary works, especially in the Prologue of his poem entitled "Haru (春) to Shura (修羅)", which means "Spring and the Evil", his drastic in-organic ideas of the mineral world (鉱物界) is finely developed. A contemporary researcher of Japanese thought, Sei'ichi TAKEUCHI (竹内整合) has recently pointed out its paradoxical recognition. He explains figuratively as follows:

" By the transparent insight into the world of the dead, it makes the world of the living flourished. Only the perfect in-organism can cause the sublimation of the Organism, Life, and Human Being. " (Sei'ichi TAKEUCHI, p. 291: trans. by KUWAJIMA.)

You can here have the geological speculation, a sort of philosophical perspective of 'geology' in a modern and broader sense, which is to be called the Aesthetics of Geology. My argument of this paper have spread from a criterion of the 'modernity' of John Ruskin ( of course, and J. M. W. Turner) 's geological aesthetics (地質学的美学) to Kenji MIYAZAWA' s geological in-organism (地質学の無機質化思想) in his poetry. Kenji's poetry carry with an air of Buddhism (仏教), more strictly speaking, the thought of the KU (空), the vacancy.

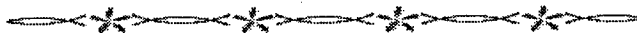
Indeed the geological model which Ruskin has employed is the very scientific and therefore modern conception on one phase. Yet it suggests the highly spiritual connotation on the other, relating to some sort of the refined and modern idea of the 'GENIUS LOCI' (地霊), spirit of the place.

I believe that Turner's talent, if unconsciously, took notice of this double meaning of the geology and acquired the skill of executing and representing it in his mountain landscapes. And then Turner met the best art-critic of the same country, John Ruskin, who was blessed with the insight into the Turner's geological modernity.

And eventually we can say that the aesthetics of geology discussed above shows the alternative way of 'modernity' not only in the art of landscape paintings (風景画), but also in the art of our world-recognition (世界認識), which is based on the acute observation on the very 'earthy' world (世俗=俗悪=大地世界).

#### Reference:

1. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. 1 ( 5 vols. and index ), Kent, UK: George Allen, 1888 (original ed. in 1843-1860). = MP.
2. Sei' ichi TAKEUCHI, 'Mizukara' to 'Onozukara' : *Nihon-shisou no Kisou*, Tokyo: Shun-juh sha, 2004, pp. 209-233.
3. Gabriel Gohau, *Une histoire de la geologie, Paris : la Decouverte*, 1st ed. in 1987, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. in 1990. ( Japanese translation : *Chishitsugaku no Rekishi*, Tokyo : Misuzu-shobo, 1997. )



## The Comparison-List of the Modern Painters with the Old Masters

in: Section IV: "Of Truth of Earth", Part II: "Of Truth" of *Modern Painters*.

### • Chapter II: "Of the Central Mountains" (MP. pp. 270-284)

【(Joseph Mallord William) Turner, 1775-1851, English】 :

the vignette of Alps at Daybreak (MP. p.271)

..... 【Figure 1】

the vignette illustration to Jacqueline, the vignette of Aosta, in the Italy

(MP. p. 272) ..... 【Figure 2 -a, 2 -b】

the vignette of the Andes, the second in Campbell (MP. p. 272)

the drawing of Arona, with the St. Gothard in the distance (MP. p. 277)

..... 【Figure 3】

※ Almost all the original paintings by Turner presented above were engraved after him by Edward Goodall (1795-1870, Yorkshire), who was living near Turner's house in London, and became popular in the Victorian era.

VS

【The Other Modern Painters : (Clarkson) Stanfield, 1793-1867, English】 :

the Borromean Islands, with the St. Gothard in the distance (MP. p. 277)

【The Old Masters : Claude (Lorrain) , 1600-1682, French- Italian】 :

the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca (in the National Gallery, London) (MP. p. 274)

..... 【Figure 4】

No. 244 in the Dulwich (Painting) Gallery (, London) (MP. p. 279)

### • Chapter III: "Of the Inferior Mountains" (MP. pp. 285-303)

【Turner】 :

the engraving of the Lake Coriskin (=Loch Koriskin)

(MP. p. 288) ..... 【Figure 5】

Glencoe in the illustrations to Scott, the Daphne hunting with Leucippus

(MP. p. 288, p. 294)

the Caudebec, in the Rivers of France (MP. p.297)

the Skiddaw, in the illustrations to Scott (MP. p. 299)

the Oberwesel or Lake of Uri (MP. p. 300)

..... 【Figure 6】



**【The Other Modern Painters : Clarkson Stanfield】 :**  
the drawings of the mountains < as well as the central clouds >

VS

**【The Old Masters】 :**

1. Salvator (Rosa) , 1615-1673, Italian: ..... **【Figure 7】** ※ similar example  
No. 220 in the Dulwich Gallery (MP. p. 289)
2. Gaspar Poussin (=Gaspard Dughet) , 1615-1675, French-Italian:  
No. 269 in the Dulwich Gallery (MP. p. 290)
3. Claude:  
No. 260 in the Dulwich Gallery (MP. p. 298)

• Chapter IV: “Of the Foreground” (MP. pp. 304-319)

**【Turner】 :**

- the Mercury and Argus (MP. p. 313, p. 318)
- the drawings of the engravings of the Upper fall of the Tees, Yorkshire, in the  
England series (MP. p. 314) ..... **【Figure 8-a, 8-b, 8-c】**
- the drawings of the engravings of the Lower fall of the Tees, with the chain-bridge,  
Yorkshire, in the England series (MP. p. 316) ..... **【Figure 8-a, 8-b, 8-c】**
- the foreground of the Ulleswater (Lake) (MP. p. 316)
- the grand drawing of Penmaen Mawr(MP. p. 318)
- the Bay of Baiæ (MP. p. 318) ..... **【Figure 9】**

**【The Other Modern Painters】 :**

1. Clarkson Stanfield:  
<the drawings of> the faithful, scientific, and dexterous studies of nature  
(MP. p. 307)
- the engraving of the Coast Scenery: the Botallack Mine, Cornwall(MP. pp. 307 -308)
- the East Cliff, Hastings(MP. p. 308) ..... **【Figure 9-a, 9-b】** ※ similar example
2. J. D. (=James Duffield) Harding, 1798-1863, English:  
the rocks of middle distances (MP. p. 308) ..... **【Figure10】** ※ similar example
  3. J. B. (=James Baker) Pyne, 1800-1870, Bristol, English:  
the very accurate knowledge of limestone (MP. p. 309)  
..... **【Figure11-a, 11-b】** ※ similar example

VS

【The Old Masters】 :

1. Salvator:

No. 220 in the Dulwich Gallery (MP. p. 307)

2. Unknown Painter:

No. 159 in the Dulwich Gallery (MP. p. 307)

3. 〈David〉 Teniers 〈the Younger〉 , 1610-1690, Flemish:

No. 139 in the Dulwich Gallery (MP. p. 310)

4. 〈Albert〉 Cuyp, 1620-1691, Dutch:

(MP. p. 312) …… 【Figure12-a, 12-b】 ※ similar example

5. Claude:

the foregrounds of his morning landscape, with the large group of trees and high single-arched bridge, in the National Gallery (MP. p. 312)

Text: John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. 1 ( 5 vols. and index ), Kent, UK: George Allen, 1888. =MP.

Notes:

\*This paper is based on my oral presentation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of Eastern Aesthetics on February 23, 2004, held at the Korean National University of Arts (KNUA), Seoul, Korea.

\*\*We have a very recent work, which makes very similar examination at the relationship between aesthetics and geology, mainly focusing on the Romantic in Britain: **Noah Heringman, *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004.*** This is sure to be a suggestive research of our subject. I am sorry that I shall show you Heringman's conception of ' aesthetic geology ' in another opportunity after detailed scrutiny of the intensive reading.

**The Figures Cited Above:**

**Chapter II: “ Of the Central Mountains ”**

**J. M. W. Turner vs The Old Masters ( esp. Claude Lorrain )**

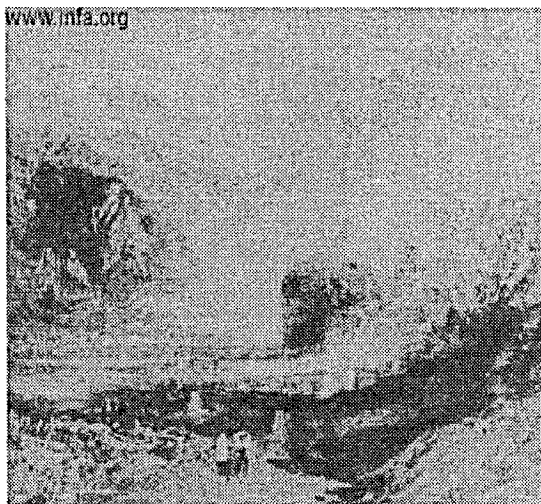
**【Figure 1】 Goodall after Turner:**

**The engraving vignette of Alps at Daybreak**



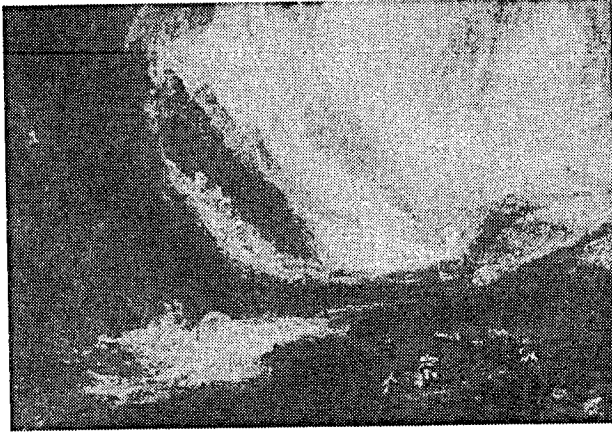
**【Figure 2-a】 Turner( original painting ):**

**Aosta, Lausanne, 1836**



**【Figure 2-b】 Turner( original painting ):**

**Valley of Aosta: Snowstorm, Avalanche, Thunderstorm, 1837**



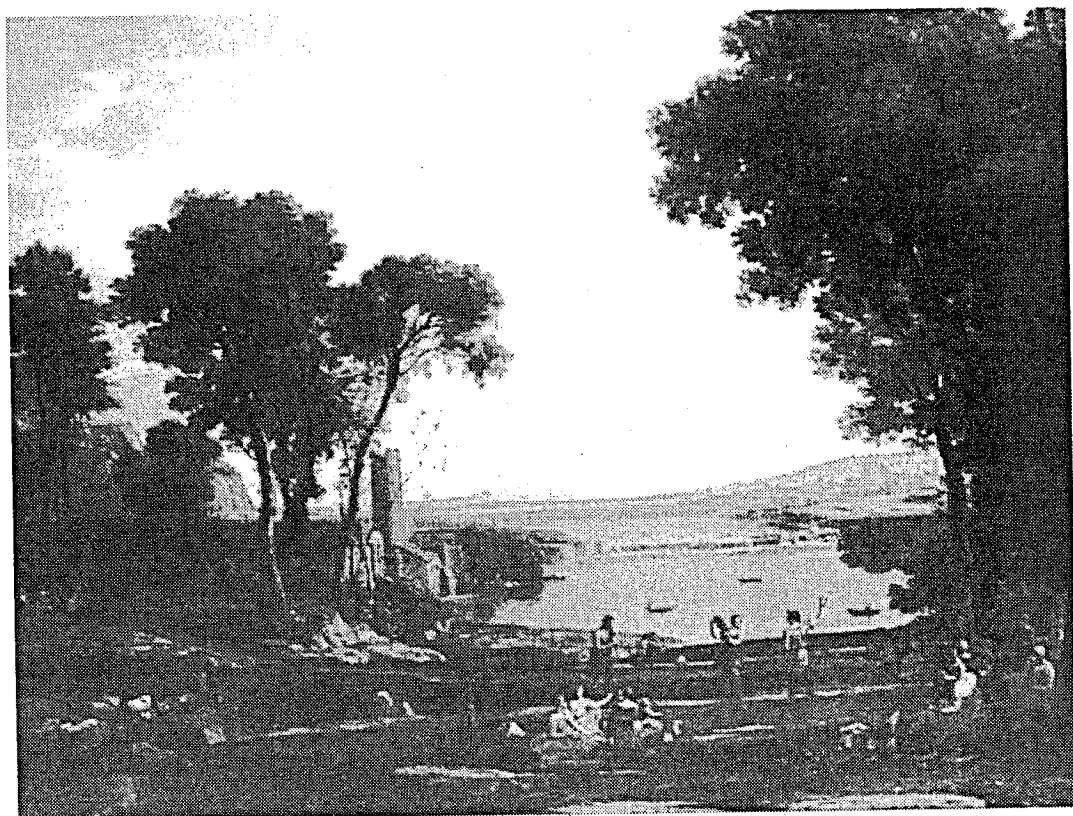
**【Figure 3】 Turner( original painting ):**

**Passage of Mount St. Gothard, 1804**



**【Figure 4】 Claude Lorrain:**

**The Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca <=Rebecca's Wedding>**

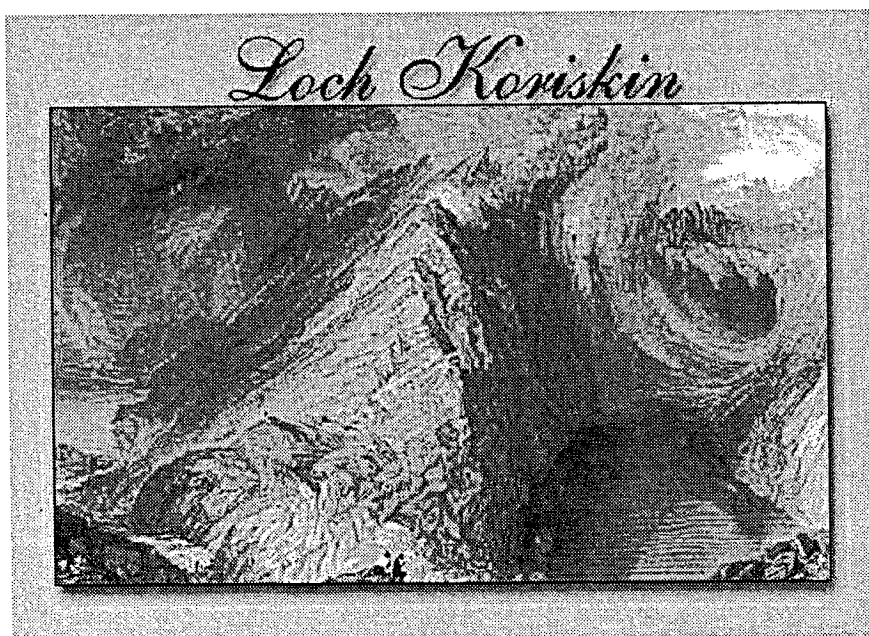
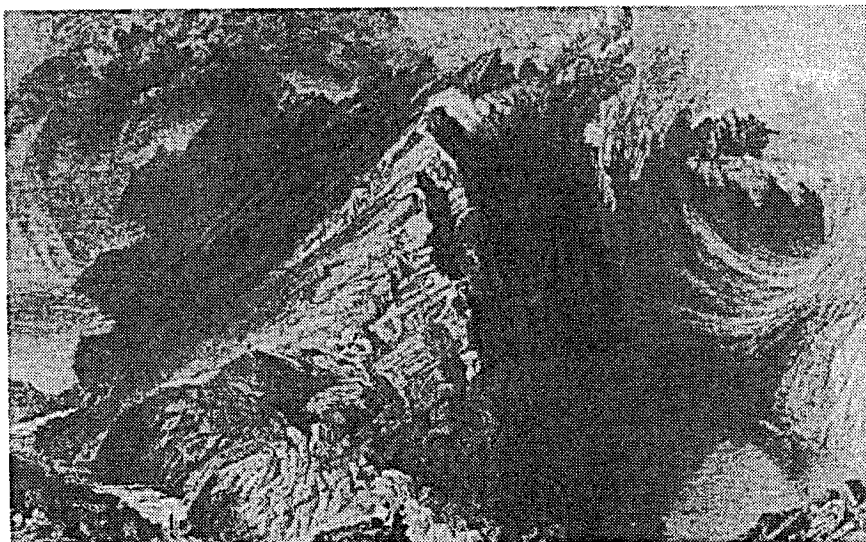


Chapter III: “ Of the Inferior Mountains ”

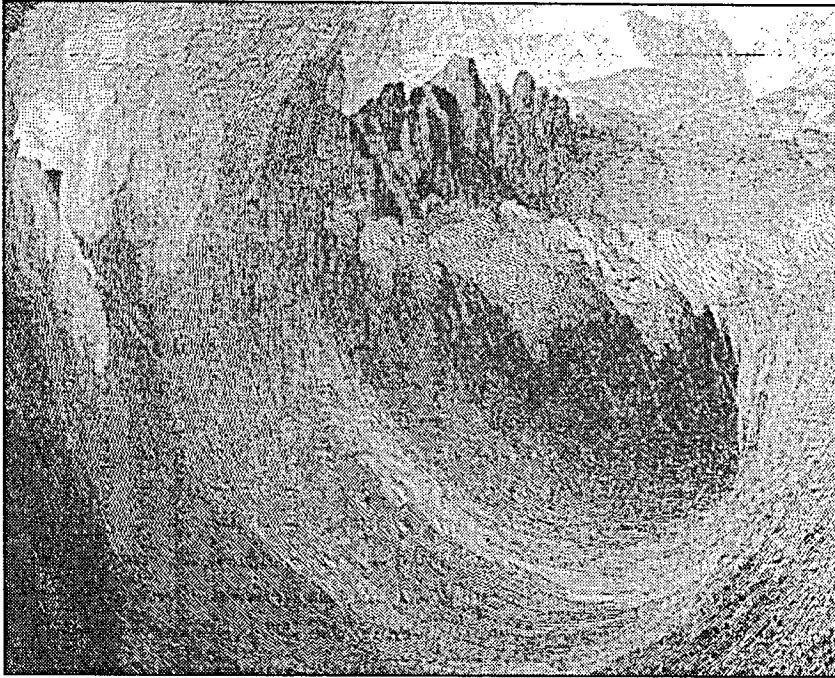
J. M. W. Turner vs The Old Masters ( esp. Salvator Rosa )

**[Figure 5 ]** Turner:

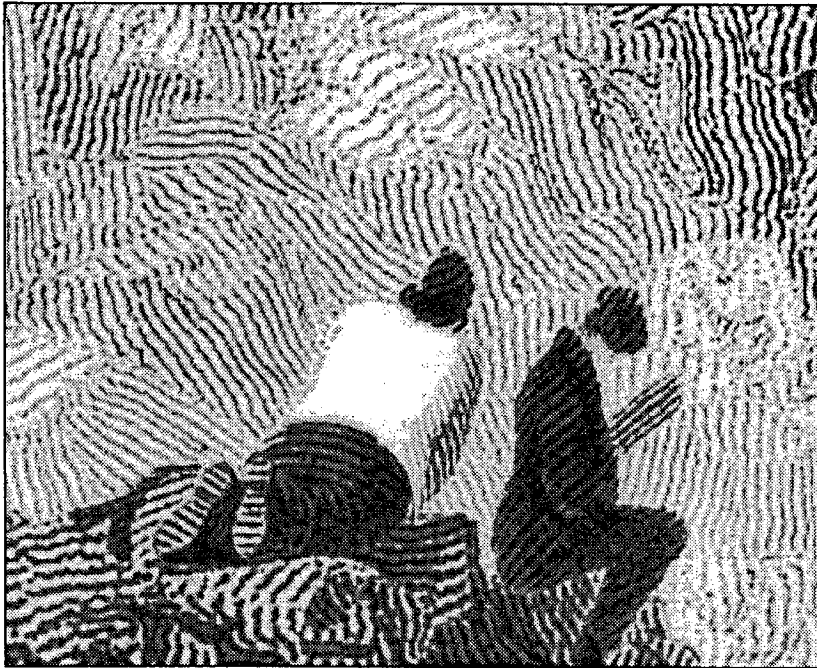
the engraving of the Lake Coriskin ( =Loch Koriskin )



**【Figure 5】 Magnified Details:  
Upper Right Side: Mountains**



**Lower Middle Side: Tourists admiring a Wonder of Nature**





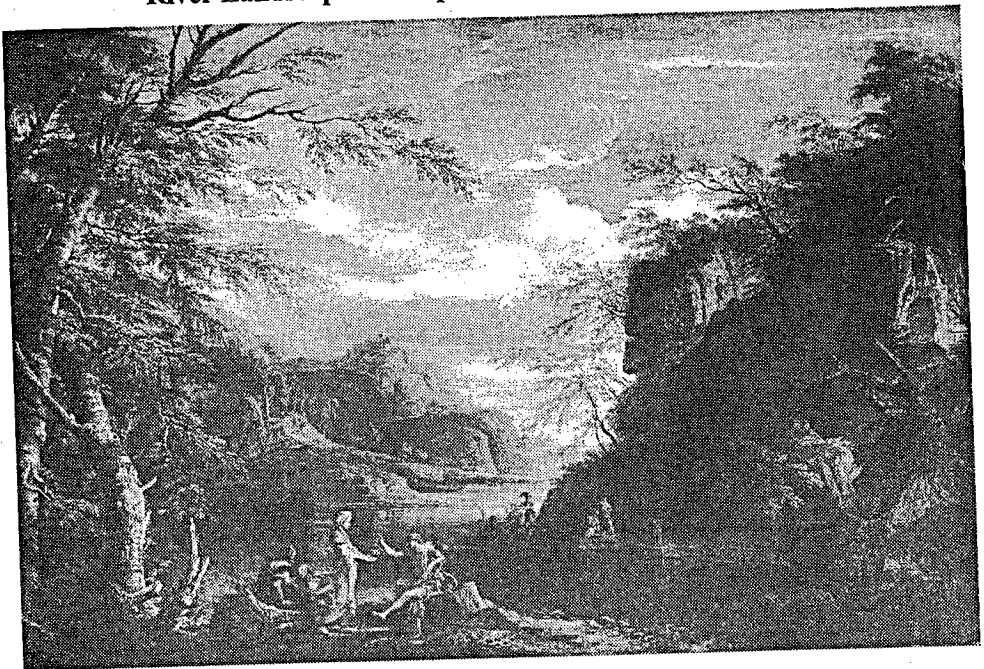
**【Figure 6】 Turner:**

**Lake Lucerne: the Bay of Uri from above Brunne**



**【Figure 7】 Salvator Rosa:**

**River Landscape with Apollo and Cumean Sibyl, c. 1655**





Chapter IV: “ Of the Foreground ”

Turner and the Other Modern Painters vs The Old Masters

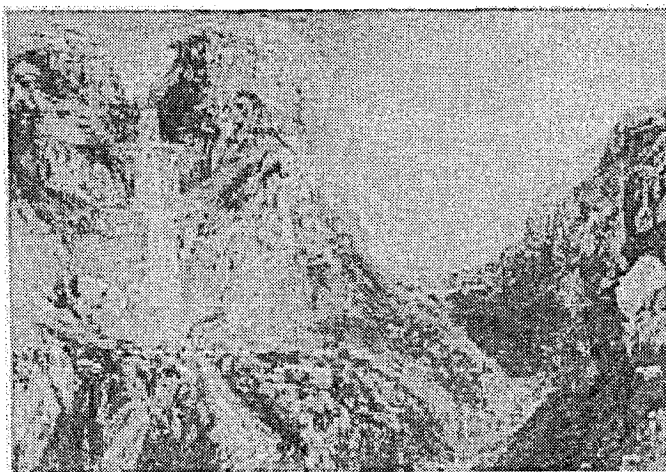
**【Figure 8-a】** Turner( original painting ):

Weathercote Cave, c. 1816-1818



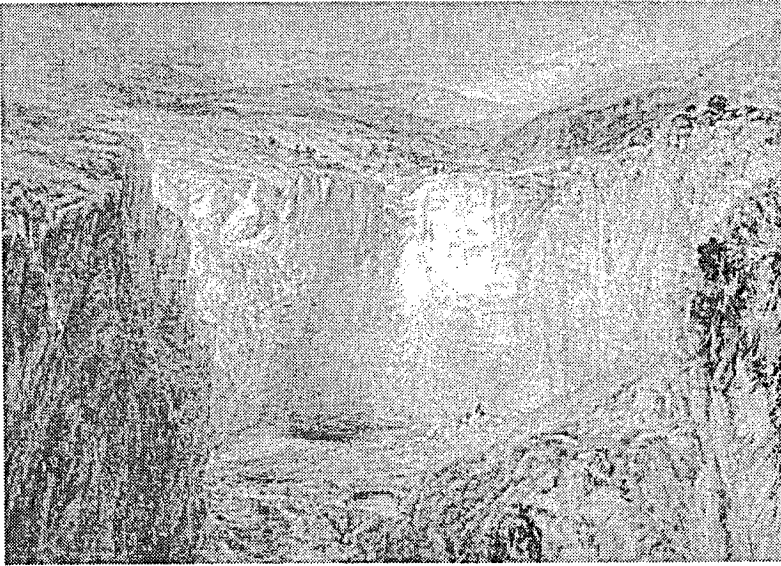
**【Figure 8-b】** Turner( original painting ):

Mossdale Fall, c. 1816-1818 ( included in Ruskin's collection )



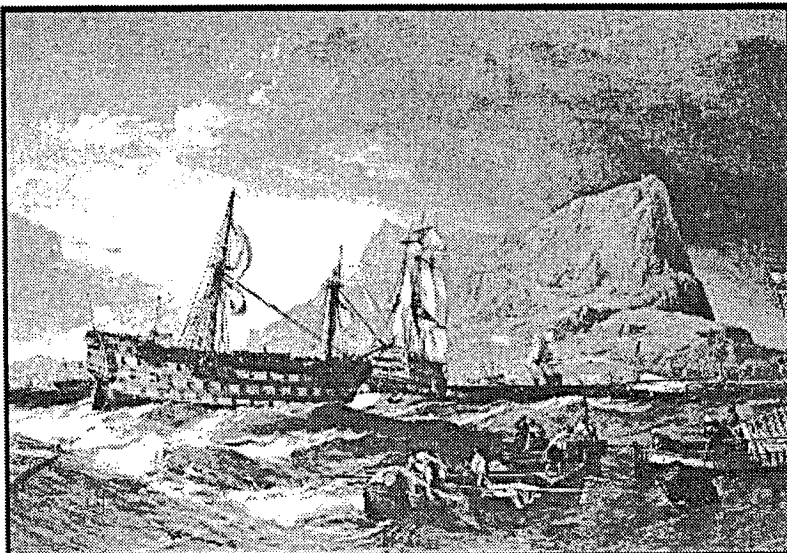
**【Figure 8-c】 Turner( original painting ):**

**Fall of Tees, Yorkshire, c. 1825-1826**



**【Figure 9-a】 Clarkson Stanfield:**

**H. M. S. Victory, with the body of Nelson on board.....28<sup>th</sup> October,  
1805**

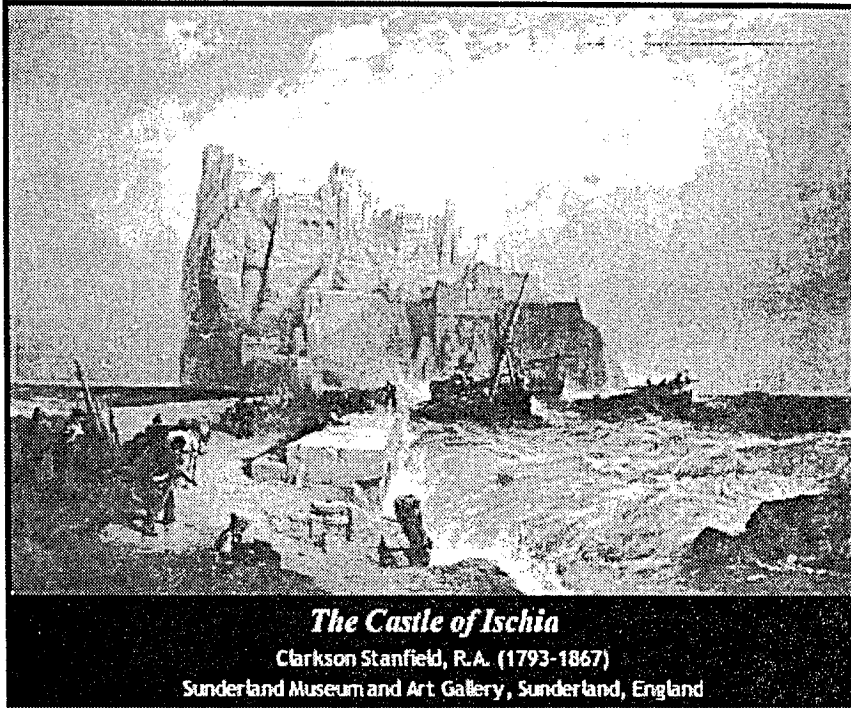


*H.M.S. Victory, with the body of Nelson on board, towed into Gibraltar,  
28th October, 1805, seven days after the Battle of Trafalgar*

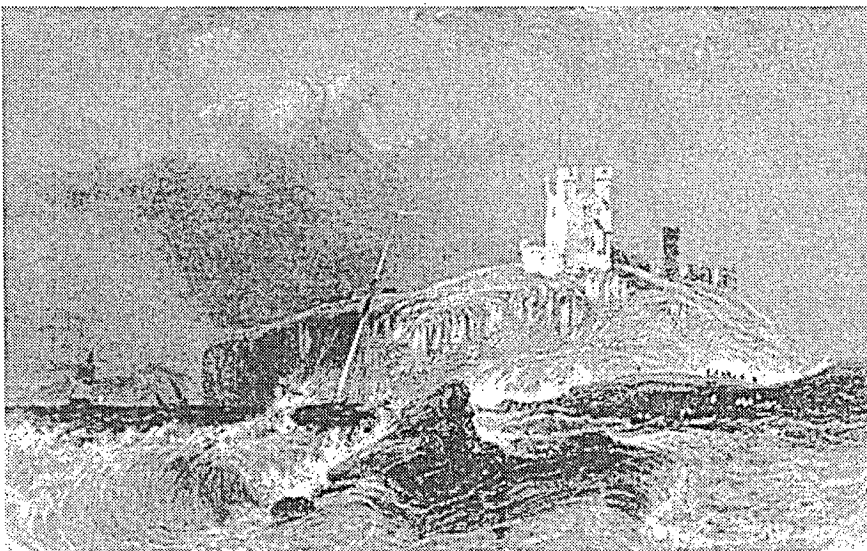
**Clarkson Stanfield, R.A. (1793-1867)**

**Exhibited R.A. 1853, Oil on canvas, 69 x 103 ins  
private collection - Somerleyton Hall**

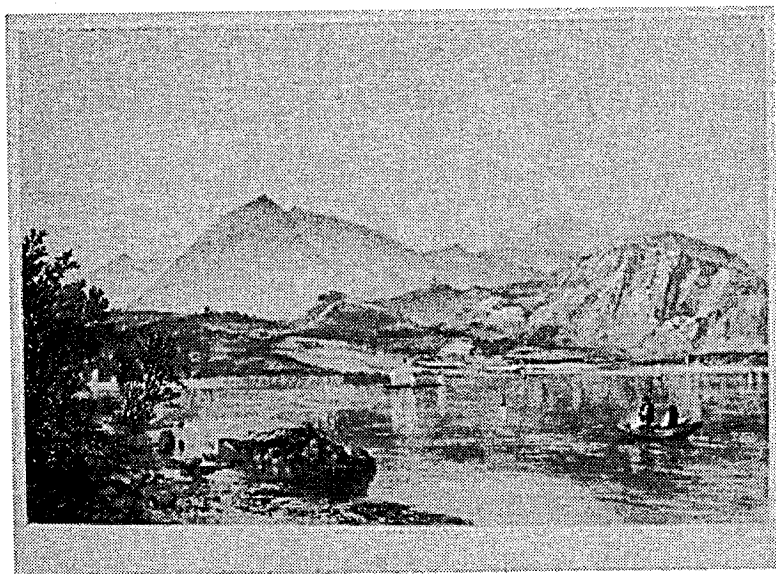
**【Figure 9 -b】 Clarkson Stanfield:  
The Castle of Ischia**



**【Figure10】 J. D. Harding:  
The engraving of Dunstanborough Castle, c. 1840**



**【Figure11-a】 W. Gauci lithographing and Hanhart printing after J. B. Pyne:  
Coniston Water**

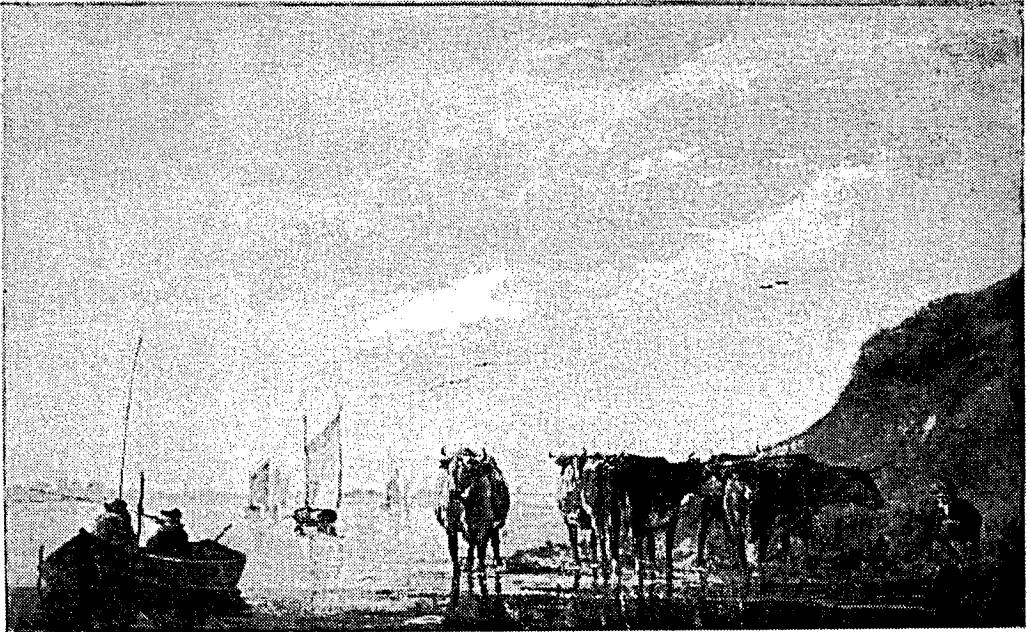


**【Figure11-b】 W. Gauci lithographing and Hanhart printing after J. B. Pyne:  
The Derwent River and Barrowdale**



**【Figure12-a】 Albert Cuyp:**

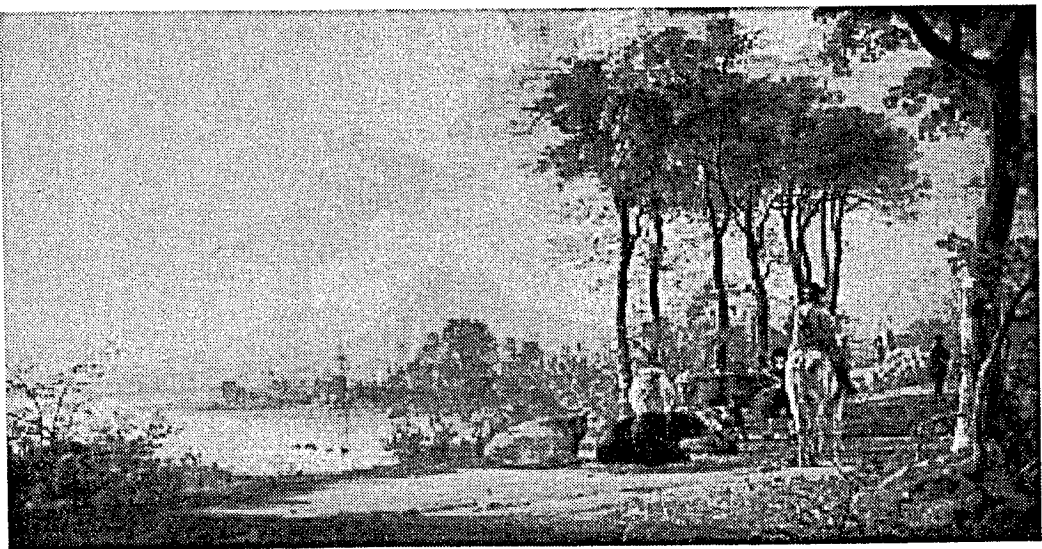
**A Herdsman with Five Cows by a River, c, 1650-1655**



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**【Figure12-b】 Albert Cuyp:**

**River Landscape with Horseman and Peasants, c, 1658-1660**





# ラスキン『近代画家論』にみる地質学の美学—山岳絵画の「近代」とは何か—

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本稿は、ジョン・ラスキン (John Ruskin, 1819-1900) による『近代画家論』 (*Modern Painters*, 1843-1860年。以下、MP. と略記) のなかに、「地質学の美学」を読みとる試みである。ラスキンが、17世紀の風景画の「巨匠たち」(The Old Masters)と比較して、すなわち、ひとつの古今画家論争を通じて、J. M. W. ターナー (Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1775-1871) など—主として同時代イギリスの—「近代画家たち」(The Modern Painters)のなかに見いだしたものとこそ、まさに新たな「地質学的な」山岳絵画の描法と、その反省的な含意であった。

従来『近代画家論』をめぐるのは、光学・色彩学・気象学といった分野との関連のもと、ターナーらの風景画における近代性が、ひじょうにかまびすしく論じられてきたように思われる。あるいは、『近代画家論』を扱う者たちのなかで繰り返されてきたのは、既成かつ自明の「ロマン派」概念との照合せつつ、そこで論じられている「想像力」概念を開雲に検討・整理するような、ある種の銜学的な概念操作でしかなかったという感が否めない。

たしかに上記のような研究視座は、ターナーらによる新たな風景描法の考案、特に、その「雲」や「水蒸気」をめぐる大気 (あるいは、大空) の様相を捉える自然表象法の創出という点では、きわめて有効なものであったと思われる。例えば、本稿で特に注目している「山岳風景 (画)」の場合でも、ユングフラウのように「中央高山脈」(The Central Mountains) (MP. 第2部・第4節・第2章)をなし、かつ常に万年雪に覆われ、したがって天上世界と渾然一体の様相を呈しているような山岳風景は、従来の「大気」をめぐる考察を基礎にその美的な価値が正当に論じられているといえよう。ちなみに、ターナーが原画を描いた《日の出のアルプス》のピセットなどがその好例として挙げられている。

しかしながら、「中央高山脈」の章に続く、「傍系低山地」(The Inferior Mountains) (MP. 第2部・第4節・第3章)の章、さらには「前景大地」(The Foreground) (MP. 第2部・第4節・第4章)の章にいたっては、むしろその岩石表象の地質学的肌目の正確さおよび完全さが美的な価値評価の対象となっている。ラスキンは、「傍系低山地」の例としては、ターナーが原画を描いた《コリスキン湖》を挙げる。また「前景大地」の例としては、同じくターナーの描いたイングランド・ヨークシャーに存する一連の「滝」を描いた作品群に言及している。ラスキンに言わせれば、ターナーの描いたコリスキン湖は、いかなる地質学教科書の挿絵と比べても、「地質学的な真理」とともに「偉大な完全さ」を表している、という。さらにまた、ターナーの描いた「前景大地」つまりぬ岩や土のうちには、天上の神聖な世界と同様の、あるいは、それ以上の「自然の偉大な精神」(the Great Spirit of nature)が漲っている、ともいつている。

ラスキンの「地上=卑俗世界」讚美は、天の調和へと向かいがちな古典的美学に対する反省的思考様式を示してはいないだろうか。地上の物質世界の「凝視」(contemplation)こそ、逆説的に、我々の感性論的な価値付けを可能にしているのではないか。いつけん美学者あるいは芸術学者に縁遠いものであるように思われる「地質学」へと分け入ることで、かえってターナーら風景画家の目指した近代性の輪郭がはっきりしてくるということだ。『近代画家論』に見られる地質学的な山岳美学は、じつは形而上学的な「天」の美学に対し、別の「美学」の在り方を問う鋭い批判ではなかったのか。ラスキン以後の美学者は、「地」へと深く沈潜していくような感性的認識の可能性を探る途の存在を忘れてはなるまい。