in Turner's late paintings, that become characteristic of modernism.

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Reply:

Basem L. Ra'ad is right to suggest that my essay is less interested in reading John Ruskin into the explicit styles of twentieth-century modernism than in recuperating a more capacious vision of Victorianism, one that locates more relativistic and destabilized modes of thinking than the stereotype of the period would allow. The overarching goal, which I articulated in the essay's subtitle, was to "revision . . . nineteenth-century aesthetics."

Yet since Ra'ad raises the question of Ruskin's ties to twentieth-century aesthetics, I will take the opportunity to pursue his theme. Ra'ad argues that Ruskin is modernist because Turner is: in defending Turner, Ruskin embraces the "abstract" style that was characteristic of Turner's late-career paintings, thus eschewing any "mirrorlike" visual investments. This claim, unfortunately, is simply untrue. Ruskin was a staunch supporter not only of Turner but also of the Pre-Raphaelites, whose style in the 1850s entailed a supersharp, almost photographic representation of visual detail. And in the 1870s, Ruskin accused Whistler of "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face" with his protomodernist nocturnes (*Works* 29: 160). So it was not Turner's abstract brushwork that Ruskin was espousing. In fact, the modernism of Turner's painting is a different issue than the modernism of Ruskin's writing; it is fuzzy thinking to conflate the two. A careful reader of Ruskin will observe that his claims are often at variance with the images he ostensibly describes. This was the case with many Victorian art writers, who appropriated controversial artworks to debate cultural questions beyond the strict bounds of art history or criticism.

In my recently completed book manuscript on Victorian aesthetics, I analyze the question of Ruskin's modernism using the lens of the first volume of *Modern Painters*. Published in 1843, this text responds most directly to the firestorm in the British press that was being generated by Turner's provocative late style. Far from promoting abstraction, however, *Modern Painters I* aspires to be a natural-history treatise of landscape painting: the book contains chapters on the "Truths" of natural features such as mountains, trees, and clouds. Combining Lockean empiricism with a stern evangelical vision of nature, Ruskin analyzes landscape paintings as an encyclopedia of natural forms, a catalog of the immutable object world of God's creation. In *Art and Illusion*, E. H. Gombrich pinpoints the "vast treatise" of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* as "perhaps the last and most persuasive book in the tradition that starts with Pliny and Vasari in which the history of art is interpreted as progress toward visual truth" (2nd ed. [New York: Pantheon, 1961] 14). Ruskin writes, "And let not arguments respecting the sublimity or fidelity of *impression* be brought forward here. . . . I am not talking about what is sublime, but about what is true" (*Works* 3: 283). Ruskin's fierce dedication to a singular truth in the object world, which he pursued in studies of natural history and earth science throughout his life, contrasts sharply with the visual impressionism that French painters were later to find so compelling in Turner's works.

Rather than dismiss Ruskin's mimetic ideal as outmoded, however, I would suggest that it can also be found in modernism, in the poetic desire to escape from the suffocating enclosure of personality. Appearing under the rubric of *classicism* or *impersonality*, this modernist strain of utopian poetics aimed to escape the human, subjective qualities of language, often invoking a "picture" or "image" to figure its cold, impersonal qualities. Ezra Pound sounds like Ruskin when he theorizes imagism in 1912 as a new poetry that "will be as much like granite as it can be, its force will lie in its truth, in its interpretive powers" ("Prologomena" [sic], *Poetry Review* 1.2 [1912]: 76). In "Romanticism and Classicism," T. E. Hulme desires a language that

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will get "the exact curve of the thing" (*Speculations* [London: Routledge, 1958] 137). When Pound and Hulme demand a classical style of poetry that sheds all the vagueness of language in favor of a sculptural, precise Truth, they are invoking a linguistic ideal of visual representation—an austere formalism—with roots in the nineteenth century and earlier.

Yet if Ruskin's *Modern Painters* presages the modernist desire for objective form, it also unwittingly reveals, in grand style, the potential for language to convey an unmediated record of sensation itself. The famous set pieces from *Modern Painters,* with extravagant sentences that pile sense upon sense, might be pointed to as early progenitors of the modernist techniques of stream of consciousness. Ruskin assaults the dull conventions of old-master landscapists by using a language that defies all formula, even deforming language to pierce through to a psychological truth of perception. Many of these famous passages describe not Turner's paintings, but Ruskin's own experiences in nature as he toured the popular mountainsides and landscapes of Europe. Turner's images are superior because they most closely approximate actual human perceptions of nature, as sensed by Ruskin himself. Even while Ruskin works to generalize and classify the unchanging forms of nature, *Modern Painters* is dominated by the author's subjective "I." His language performs a psychological autobiography of his personal history in nature. Modernist prose stylists also manipulated language to imitate the unpredictable streams of thoughts and sensations; in this, they remade Ruskin's linguistic process into a more deliberate and conscious artistic action.

So *Modern Painters* anticipates modernism in its allegiance to two contradictory visions of art's relation to the world, one in which art produces an idealized record of human consciousness, and another in which it offers an avenue to objective truths beyond the distorting influence of personal sentiment.

I disagree with Ra'ad that Ruskin was demolishing "traditional aesthetics" to pave the way for an unheralded modernism. This account rehashes the tired clichés of rupture and newness that so often characterize genealogies of modernism. A more complex account, as my comments suggest here, will look to see not only what has changed but also what has persisted.

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Challenges Facing Older Scholars

To the Editor:

The publication in our journal of advertisements for research fellowships led me, an eighty-three-year-old, to investigate some of them further on the Internet. I am still a very active scholar and still publishing, but my pension is small, and research (including flights and accommodation) is expensive. Imagine my dismay when I found that several of the Yale-Beinecke fellowships are age-restricted in various ways.

It is hard enough for a retired scholar to jump through all the hoops now required by federal, state, and private grant-awarding institutions, let alone be ruled out of the competition altogether. Shame on them. It doesn't benefit the university, our membership association, or the teaching profession to eliminate genuine contributions by academics of any age. It would be interesting to know how many other scholars share my dismay.

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