143. “Whither, whither, dost thou fly,” first half of November, MS VIII. Previously unpublished.

Untitled in manuscript, and falls between preceding apocalyptic poems nos. 140-42 and no. 144 (and set apart from nos. 142 and 144 by ornamental horizontal lines). See no. 136 for Ruskin’s promise to become “Anacreontic” in resistance to Horatian didacticism. He translates the opening lines of “The Dove’s Errand,” one of the poems in the Anacreontea, a collection of imitations of the sixth-century B.C. Ionian composer of light odes and epigrams. Ruskin’s is a love poem for the boy Bathyllus, ode 15 in the Loeb edition (Elegy and Iambus . . . with the Anacreontea, ed. and trans. J. M. Edmonds, 2 vols. [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931], 2:37-41).

The Anacreontea poems were frequently translated by British poets, most recently by Thomas Moore, who published his Odes of Anacreon in 1800. Moore’s lush tetrameter lines and diction may well have influenced Ruskin’s translation and some other poems of 1831. “Anacreon” Moore later befriended Byron and wrote a life of the poet, an association that probably further recommended both Moore and the Greek poet to Ruskin. Moore was also a favorite of John James (RFL, 119, 488).

Whither whither dost thou fly

Lovely dove that stemmst the sky

As thy flight around thee flings

Perfumes distilling from thy wings

What of labour can there be

Or care Oh lovely dove to thee

To the boy Bathullus I

On the wanton winds do fly

Commanded by Anacreon

My rapid course Im urging on