

# The Apostle of Beauty: Some Turn-of-the-Century Perceptions of Ruskin in Central and Eastern Europe

Stuart Eagles  
Independent Scholar

**Abstract** Ruskin's writings were widely available in a range of European languages by the early years of the Twentieth century. We focus here on the Czech lands (mainly Bohemia), Hungary and Poland, with some comparative references to Russia. In these nations, Ruskin was found in partial and complete translations of individual works, anthologies of selected passages, critical studies, journal articles and in the debates these publications helped to stimulate. Ruskin was also read both in the original English, and widely in French translation. But it was not until Ruskin's ideas began to circulate in these countries' native languages that Ruskin's literary merit and philosophical insights could be seriously engaged with.

**Keywords** Ruskin's reception. Translation. Hungary. Czech. Poland. Russia. Leo Tolstoj. Robert de la Sizeranne.

**Summary** 1 Ruskin's Reputation. – 2 Ruskin, the Apostle of Beauty. – 3 Interpreters and Interpretations. – 4 Women Interpreters.

Ruskin did not generally approve of his work being translated. When, in 1896, the committee of the Welsh National Eisteddfod asked his permission to include translations from his poems in their concert programme, W.G. Collingwood replied that Ruskin

has always felt extremely indisposed towards translations from his works, and it would perhaps be hardly fair to persons to whom he has refused permission to translate into French and German, if he were now to sanction translations into Welsh.<sup>1</sup>

Despite or regardless of this, Ruskin's writings were widely available in a range of European languages by the early years of the Twentieth century. We will focus here on the Czech

---

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, 34: 616 fn. 1.

lands (mainly Bohemia), Hungary and Poland, with some comparative references to Russia.<sup>2</sup> In these diverse nations, Ruskin was found in partial and complete translations of individual works, anthologies of selected passages, critical studies, journal articles and in the debates these publications helped to stimulate. Ruskin was also read both in the original English, and widely in French translation. But it was not until Ruskin's ideas began to circulate in these countries' native languages that Ruskin's literary merit and philosophical insights could be seriously engaged with.

The peak of Ruskin's appeal to translators and critics, and the height of his reception, was reached in these countries, as in many other parts of the world, at the turn of the Nineteenth into the Twentieth century. Ruskin was discussed with increasing frequency and interest from the late 1890s, but his death at the start of 1900 triggered an explosion of obituaries and critical retrospectives in a period hungry for fresh ideas. The dislocating effects of urbanisation, rapid industrial growth, the mechanisation of agricultural and industrial production, the specialisation of labour, and the mushrooming of city squalor, all combined with the ambiguous and uncertain potential of technological invention, social experimentation, and cultural innovation, to contribute to a fevered atmosphere at once threatening and exciting, full of possibilities, good and bad.

The space available here is barely sufficient to provide more than the briefest selective sketch of some of the lessons derived from Ruskin by a few of his most fascinating interpreters. Ruskin's influence was felt in the fine, applied and industrial arts. He was admired for his role in inspiring and supporting the Pre-Raphaelites,

and for providing the theoretical basis for the practical achievements of William Morris and the Arts & Crafts movement. A wide variety of individuals and groups cited aspects of his thinking and called on his authority in cultural debates about the purpose and value of artistic movements and national styles. The vital connecting element was Ruskin's insistence on the vital importance of beauty in nature and art. This is not to deny that he had his detractors and opponents. Nor is it to suggest that Ruskin's legacy was uncomplicated or uncontested. For many conservatives, his perceived celebration of man's harmony with nature in the Middle Ages, and his emphasis on traditional methods and standards of art production, validated their resistance to modern orthodoxies, and privileged the special work of the hands above all else. Many modernists opposed to Ruskin saw this as essentially stifling of creative innovation, truth to nature being apparently antithetical to abstraction. But for modernists who saw value in Ruskin's ideas – and there were many – his rejection of industrial capitalism, opposition to exploitative labour relations and belief that art was for the everyday and for all, licenced a range of initiatives to make art more accessible. Inevitably there were differences of interpretation from individual to individual and group to group within these countries, as well as between them. Describing Ruskin's little-known translational history, and the affinities and differences in his reception in central and eastern Europe, helps to map Ruskin's global reach and to understand his influence in a way that underlines the inspirational or recuperative value of his insights to a diverse and significant range of thinkers and practitioners all too commonly ignored in the English-speaking west.

<sup>2</sup> For a broad survey of the reception of British art and design in the Czech lands, Hungary and Poland, as well as Germany and Austria, see Szczerski 2015. For surveys of Ruskin's influence on the Czech Arts & Crafts, see Vybíral 2004; for his reception in Hungary, see Péteri 2005; and for a brief survey of his influence in Poland, see Ulita 2007. For a contextualised and detailed account of Ruskin's influence in Russia see Polonsky 1998, Eagles 2011, Eagles 2016.

Conspicuous among Ruskin's champions was Leo Tolstoj who declared in 1898 that "John Ruskin is one of the most remarkable men not only of England and of our generation, but of all countries and times".<sup>3</sup> For him, Ruskin was "a philosopher, political economist, and Christian moralist". In addition to publishing his own short selection of paraphrased Ruskinian aphorisms, Tolstoj also caused one disciple in particular, Lev Pavlovich Nikiforov (1848-1917), a Socialist Revolutionary, to translate

three books about Ruskin (two from French), twelve books by Ruskin, and to produce four books of selected passages as well as his own short biography of him.<sup>4</sup> But Tolstoj's interpretation of Ruskin, and the extent of Nikiforov's copiousness, were exceptional. In Russia, as in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, the dedication was less intense and the focus of attention was largely on Ruskin's aesthetic theory, in particular his claims for the vital moral importance of natural and artistic beauty.

## 1 Ruskin's Reputation

The master of religious painting, and a leading member of the Mir Iskusstva (World of Art) movement in Russia, Mikhail Nesterov (1862-1942), recalled in his memoirs, "I and my generation were raised on the views and concepts of art of Ruskin and theorists like him".<sup>5</sup> In 1900, the journal *Magyar Iparművészet* (Hungarian Applied Arts) commented in an obituary of Ruskin that many Hungarians were unsure whether he had been "a polar explorer or a Russian novelist",<sup>6</sup> but by 1904 the same journal declared that "Ruskin has a very good name in Hungary today".<sup>7</sup> This latter article speculated that whilst it was possible that Ruskin's influence would prove to be a passing fad, it might yet cause "the whole Hungarian nation" to "settle on a new culture

in which Ruskin's teaching is vivid and thriving".<sup>8</sup> For the Hungarian artist, Aladár Körösfői-Kriesch (1863-1920), writing in the same year, Ruskin's influence was so pervasive that "We are all his disciples, whether we have read a line of him well or not".<sup>9</sup> The Czech journalist, essayist and author, Gustav Jaroš (1867-1948), writing under his pseudonym Gamma in the influential journal, *Volné Sméry* (Free Directions) in 1900, remarked:

How thick must be the Chinese wall between England and Bohemia if the first accounts of a man of such importance as John Ruskin are only timidly starting to reach us in a few fragmentary passages

<sup>3</sup> Eagles 2016, 12.

<sup>4</sup> See Eagles 2016, 16-32.

<sup>5</sup> Nesterov 1985, 113. The Mir Iskusstva movement engaged with Ruskin and helped to interpret him for Russian readers, but rejected many of his ideas: see Polonsky 1998, Eagles 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Szczerski 2015, 337.

<sup>7</sup> Dömötör 1904, 24.

<sup>8</sup> Dömötör 1904, 34.

<sup>9</sup> Kriesch 1904, 10.

after his great, famous and profound work has been ongoing for fifty years.<sup>10</sup>

The lawyer, journalist and critic of society and economics, Stanislaw Koszutski (1872-1930), wrote in 1900 that until recently Ruskin was almost completely unknown in Poland, but that it was to be hoped that with the recent slew of “obituaries, dissertations and articles”, he would become known in “all the splendour of his beauty and strength”. Ruskin was, he added, “one of the greatest writers of the Nineteenth century”.<sup>11</sup>

Translations appeared unsystematically, out of sequence, often out of context, and coverage was not consistent across national borders. Of Ruskin’s major works, only *Sesame and Lilies* appeared in its entirety in all four languages: translated into Russian twice, first by Nikiforov in 1900 (the first of his 11-volume *Sobranie Sochinenii Dzhona Reskina* (The Collected Works of John Ruskin), and second, by Olga Soloveva, the following year; in Polish, also in 1900, by Ruskin’s most prolific Polish translator, Wojciech Szukiewicz (1867-1944); in Czech, in 1901, by F.X. Šalda; and in Hungarian, in 1911, by Klára Farkas.<sup>12</sup> *The Crown of Wild Olive* appeared in Russian, Polish, and Czech, all in 1900; *Unto this Last* in Russian in 1900, Hungarian in 1904, and Czech in 1910; *Ethics of the Dust* in Russian and Polish,

both in 1901; *The Queen of the Air* in Polish in 1901, and Czech in 1903. *Lectures on Art* was translated into Russian three times (twice in 1900, and again in 1907) and appeared in Czech in 1901; *Mornings in Florence* appeared in Russian in 1902, and Czech in 1919; *The Political Economy of Art* in Russian in 1902 and in Czech in 1925; while *The Two Paths* appeared before the Second World War only in Czech (in 1909). *The Eagle’s Nest* and *The Laws of Fesole* were also translated into Russian in 1903 and 1904 respectively.

*The Seven Lamps of Architecture* did not make it into any of these languages in its entirety in this period, but a critical summary and analysis was published in Polish in 1902 by the influential architect and conservator, Jan Sas Zubrzycki (1860-1935). Ruskin’s multi-volume works were scarcely attempted in their entirety by translators, but circulated in numerous extracted passages that appeared in anthologies, critical studies, and journal articles, though *Frondees Argrestes* (being a selection from *Modern Painters*) and a 363-page selection from *Fors Clavigera* made standalone publications in Russian in 1902 and 1905 respectively, and remarkably all three volumes of *The Stones of Venice* appeared in Hungarian between 1896 and 1898, published by the Magyar Tudományos Akademia (Hungarian Academy of Arts and Sciences).

<sup>10</sup> Jaroš 1900, 89. The article was headed with a drawing, apparently of Ruskin, by the artist, Jan Priesler (1872-1918), for a long time editor of the journal, and later an art professor.

<sup>11</sup> Koszutski 1900, 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> It also appeared in Romanian in 1914, translated by Constantin Antoniadă (1880-1954), a hugely important Romanian jurist, diplomat, writer, philosopher, and historian of the Renaissance: *Comori si gradini: trei conferinte* (Treasures and Gardens: Three Lectures), Bucharest: Universale.

## 2 Ruskin, the Apostle of Beauty

Common to many – but by no means all – translators and critics of Ruskin in turn-of-the-century Russia, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech lands was their interpretation of him as an apostle. A Christian teacher leading his disciples through the blighted landscape of the present, Ruskin shone the light from his lamps of Beauty and Truth to point the way to a future capable of recuperating the sympathy and reverence for nature common in pre-Renaissance Europe when God's gifts were apparently properly valued and head, heart and hand were harmonized in a whole human soul.

Ruskin's legacy was to a large extent framed in central and eastern Europe by the influential French art critic and historian, Robert de la Sizeranne (1866-1932), and especially by his magisterial study, *Ruskin et la religion de la beauté*, which appeared in Paris in 1897. It was translated into Russian twice, both in 1900, once by Nikiforov, and once by T. Bogdanovich. A year earlier an essay on Ruskin had appeared under the title "Religiya krasoty" (The Religion of Beauty) in the Russian journal *Russkoe bogatstvo* (Russian Treasure) by the essayist, critic, and theosophist, Adelaida Gertsyk (1874-1925), later a notable and highly original Decadent poet.<sup>13</sup> A Polish translation of Sizeranne's work was published in Lviv in 1898-1899, as *John Ruskin i kult piękna* by the eminent writer and literary critic, Anto-

ni Potocki (1867-1939). It appeared just before Potocki established himself as the pre-eminent ambassador of Polish culture in France, having established the Koło Polskie Artystyczno-Literackie (Polish Artistic and Literary Association) in Paris in 1897. Sizeranne's study was cited in Polish obituaries of Ruskin, such as that which appeared in the journal, *Architekt* (Architect) by Jan Zawiejski (1854-1922), the historicist architect.

A short study by Lev A. Bogdanovich, *Dzhon Reskin: 'Apostol religii krasoty' (ocherk)* (John Ruskin, 'Apostle of the Religion of Beauty' [An Essay]) was published in Moscow by I.A. Mamontov just after Ruskin's death in January 1900. In his account, Bogdanovich firmly establishes Ruskin as the "father of the aesthetic" and the "apostle of the religion of beauty",<sup>14</sup> varying the phrase to "the father of British aesthetics"<sup>15</sup> as he characterises Brantwood as a site of pilgrimage to which disciples expectantly turned up with their "Kodaks" determined to take away a memento of their visit.<sup>16</sup> He hails "the apostolic spirit of John Ruskin"<sup>17</sup> and, deploying a significant metaphor, he compares Ruskin to a "Great Anglo-Saxon physician"<sup>18</sup> determined to "use his powerful means to cure his brothers".<sup>19</sup> Ruskin is the "eternal advocate of real virtues" whose writings are "monographs about the medicinal qualities and properties of beauty".<sup>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Gertsyk produced the Russian translation of *Mornings in Florence*.

<sup>14</sup> Bogdanovich 1900, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Bogdanovich 1900, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Bogdanovich 1900, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Bogdanovich 1900, 22.

<sup>18</sup> Bogdanovich 1900, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Bogdanovich 1900, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Bogdanovich 1900, 9..

In June 1900, the translator and literary critic, Zinaida Vengerova (1867-1941), wrote a lengthy obituary of Ruskin in the journal *Vestnik Evropy* (The Herald of Europe), though she expressed an anxiety felt by other modernists, in Russia and elsewhere, that Ruskin's message had the potential to stifle creativity in its perceived emphasis on the social utility of art, but her enthusiasm for him was always strong. Her essay was later collected under the title, "Dzhon Reskin, Apostol krasoty" (John Ruskin, Apostle of Beauty). In 1903 she succinctly encapsulated the admiration of many sympathetic modernists by declaring that "[Ruskin] caused a revolution in art, he managed to convince us that art is not a luxury but a necessity, that beauty is a necessary element of life".<sup>21</sup> In Hungary, in 1904, Körösfői-Kriesch compared Ruskin to 'the apostles' for revealing the harmony and beauty of nature by insisting that the artist should show a mirror to nature and thus reflect their own soul.<sup>22</sup> Two years earlier, Frigyes Spiegel (1866-1933), the architect and craftsman, writing in the journal *Magyar Iparművészet* (Hungarian Applied Arts), called Ruskin the "free-spirited apostle" who taught that "mechanical industry could be counter-balanced only by the revival of the handicrafts".<sup>23</sup>

The Pole, Stanislaw Koszutski concluded his essay on

Ruskin with the assessment that the "words and deeds of this apostle [...] have received a wide hearing at home and abroad": "Everywhere, his words echo" with the message that "the most beautiful reward of life is life itself; the joy of creation is the reward which God himself destined for us".<sup>24</sup> The Czech teacher, translator and cultural historian Otakar Josek (1854-1926) wrote an article on Ruskin in the journal, *Osvěta* (Enlightenment) entitled "Apostol krásy a altruismu" (Apostle of Beauty and Altruism), and Miloš Seifert (1887-1941), a school teacher, naturalist, writer, and translator, long interested in Ruskin, entitled his 1937 study, *John Ruskin, apostol pravdy a krásy. Myslenky a dilo* (John Ruskin, Apostle of Truth and Beauty. Ideas and Work); as a young man, in 1910, he had translated *Unto this Last*. The founder of modern Czech cultural criticism, František Xaver Šalda (1867-1937), whose translation of *Sesame and Lilies* we have already noted, called Ruskin, in a short piece entitled "Johna Ruskina vyklady o umění" (John Ruskin's Interpretations of Art), published in the influential journal, *Volné Sméry* (Free Directions), "the apostle of beauty" in everyday life who crucially recognised its joy.<sup>25</sup> He credited Ruskin with influencing his increasing conviction that intuition was the most important element in artistic creation.

<sup>21</sup> Vengerova 1903, 173.

<sup>22</sup> Kriesch 1904, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Spiegel 1902, 97.

<sup>24</sup> Koszutski 1900, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Šalda 1902, 132.

### 3 Interpreters and Interpretations

Framing Ruskin as the Apostle of Beauty nevertheless neither strictly limited nor gave any special coherence to how Ruskin was understood. A more detailed look at a few of the Hungarian, Polish and Czech interpreters and interpretations of Ruskin reveal further continuities and variations in Ruskin's reception in the region.

Körösfői-Kriesch's account of Ruskin, given in his 1904 lecture "Ruskin művészi hitvallása" (Ruskin's Artistic Creed), was a sensitive account which demonstrated a widely-read appreciation of Ruskin, and an understanding of Ruskin's style that unarguably influenced his own mode of expression. He argues that although "most people do not even know it" it was Ruskin's medievalism that provided the impulse for "the whole modern art movement" as he saw it.<sup>26</sup> Ruskin's central contribution was as "a prophet, a seer" who established "new and deep connections between things".<sup>27</sup> The analysis begins with *Modern Painters* and Ruskin's reverence for nature and its truthful representation in the artwork of Turner. Körösfői-Kriesch traces Ruskin's interest in nature to his geological studies at Oxford, his friendship with Henry Acland, and the European travels he undertook with his parents, connections which inspired him to see the world simultaneously through the eyes of the scientist and the artist. In Italy, Körösfői-Kriesch argued, Ruskin was able to study the great Christian medieval artists and discovered "the joy of the eyes" in

the artistic "worship of nature".<sup>28</sup> The Renaissance destroyed the rhythm of life and undermined the harmonious relations between man, nature and society, a rupture which had led to the people of Europe "not looking any more for God" but instead revelling unthinkingly in splendour.<sup>29</sup> It was time once again to embrace the soul of the artist. *Seven Lamps* and *Stones* "found a strong echo in England and across the continent as well", both among "the people and especially the majority of artists".<sup>30</sup> Körösfői-Kriesch shared in Ruskin's admiration for the art of the Middle Ages, produced in a Christian community, and he endorsed Ruskin's religious reverence for nature. Ruskin's argument that "everyone has the right to and need for art as much as air and daily bread"<sup>31</sup> attracted him keenly: Ruskin, he believed, was the first to argue that "moral and artistic truths stem from one and the same source and that the latter cannot exist without the first".<sup>32</sup> For Körösfői-Kriesch, Ruskin's argument was organic and holistic, binding the arts with every aspect of life.

Ruskin was presented as a visionary who pioneered and gave expression to a noble aesthetic theory which Morris gave practical form. Their shared sense of the vital importance of preserving ancient buildings, their promotion of handicrafts, and their concern for the welfare of the working man were exemplary and should be followed in Hungary. *Unto this Last*, quoted extensively,

---

<sup>26</sup> Kriesch 1904, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Kriesch 1904, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Kriesch 1904, 15.

<sup>29</sup> Kriesch 1904, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Kriesch 1904, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Kriesch 1904, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Kriesch 1904, 22.

is described as a “modern gospel” in which Ruskin argued for “a common life based on love alone”.<sup>33</sup> In this text, Ruskin had shown “what is truly valuable in human life, vital and lasting” for “noble and happy” souls.<sup>34</sup> There was perhaps more wishful thinking than truth in his assertion that although Ruskin was attacked for his economic theories, “it never for a moment discouraged” him.<sup>35</sup> Ruskin’s attack on the factory was “violent” because work there destroyed the soul.<sup>36</sup> Ruskin’s practical legacy was vested in the Oxford Museum, established with his friend Acland, and represented “every branch of human knowledge, the manifestation of the creative spirit in all directions”,<sup>37</sup> and built in the gothic style which expressed his ideas, though “perhaps not quite so clearly and eloquently as his works”.<sup>38</sup> Ruskin had stirred the soul (literally, he says, “boiled”) and had led the way to a new art and a new life.<sup>39</sup> Ruskin, together with the Pre-Raphaelites, had “handed the arts back to life” and “extended their boundaries in every direction”.<sup>40</sup>

Together with Sándor Nagy (1869-1950) Körösfői-Kriesch believed that the Ruskinian-Morrisian ideal was being lived in the Transylvanian villages where folk art and crafts were still being practiced in an unspoiled region of what they apparently called “Ruskinian Lands”.<sup>41</sup> From 1901, in Gödöllő, twenty miles from

Budapest, Körösfői-Kriesch lived a Tolstoyan life in an artists’ colony to which friends and colleagues followed him. It was a creative utopia consciously informed by the ideas of Ruskin and Morris, and encompassing work in stained glass, leather, furniture-making, textile-weaving, interior design, and book illustration. The textile, carpet and tapestry workshop, which Körösfői-Kriesch personally directed, achieved success and renown, and it endured for twenty years. There are instructive comparisons to be drawn between Körösfői-Kriesch and the Polish art theoretician, painter, and architect, Stanisław Witkiewicz (1851-1915), who also considered that he had realised the Ruskin-Morris dream in southern Poland at Zakopane, where he developed the “styl zakopiański”, admirably detailed in an essay by Marta Wiszniowska, and not requiring amplification here.

We have already mentioned Miloš Seifert’s translation of *Unto this Last* and his study of Ruskin published in 1937. He provides another example of Ruskinian ideas being put into practice. He became the father of the Czech Woodcrafting Movement. He was, in common with many of Ruskin’s most ardent disciples around the world, a vegetarian, a pacifist, a campaigner for nature conservation, and an ecologist. Immediately prior to publishing his major study of Ruskin in 1937 he wrote a mono-

<sup>33</sup> Kriesch 1904, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Kriesch 1904, 24.

<sup>35</sup> Kriesch 1904, 27.

<sup>36</sup> Kriesch 1904, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Kriesch 1904, 28.

<sup>38</sup> Kriesch 1904, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Kriesch 1904, 30.

<sup>40</sup> Kriesch 1904, 31.

<sup>41</sup> Péteri 2005, 195.



graph on Thoreau.<sup>42</sup> This had followed a celebration of the canonical Dutch writer and psychiatrist, Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932), who had himself established the simple commune of artists and peasants near Bussum, in northern Holland, which had been inspired by his own love of Thoreau and Ruskin and which he called Walden.<sup>43</sup>

Rudolf Schlattauer (1861-1915), the Moravian painter, educator and textile artist, provides another practical example of a Czech response to Ruskin comparable with that of Körösfői-Kriesch in Hungary. He was partly motivated by Ruskin and Morris to found, in 1898, his textile workshop in Zašové, near Valašské Meziříčí, where there was a long history of cottage industries involved in producing textiles. Its direct descendant, the Moravská gobelínová manufaktura (Moravian Tapestry Manufactory) survives today. Ruskin and Morris provided both a philosophical framework and a practical example: Ruskin in the Langdale Linen Industry; Morris in Merton Abbey. Having studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, and having spent time as an artist living in Scandinavia, Schlattauer decided to dedicate his life to the weaving and design of tapestries.

As they lived and worked in the area, Körösfői-Kriesch and Nagy simultaneously contributed to the five-volume study of Hungarian national cultural identity, *A magyar nép művészete* (The Art of the Hungarian People, 1907-1922) which Péteri has argued was seen as a Ruskinian project.<sup>44</sup> The art critic, Pál Náday (1881-1945), writing in *Népmívelés* (National Education) in 1906, commended Ruskin for advocating an education for all in which

appreciation of beauty played a fundamental part, and he considered as vital Ruskin's call to revive craftsmanship as an art. The general view in Hungary, however, was not with Körösfői-Kriesch and Náday. Most Hungarian intellectuals saw craft revival as utopian at best, and backward at worst, because the expense of hand-made objects made them economically uncompetitive and unaffordable to the poor.

In key respects, the pre-eminent Czech art critic, František Xaver Šalda, unconsciously shared in Körösfői-Kriesch's analysis. Šalda's preface to his translation of *Sesame and Lilies*, an essay on Ruskin, also presents implicit testimony of Ruskin's influence, though his analysis is not uncritical.<sup>45</sup> Ruskin, Šalda writes, combined "the enthusiasm of hymns and the intuitiveness of lyricism, whereas professional aesthetics strives to arrive at a few meagre, grey little truths by way of sober induction".<sup>46</sup> Šalda shared Körösfői-Kriesch's admiration for Ruskin's synthesis of the scientific and artistic, considering it Ruskin's greatest philosophical contribution. Also in common with Körösfői-Kriesch, he fully agreed with Ruskin's criticism of the separation of art and handicrafts, and accepted his analysis that their perfect synthesis had been destroyed by the Renaissance. Although Šalda did not go as far as Körösfői-Kriesch in founding a craft colony, he wrote eloquently and influentially about the importance of Ruskin's enjoiner to revive the applied arts and to put craftsmanship on a par with the fine arts. It was the main distinction between Šalda's analysis and his colleague Jaroš. Šalda made his point most

<sup>42</sup> Miloš Seifert (1934) *Henry D. Thoreau, filosof přírody* (Henry D. Thoreau, *Philosopher of Nature*).

<sup>43</sup> Miloš Seifert (1922). *U básníka Frederika van Eedena* (To the Poet Frederik Van Eeden). Van Eeden contributed a long and interesting foreword to a Dutch translation of *Fors Clavigera: Fors Clavigera. Verzameling van Brieven aan Werklieden* (A Collection of Letters to Workmen) transl. by Bertha Koch-Huber (1901). Praha: B. Kočí. See Eagles 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Péteri 2005, 195.

<sup>45</sup> See Šalda 1901, 3-19.

<sup>46</sup> Šalda 1901, 3-4.

eloquently in his 1903 article for *Volné Směry* (Free Directions), “Smysl dnešní tzv. renaissance uměleckého průmyslu” (The Meaning of the Present So-Called Renaissance in the Applied Arts), in which he called for a renewed union of art and life in a society held together by a shared joy in beauty.<sup>47</sup> In his own art theory Šalda blended a Ruskinian appeal to intuition with the ideas of Carlyle, Goethe, Taine and Nietzsche. Where Šalda differed most profoundly from Ruskin and Körösfői-Kriesch was in his modernist rejection of the distinction between art as “truth to nature” and art derived from abstraction, and Šalda was also sceptical about what he perceived to be Ruskin’s Christian socialism.<sup>48</sup>

The selection from Ruskin made and translated into Polish by Stanislaw Koszutski, *Droga do sztuki* (The Road to Art) was approved by the Russian censor for publication on 11 March 1900. Koszutski was a fascinating figure. He trained as a lawyer at the University of Warsaw but was thrown out because of involvement with illegal Marxist organisations, was briefly exiled to the Volga region of Russia, and eventually resumed his studies at the University of Kiev. As a school student he had participated in patriotic, socialist-leaning self-education groups which were proscribed under Russian law, and even edited one of the circle’s journals, contributing poems and essays on economics. Returning to Warsaw in 1897, he worked as an assistant lawyer and a journalist. In 1898 he published his first book, about the development of industry in Poland, and with the money he earned he continued his legal and economics studies in Berlin and Par-

is. He returned to Poland in 1900 and resumed his career in law and journalism, frequently lecturing and authoring a series of industrial, economic and political studies of Poland, producing important insights into the political geography and historical ethnography of the region. He was also a keen champion of women’s rights.

Koszutski’s Ruskin anthology is split into 32 sections of unequal length, by far the longest being the first two, consisting of long extracts from the lecture, “The Mysteries of Life and Its Arts” collected in *Sesame and Lilies*, and “Art and Morality” from *Lectures on Art*. Other works translated from include *A Joy for Ever*, *Ariadne Florentina*, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, *The Eagle’s Nest*, *Fors Clavigera*, *The Laws of Fesole*, *Modern Painters*, *On the Old Road*, *The Queen of the Air*, *The Stones of Venice* and *The Two Paths*. The anthology presents Ruskin’s broad conception of art, but readers were warned not to look for a “closed systems” in Ruskin’s theory, but instead to expect “a great abundance of independent and original ideas, giving fresh inspiration in its bold insights, [and] unexpected turns of thought and phrase”.<sup>49</sup>

In the przedmowa tłumacza (translator’s preface), Koszutski promises that in his anthology “the reader will find all the most outstanding features of Ruskin’s artistic individuality”.<sup>50</sup> He proceeded to give a brief biographical sketch. Above all, Ruskin was a fighter of systems and doctrine engaged “in the endless pursuit of beauty and truth”.<sup>51</sup> With the advent of Pre-Raphaelitism came a fertile example of Ruskin’s influence. In addition, Ruskin had inspired “anthems of praise” to Giotto, Fra An-

<sup>47</sup> See *Volné Směry*, VII (1903), 137-8.

<sup>48</sup> Šalda’s views contrasted with the conservative opinion of the art historian, František Xaver Jiřík (1867-1947), Director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague, who emphasised Ruskin’s criticisms of the present in support of his view that artists should reach into the past to rediscover its true value. See Jiřík.

<sup>49</sup> Koszutski 1900, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Koszutski 1900, 2.

<sup>51</sup> Koszutski 1900, 3.

gelico and Botticelli.<sup>52</sup> He was not merely the independent aesthetician and “devotee of pure beauty” but a “man of action” who needed “to penetrate the various issues of life”.<sup>53</sup> He came to see that industry, with its division of labour, had created the “człowieka-tryb maszynowy” (the human-machine).<sup>54</sup> Infected by greed and the consequences of unnatural factory work, “the inner soul of man” was unable to mirror the outside world.<sup>55</sup> Ruskin recognised the crucial significance of the “cultural base” to the full development of man, and sought to demolish

“modern industry, railroad and [other] inventions” in favour of a revival of “the old era of small industry, the manual and artistic work of the medieval artisans”.<sup>56</sup> He promoted a “joy of life, of nature, a harmony of physical and spiritual work” that created a culture at the height of which one could “flourish in art – the noblest expression of the human spirit”.<sup>57</sup> For all its politically radical elements, it is striking at how many points Koszutski’s analysis agrees with that of Körösfői-Kriesch and Šalda.

#### 4 Women Interpreters

The Hungarian teacher, translator and Christian Socialist, Sarolta Geőcze (1862-1928), deserves a special place in the story of Ruskin’s reception in central Europe because of her heroic achievement in translating all three volumes of *The Stones of Venice*. It was a feat she consolidated with the publication in 1903 of her more influential study and anthology, *Ruskin élete és tanításai* (The Life and Teachings of Ruskin), a book of more than 400 pages.<sup>58</sup> Split into two sections, the first, comprising 72 pages, focuses on Ruskin’s biography (following a short introduction about “the Ruskinian creed”), in which she describes Ruskin boldly as “the saviour of the English nation”. Geőcze then presents 32 translated extracts from

*Modern Painters* (covering 267 pages) and six from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (70 pages). As evidence of thoroughness, this is followed by a list of books by and about Ruskin, explanatory notes, and an index.

Eva Péteri has claimed that Geőcze made “Ruskin’s ideas widely available for the whole nation”.<sup>59</sup> If that is an over-statement, it is nevertheless certain that it attracted the attention of an influential artistic elite, and through them, Ruskin’s message permeated Hungarian society more widely. Geőcze’s study places Ruskin at the centre of turn-of-the-century efforts to change public taste, personal lifestyles and social values, and argues that Ruskin’s ethical cult of beauty is socially transform-

<sup>52</sup> Koszutski 1900, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Koszutski 1900, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Koszutski 1900, 5.

<sup>55</sup> Koszutski 1900, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Koszutski 1900, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Koszutski 1900, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Its frontispiece is a photograph of Benjamin Creswick’s bust of Ruskin, and the book is generously illustrated with reproductions of works by Turner, Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites.

<sup>59</sup> Péteri 2005, 186.

ative. Geőcze emphasises the importance of preserving historic monuments and promoting the ethical qualities of artistic and architectural culture. “I would like”, she writes in her biographical sketch, “to invest the Hungarian mind-set with Ruskin’s noble idealism. I would like his noble views of life to take root in each Hungarian soul”.<sup>60</sup>

Geőcze’s wider influence in Hungary was significant. No feminist, she nevertheless campaigned for women’s self-realisation through education, but she combined it with a strong belief in family values derived in part from Ruskin’s lecture, “Of Queens’ Gardens”, and a belief in the different responsibilities of women and men. She trained as a teacher and worked initially at a girls’ school in what today is Romania. When she translated *Stones*, she was on the board of an international school for girls in Komárom County (western Hungary) which was later named after her. On a tour of Italy in 1895, Ruskin’s book in hand, she went to see the places Ruskin had spoken of in *Stones*. She wrote that she was determined “to grasp Ruskin’s message and thus to understand all mankind”.<sup>61</sup> In 1897-1898, she studied pedagogical methods at religious institutions in France, Switzerland and England. In 1898 she began teaching at the Pest Institute of Instruction, and in 1907 was appointed Director of the State Institute of Women School Teachers in Buda, a post she held for ten years. In 1904 she established the Hungarian Christian Women’s Workers’ Section of the Budapest Christian Workers’ Association, defending the rights of the most vulnerable and deprived women. In 1906 she founded the National Association of Christian Women Workers which provided a home for women

workers in Budapest. She engaged with Felix Adler’s Society for Ethical Culture and staunchly defended Christian family values as the only bulwark against national decline. Her views became increasingly reactionary, and she joined the right-wing Hungarian National Women’s Union. The First World War had a profound impact on her and she ended her career back at the Pest Institute where she became an implacable opponent of Bolshevism and a vocal critic of Hungary’s wartime territorial losses.

Geőcze was only one of many important women who helped establish Ruskin’s reputation in central and eastern Europe. The first major work of the Polish author, Maria Bujno-Arctowa (1877-1952) was her study, *John Ruskin i jego poglądy* (John Ruskin and His Ideas), published in 1901. Bujno-Arctowa had studied in Warsaw, and then went abroad as a student of foreign languages. She would become well-known in Poland principally for the books she wrote and the magazines she edited for children and young people. The Czech illustrator and graphic artist, Zdenka Braunerová (1858-1934), was inspired by Ruskin’s ideas and Morris’s practical example in the Kelmscott Press, to revitalise contemporary book design by reviving aspects of Czech tradition influenced by Venice in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries.<sup>62</sup> In Russia, many of Ruskin’s key interpreters at the turn-of-the-century were women (Vengerova, Soloveva, Gertsyk) and one, Lidia Ivanovna Veselitskaya (1857-1936), like Bujno-Arctowa, specialised in stories for children. In 1905 she published an anthology under her pseudonym, V. Mikulich, entitled, *Na den’ rozhdeniya. Mýsli na kazhdyi* (On the Birthday, Thoughts for Every

<sup>60</sup> Peteri 2005, 5. It was in part owing to the success of this study of Ruskin that an appetite grew in Hungary for his work, and it helped prepare the ground for the publication in 1904 of a translation of *Unto this Last*, under the title ... *Az utólsónak is ... annyit, mint neked*. The translator was the medic, József Ibos (1864-1945), later - appropriately for the translator of a book that took its title from Christ’s Parable of the Vineyard - a director of the Research Institute of Viticulture and Enology in Budapest. The Ruskin translation was Ibos’s first book.

<sup>61</sup> Szczerski 2015, 336-7.

<sup>62</sup> See Szczerski 2015, 305-6.

Day) based on the *The Ruskin Birthday Book, a Selection of Thoughts, Mottoes and Aphorisms* compiled by Maude Bateman and Grace Allen in 1883. A novelist, short story writer, memoirist and translator, Veselitskaya studied at the Pavlovsk Institute to be a teacher, like Geőcze, and then completed the St Petersburg pedagogical courses. Her first publications were simple children's stories, and her later novels were frank and insightful (and included

a Jamesian novel about Venice). Her short stories often attended to the sufferings of the poor and the problems of social injustice, and were influenced strongly by Tolstoj, whose Moscow home she lived near to and used frequently to visit, and whose publishing house, Psorednik (Intermediary), which published several of Nikiforov's Ruskin publications, she occasionally worked for.

## 5 Conclusion

How deeply Ruskin's message penetrated in central and eastern Europe is difficult to judge in a survey of this brevity. Ruskin was certainly taken seriously by some of the most important theorists and practitioners of art at the turn of the century and helped inspire a wide range of ideas and experiments. Above all, his value in preaching the religion of beauty was understood as a call to reconnect humanity with nature and to democratise the bene-

fits of creative endeavour by revitalising the applied arts and uniting head, heart and hand by crafting beautiful objects for everyday use. The true breadth and significance of Ruskin's reception in Russia, Poland, Hungary and the Czech lands is only beginning to be mapped, and it is to be hoped that a comprehensive study of the continuities and variety of Ruskin's influence across the region commends itself even in a survey as brief and selective as this.

## Bibliography of Works by John Ruskin

References are to volume and page numbers in:

Cook, E.T.; Wedderburn, A. (eds) (1903-1912). *The Works of John Ruskin*. Library Edition, 39 vols. London: George Allen. <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/the-ruskin/the-complete-works-of-ruskin/>.

*Works*, 34: *The Storm-cloud of the Nineteenth Century, On the Old Road, Arrows of the chace, Ruskiniana*.

## General Bibliography

Bogdanovich, L.A. (1900). *Dzhon Reskin: 'Apostol religii krasoty' (ocherk)* (John Ruskin: 'Apostle of the Religion of Beauty' [An Essay]). Moscow: A.I. Mamontov.

Bogdanovich, T. (ed.) (1900). *Robert de la Sizeranne: 'Reskin i religiya krasoty'* (Robert de la Sizeranne: 'Ruskin and the Religion of Beauty'). St Petersburg: I.N. Skorokhodova.

Bujno, M. (1901). *John Ruskin i jego poglądy* (John Ruskin and His Ideas). Warsaw: Michał Arct.

Dömötör, I. (1904). "Ruskin nálunk (Ruskin Here)". *Magyar Iparművészet* (Hungarian Applied Arts), 7(1), 24-34.

Eagles, S. (2011). "'For Fear of Bears': Ruskin in Russia (A Biblio-Historical Sketch)". *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, 38(2), 157-94.

Eagles, S. (2013). "Ruskin as 'World-Author': The Netherlands". *Ruskin Review and Bulletin*, 9(2), 4-13.

- Eagles, S. (2016). *Ruskin & Tolstoj*. 2nd edition. York: Guild of St George.
- Gertsyuk, A. (1899). "Religiya krasoty" (The Religion of Beauty). *Russkoe bogatstvo* (Russian Treasure), 1, 30-44.
- Geócze, S. (ed.) (1896-1898). *John Ruskin: "Velencez kövei"*. (John Ruskin: "The Stones of Venice"). 3 vols. Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akademia.
- Geőcze, S. (1903). *Ruskin élete és tanításai* (The Life and Teachings of Ruskin). Budapest: Athenaeum.
- Jaroš, G. [Gamma] (1900). "John Ruskin". *Volné Sméry* (Free Directions), 4, 89-96.
- Jiřík, F.X. (1905). "John Ruskin a jeho umělecké teorie" (John Ruskin and His Theories of Art). *Dílo* (Artwork), 3, 3-22, 76-9.
- Josek, O. (1901). "Apoštol krásy a altruismu" (Apostle of Beauty and Altruism). *Osvěta* (Enlightenment), 884-90.
- Kozzowski, S. (1900). *John Ruskin: Droga do sztuki* (John Ruskin: The Road to Art). Warsaw: M. Borkowski.
- Kriesch, A. (1904). *Ruskinról s az Angol Preraffaelitákról* (On Ruskin and the English Pre-Raphaelites). Budapest: Franklin.
- Nádai, P. (1907). "Ruskin mint népnevelő" (Ruskin as a Teacher of the People). *Népmívelés* (National Education), 4, 44-51, 296-307.
- Nesterov, M.V. (1985). *Vospominaniya*. Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik.
- Nikiforov, L.P. (1900). *Robert de la Sizeranne: 'Reskin i religiya krasoty'* (Robert de la Sizeranne: 'Ruskin and the Religion of Beauty'). Moscow: Komkniga, 2007. [Reprint of Moscow: Magazina "Knizhnoe Delo" and I.A. Balandin]
- Péteri, É. (2005). "Pre-Raphaelitism in Hungary". Tobin, T.J. (ed.), *Worldwide Pre-Raphaelitism*. New York: SUNY Press, 185-214.
- Polonsky, R. (1998). *English Literature and the Russian Aesthetic Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Potocki, A. (ed.) (1898-1899). *Robert de la Sizeranne: 'John Ruskin i kult piękna'* (Robert de la Sizeranne: 'John Ruskin and the Cult of Beauty'). 2 vols. Lwów: H. Altenberg.
- Šalda, F.X. (1901). "John Ruskin". *John Ruskin: 'Sesam a Lillie. Tri prednasky'* (John Ruskin: 'Sesame and Lilies. Three Lectures'). Prague: J. Otto, 3-19.
- Šalda, F.X. (1902). "Johna Ruskina 'vyklady o umění'" (John Ruskin's 'Interpretations of Art'). *Volné Sméry* (Free Directions), 6, 136.
- Seifert, M. (1937). *John Ruskin: 'Apostol pravdy a krásy'*. *Myslenky a dílo* (John Ruskin: 'Apostle of Truth and Beauty'. Ideas and Work). Prague: Josef Svoboda.
- Sizeranne, R. de la (1897). *Ruskin et la religion de la beauté*. Paris: Hachette.
- Spiegel, F. (1902). "Brit Iparművészet Budapesten" (British Applied Art in Budapest). *Magyar Iparművészet* (Hungarian Applied Arts), 5(3), 97-106.
- Stibral, K.; Binka, B.; Johanisová, N. (2011). *John Ruskin a příroda* (John Ruskin and Nature). Brno; Praha: Masarykova.
- Szczerski, A. (2015). *Views of Albion: The Reception of British Art and Design in Central Europe, 1890-1918*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Ulita, M. (2007). "Ruskin's Echoes in Poland". *Ruskin Review and Bulletin*, 3(1/2), 64-7.
- Vengerova, Z. (1903). *Ocherki po istorii zarubezhnoi literatury* (Essays on the History of Foreign Literature). St Petersburg: Prometei.
- Vybíral, J. (2004). "The Reception of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Bohemia around 1900". *Centropa*, 4(3), 218-30.
- Wiszniewska, M. (1995). "Popularity Against the Odds: Ruskin and Zakopane". *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici: English Studies*, 5, 49-57.
- Zubrzycki, J.S. (1902). *Krótkie myśli z dzieła Ruskina 'Siedm lamp architektury' wraz z uwagami* (A Brief Summary of Thoughts from Ruskin's Work the Seven Lamps of Architecture' with Comments). Lviv: Towarzystwa Politechnicznego.