sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business.” I have always taken Christ’s physical aloofness from his Mother in this painting to be purely one of impatience.

Although the chapter devoted to Whistler is interesting for the background it provides to his work, I found the analysis of the portrait of the painter’s mother disappointing. Whistler never made any secret of the fact that the subject matter was of secondary importance to him, and therefore his work should be viewed with that consideration in mind. His paramount preoccupation was with the translation of the subject into colour and form. He regarded a portrait as he would have a still-life, an arrangement, as his titles so aptly convey. The fact that this particular painting is one of the world’s most popular is interesting in itself. In spite of Whistler’s posturings, a certain emotion occasionally escapes; I find this portrait a most sensitive one. Bernard Sickert remarked that it is “the only one [portrait] that has a compelling individuality, except perhaps the Carlyle whose weary hopeless face looks out with a sad intensity.” He goes on to say, “a human being was to Whistler just like an old barge or a falling rocket, the stimulus to certain ideas as to colour and form aroused by the contemplation of its aspect.” More could have been said about Whistler’s interest in Japan and Aestheticism, and of his profound influence on the Scottish painters of the Glasgow School: Lavery, Guthrie, and E. A. Walton.

The literary style of the book is a little diffuse and indigestible, but that is a minor quibble. Professor Bendiner has amassed a wonderful selection of illustrations to accompany his main work in each chapter. It is a pity that more could not have been in colour as the vivid nature of Victorian art is often lost in monochrome illustrations. The colour plates are of a superb quality rarely seen this side of the Atlantic. He has compiled an invaluable bibliography though the absence of William Gaunt’s classic trilogy is strange. The notes, however, are full of useful sources and references.

In the end, the importance of this work is this: Kenneth Bendiner traces the renewed interest in Victorian painting which endured a long period of virtual igno

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In this thought-provoking analysis of the shifting grounds on which Ruskin purported to be building his defence of Turner in Modern Painters and of his interpretation of the Greek imagination in ARA

This leads Wilh into the most interesting section of the book, a discussion of “Idolatry in Ruskin and Proust.” Wilh’s is the first concerted attempt in English criticism to come to terms with Proust’s complex reaction to what he considered Ruskin’s dishonest substitution of morally significant but empirically valueless religious images for his “sincere” love of physical beauty. While Wilh himself uses the term to cover a bewildering range of meanings, his definition of idolatry as “belief in the literal existence of... allegorical figures” is applied with interesting results to Ruskin’s later writings, in which he turned increasingly to forms of art, such as Byzantine mosaics or Greek coins, which “emphasize the importance of cognition over sensation.” In ARA

RUSKIN, for example, Ruskin fell into idolatry in his treatment of
of his analysis.” Some of his most moving praise in St. Mark’s Rest is reserved for mosaics (such as the exquisite Salomé in the Baptistery) which display consummate artistry. The Vierge Dorée of Amiens, as treated by Ruskin in a lecture of 1858 (published in The Two Paths the following year), is not, as Wihl claims, the “last ‘tender’ fiction that he allows himself to appreciate.”

Wihl’s study, concentrating as it does on “the failure of epistemology to overcome rhetoric” in Ruskin’s writings (p. 2), might blind the unwary reader to the fact that Ruskin’s most valuable writing on art—the contribution that has most to offer the modern art critic—is neither rhetorical nor concerned with epistemology. Many of his verbally restrained studies of individual buildings and paintings set standards of analytical accuracy that are seldom equaled in the best contemporary criticism.

Finally, one cannot discuss this fine book without lamenting Wihl’s adherence to Harold Bloom’s egregious claim that “all Ruskin’s later works (beginning perhaps with the final volume of Modern Painters [in a later echo Wihl speculates ‘beginning perhaps with Seaside and Lilies’]) are massive pathetic fallacies” (pp. 2, 131). That the author of The Elements of Drawing, The Laws of Fésole, Praterita, and large portions of Fors Clavigera should still be subjected to such assertions is evidence that the sin of idolatry—the “self imposition” of the critic before the truth (p. 27)—is as rampant in modern criticism of Ruskin as it was in the works of the master himself.

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We are well informed about the life and work of Thomas Eakins, but any reader at all familiar with the literature on the artist would have to confess that our understanding of his life and work is limited. An abundance of data supports a fundamentally superficial interpretation of the style and content of his works. This new study by Elizabeth Johns is therefore a particularly welcome contribution because it builds up a coherent and sophisticated picture of Eakins’s art and thought through the critical analysis of a few selected works in which the full range of traditional art-historical methods is brought to bear. While in her preface Johns acknowledges her debt to Goodrich and others who have laboured to establish the facts of Eakins’s life, she makes it quite clear that she is not simply following in their footsteps and attempting to mine new facts or rearrange old ones about the artist’s biography or his stylistic development.

The author’s broader, more comprehensive approach is indicated by the volume’s subtitle, The Heroism of Modern Life, which identifies an overarching theme used to link observations and conclusions about paintings with different kinds of subject matter. The theme is not a novel one. Linda Nochlin devotes a chapter of her well-known book on realism to it and notes that concern with the heroism of modern life arose out of a new