

A STROLL THROUGH TATE BRITAIN

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851)



This two-hour talk is part of a series of twenty talks on the works of art displayed in Tate Britain, London, in June 2017.

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A STROLL THROUGH TATE BRITAIN

1. The History of the Tate
2. From Absolute Monarch to Civil War, 1540-1650
3. From Commonwealth to the Georgians, 1650-1730
4. The Georgians, 1730-1780
5. Revolutionary Times, 1780-1810
6. Regency to Victorian, 1810-1840
7. William Blake
8. **J. M. W. Turner**
9. John Constable
10. The Pre-Raphaelites, 1840-1860



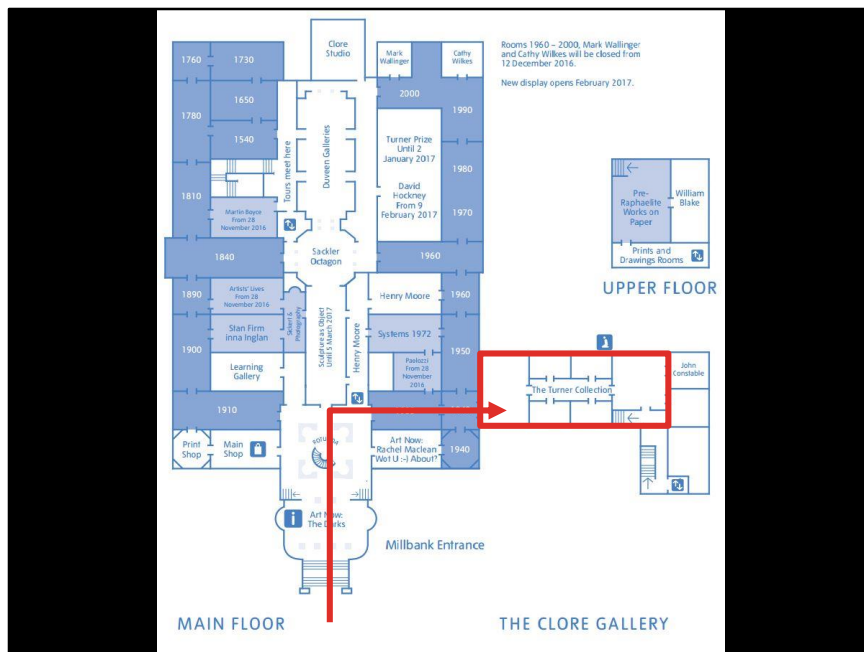
Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851)

Turner Wing includes Turner, Constable, Blake and Pre-Raphaelite drawings

Agenda

1. A History of the Tate, discussing some of the works donated by Henry Tate and others.
2. From Absolute Monarch to Civil War, 1540-1650
3. From Commonwealth to the Start of the Georgian Period, 1650-1730
4. The Georgian Period, 1730-1780
5. Revolutionary Times, 1780-1810
6. Regency to Victorian, 1810-1840
7. William Blake (1757-1827) and his Influence
8. J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851)
9. John Constable (1776-1837)
10. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1840-1860
11. The Aesthetic Movement, 1860-1880
12. The Late Victorians, 1880-1900
13. The Edwardians, 1900-1910

14. The Great War and its Aftermath, 1910-1930
15. The Interwar Years, 1930s
16. World War II and After, 1940-1960
17. Pop Art and Beyond, 1960-1980
18. Art in a Postmodern World, 1980-2000
19. The Turner Prize
20. Summary



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) is in the Clore Gallery

There are six rooms containing 91 oil paintings and sketches.

- Turner Exhibited: Ambition and Reputation
- Turner as a British Artist
- Travelling Light
- Found in Turner's Study: Landscape and History
- Found in Turner's Study: Seascapes
- Turner's Urban Landscapes

And in an adjacent room:

- John Constable: Nature and Nostalgia



Turner Exhibited: Ambition and Reputation

First room (with the Turner *Self-Portrait*) is **Turner Exhibited: Ambition and Reputation**

Left-to-right:

Buttermere Lake, with Part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a Shower, exhibited 1798

Self-Portrait, c.1799

England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday, exhibited 1819



Aeneas and the Sibyl, Lake Avernus, c.1798

- This is probably Turner's first attempt at an oil painting of a mythological subject in a classical landscape. The story comes from the Aeneid, by the Roman poet Virgil. Aeneas wants to visit the Underworld in order to consult the ghost of his father. The Cumaean Sibyl agrees to guide him through the kingdom of the dead.

Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps, exhibited 1812



Holy Family, exhibited 1803

- Tate display caption, 'While in his later exhibits Turner's often referred to the works or styles of his contemporaries and fellow exhibitors, his early submissions measured themselves against the old masters. This picture was shown in 1803, the year after he had studied the great collections in the Louvre in Paris. Titian's *St. Peter Martyr* (destroyed) was then hanging there, having been removed from Venice by Napoleon's troops, and was among his sources for his work.'

The Tenth Plague of Egypt, exhibited 1802

- Tate display caption, 'This painting illustrates a passage from the Bible describing the last plague inflicted on the Egyptians as divine punishment for enslaving the Jewish people: the killing of all the first-born sons of the Egyptians. It is uncomfortably crowded by threatening atmospheric effects, emphasising the power of forces beyond mankind's control. Turner exhibited the picture just a couple of months after being admitted as a full member of the Royal Academy, and clearly intended viewers to recognise his skills in the highest branch of painting – the historical 'grand style' – claiming for himself the mantle of earlier artists like Poussin.'

The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire ..., exhibited 1817



Childe Harold's Pilgrimage – Italy, exhibited 1832

- Tate display caption, 'The title of this painting refers to Lord Byron's long, epic poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* ('Childe' is an archaic title for the son of a nobleman). Byron saw the remnants of Italy's past as profoundly poignant: the country had, in the intervening years, lost both its liberty and integrity, but was still breathtakingly beautiful. Turner showed his painting with these lines from Byron's poem:

... and now, fair Italy!

Thou art the garden of the world...

Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced

With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced.'



Corridor

Looking back to the archway we entered. It is a corridor with four rooms off, walking down the corridor from the room we were just in, on the left (right in picture above) is **Turner as British Artist**, the next room we shall visit.

The picture on the far left is *Undine Giving the Ring to Massaniello, Fisherman of Naples*, exhibited 1846

The picture in the left corner is *The Angel Standing in the Sun*, exhibited 1846

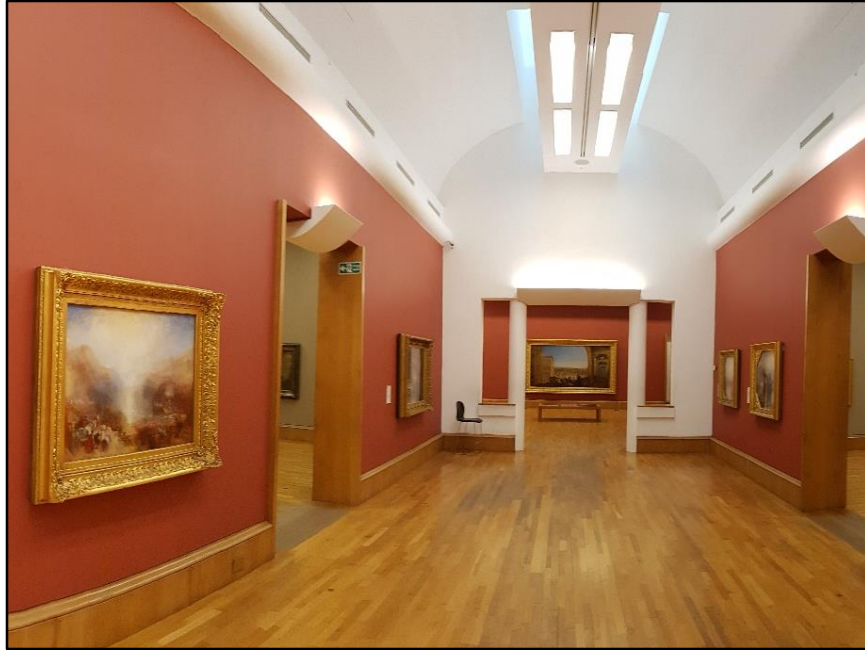
The other side of the arch is *Jason*, exhibited 1802

Nearest complete work on the right is *The Departure of the Fleet*, exhibited 1850



Turning to our right is *The Goddess of Discord Choosing the Apple of Contention in the Garden of the Hesperides*, exhibited 1806

- Tate display caption, 'The Hesperides were the three daughters of Hesperus, the evening star. They tended a tree of golden apples on the slopes of Mount Atlas. Here, the goddess Discord picks one, setting in train the events leading to the Trojan war. The apple was subsequently awarded to the goddess Aphrodite by Paris, after she had promised him the most beautiful woman in the world: the Greek Queen, Helen, wife of Menelaus, whom Paris then abducted. It seems Turner may have been alluding to recent in-fighting at the Royal Academy in his choice of subject.'



Turning right again and looking further down the corridor the room on the left is **Found in Turner's Studio: Landscape and History** and on the right **Found in Turner's Studio: Seascapes**

On the left *Mercury Sent to Admonish Aeneas*, exhibited 1850
 Furthest on the left, *Pilate Washing his Hands*, exhibited 1830

Furthest on the right *War. The Exile and the Rock Limpet*, exhibited 1842

- Tate display caption, 'This scene, a companion to *Peace*, hung alongside, shows Napoleon in exile on the island of St Helena. It was painted in the year his ashes were returned to France. The image neither demonises nor heroicises the figure, but suggests the futility of conflict. The isolated uniformed body appears incongruous in its surroundings, while the red palette recalls the trauma of battle. In verses attached to the canvas, Turner refers to the sunset as a 'sea of blood'.'

On the right *Peace - Burial at Sea*, exhibited 1842

- Tate display caption, '*Peace* shows the burial at sea of Turner's friend, the artist David Wilkie. The cool palette and saturated blacks create a striking contrast to its pair, *War*, hung alongside, and convey the calm of Wilkie's

dignified death, compared to Napoleon's disgrace. The two titles *War* and *Peace* are illustrated as abstract concepts, via tone and colour, rather than as actual events. Both works were roundly criticised at the time for their lack of finishing.'



On the right, *Van Tromp Returning after the Battle off the Dogger Bank*, exhibited 1833



Entrance of the Meuse: Orange-Merchant on the Bar, Going to Pieces; Brill Church bearing S. E. by S., Masensluys E. by S., exhibited 1819

Further down the corridor on the right is *Fishing Boats Bringing a Disabled Ship into Port Ruysdael*, exhibited 1844



Turner as a British Artist

Return to the end of the corridor where we entered and walk down the corridor and turn left into the first room.

Morning amongst the Coniston Fells, Cumberland, exhibited 1798

- Tate text, 'See Turner respond to the varied scenery and subjects he recorded during his travels through Britain. This room explores Turner's lifelong interest in depicting scenes of British landscape and contemporary life. At the beginning of his career he undertook annual summer tours of Britain, recording landscapes, coasts, towns and everyday scenes in his sketchbooks as material for pictures, watercolours and prints. His work ranged from highly-finished topographic views full of human activity to vividly spontaneous impressions of nature. For the first twenty-two years of Turner's adult life Britain was at war with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Except for an intensive visit to Paris and the Alps during a brief ceasefire in 1802, Turner concentrated on British subjects. Often shown in groups at his gallery, these combined naturalism with patriotic sentiment. After the peace of 1815, he regularly travelled abroad, so toured less in Britain. He did, however, spend working holidays at the houses of his closest patrons such as Lord Egremont

at Petworth House. The nation Turner observed progressed from a state of constant war towards Victorian prosperity and confidence, though not without social upheaval. He depicted these changes, representing sympathetically both working people and the lifestyles of wealthy or aristocratic patrons on whose support he relied, along with technological advances and improvements in the nation's infrastructure.



Sketch of a Bank, with Gipsies, ? exhibited 1809

River Scene with Cattle, c.1808

*The Quiet Ruin, Cattle in Water; A Sketch, Evening, ?*exhibited 1809

Abingdon, exhibited 1806?

- In this painting Turner shows rural productivity and a landscape rich with history, united by a glowing, diffuse light. A similar combination is used in *Ploughing up Turnips*, shown to the right. It has been suggested that the two pictures were painted to complement each other. This painting is probably the view of Dorchester shown at Turner's Gallery in 1810. However, the spire of St Helen's Church in the historic market town of Abingdon is visible over the treetops, even though it was in fact two miles away.



Crossing the Brook, exhibited 1815

Ploughing Up Turnips, near Slough ('Windsor'), exhibited 1809



George IV at St Giles's, Edinburgh, c.1822

George IV at the Provost's Banquet in the Parliament House, Edinburgh, c.1822

St Mawes at the Pilchard Season, exhibited 1812



Travelling Light

Crossing the corridor to the room opposite, we enter 'Travelling Light'

- Tate text: 'Turner first travelled outside Britain, in France and Switzerland, aged twenty-seven in the summer of 1802. Between 1817 and 1845 he explored France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Luxembourg, Denmark, Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), Switzerland and, of course, Italy. While his travels were extensive, they were confined to Europe, unlike those of contemporaries who ventured to Egypt, Spain or British colonies in Asia and Australia. The conveniences of modern travel were still in their infancy. Often Turner journeyed on foot or by horse-drawn coach, with sketchbooks and drawing materials as his main baggage. It was only during the latter half of his working life that steam power was introduced, greatly reducing travel times. When he landed in Calais in 1802 he had already been travelling for several days since leaving London. By the 1830s he could board a steamboat near London Bridge and be in France, Belgium or Holland in a few hours. Turner's later European travels allowed him to source material for a new generation of sumptuously illustrated travel books. They also provided subjects for pictures. Venetian scenes tapped into the city's popularity with British tourists while interest in Germany grew following Queen Victoria's marriage to

Prince Albert in 1840.

Rocky Bay with Figures, c.1827–30



The Dogano, San Giorgio, Citella, from the Steps of the Europa, exhibited 1842
St Benedetto, Looking towards Fusina, exhibited 1843
The Sun of Venice Going to Sea, exhibited 1843
Italian Landscape with Bridge and Tower, c.1827–8
Rouen: A View from the Left Bank in the Faubourg St-Sever, ?1827–8



The Opening of the Wallhalla, 1842, exhibited 1843

- Extract from Tate display caption, 'Between 1817 and 1844, Turner made seven tours of Germany. In Turner's time, Germany consisted of many different states, formed as the German Confederation in 1814 after the fall of Napoleon, who had ruled since 1806. This painting commemorates the 1842 opening of the Walhalla temple ('Wallhalla' in Turner's spelling), a classical building overlooking the river Danube, constructed under the auspices of king Ludwig I of Bavaria as a symbol of national unity and a monument to great Germans of the past.'



Palestrina – Composition, 1828, exhibited 1830
Heidelberg, c.1844–5



Going back out into the corridor, turn right to the two rooms at the end of the corridor.



Found in Turner's Studio: Landscape and History

At the far end of the corridor on the left is 'Found in Turner's Studio: Landscape and History'

Tree Tops and Sky, Guildford Castle(?), Evening, ?1807

Windsor Castle from Salt Hill, c.1807

The Disembarkation of Louis-Philippe at the Royal Clarence Yard, Gosport, 8 October 1844, c.1844–5

Tate text, 'Follow Turner's artistic experimentation through unexhibited and unfinished works whose innovation often puzzled his contemporaries. The paintings in this room are selected from the many unfinished canvases found in Turner's studio after his death. Not exhibited during the artist's lifetime, they range from early oil sketches to luminous and ethereal late canvases reinventing earlier motifs. Subjects range from landscape to history. While some of the works appear more resolved than others, it is unlikely that Turner considered any of them exhibition-ready. Although Turner made occasional forays into painting outdoors, he usually worked in his studio. Here he could experiment freely, testing out ideas in private. As Turner rarely discussed his working practices, they held a mystique for his artistic contemporaries.'

But his habit of finishing his pictures after they had been hung for exhibition at the Royal Academy provided a rare insight into his methods: final flourishes of paint transformed canvases and dazzled onlookers. The paintings shown here never received this final treatment. Turner's studio was equipped with a variety of brushes and palette knives: he worked the paint surface in countless ways to achieve contrasting effects. Contemporary accounts suggest he worked quickly, altering his compositions as he painted and often working on several canvases at the same time.'



The Arrival of Louis-Philippe at the Royal Clarence Yard, Gosport, 8 October 1844, c.1844-5

Sunrise, a Castle on a Bay: 'Solitude', c.1840-5



Norham Castle, Sunrise, c.1845

- Tate display caption, 'Turner first saw Norham, bordering Scotland on the river Tweed in Northumberland, in 1797. He was at the limits of his trip to northern England, when he also visited Buttermere, seen in the painting of nearly fifty years earlier shown nearby. After that first visit he made watercolours showing the ruin at sunrise, and visits in 1801 and 1831 resulted in further views. Here, finally, is one of a series of unfinished, unexhibited paintings reworking his monochrome *Liber Studiorum* landscape prints. Pure colours rather than contrasting tones express the blazing light as the historic building and landscape merge.'

The Ponte Delle Torri, Spoleto, c.1840–5



Interior of a Great House: The Drawing Room, East Cowes Castle, c.1830
The Fall of Anarchy (?), c.1833–4
Willows beside a Stream, 1805



Going back out into the corridor to the room directly opposite.



Found in Turner's Studio: Seascapes

Entering the room opposite (on the far right of the corridor) called 'Found in Turner's Studio: Seascapes'

Waves Breaking against the Wind, c.1840

Waves Breaking on a Lee Shore at Margate (Study for 'Rockets and Blue Lights'), c.1840

Tate text, 'Turner had a lifelong fascination with the sea. While its prominence within his exhibited pictures is demonstrated in the nearby displays, most of the paintings in this room are more like unfinished essays on the subject. They were among the many apparently incomplete canvases found in Turner's studio following his death, not exhibited during his lifetime and mostly unseen by his contemporaries. The paintings range from oil sketches made with finished marine compositions in mind to more experimental late works concerned with capturing the movement and nature of the sea itself. Turner's many unfinished sea paintings of the 1830s and 1840s reflect the increasing amount of time he spent at the coast, particularly in Margate, where he stayed at the lodging house of a widow, Mrs Booth, who moved with him to London in 1846. Turner's depiction of the sea is ever-changing, like the sea itself. Sometimes

his paintings delight in its calmer face, revelling in tranquil surfaces reflective of golden sunlight. But he was also fascinated by the sea's potential as a destructive force: his canvases include terrifying waves, storms and shipwrecks.'



Sunrise with Sea Monsters, c.1845
A Wreck, with Fishing Boats, c.1840–5
Seascape with Buoy, c.1840



A Disaster at Sea, ?c.1835

- Tate display caption, 'This canvas was never exhibited and is probably unfinished, but remains one of Turner's most powerful statements on the Romantic theme of maritime disaster. Its pyramidal composition leaves little doubt that Turner had seen Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* (now in the Louvre, Paris) described by one critic as 'this tremendous picture of human sufferings', when it was exhibited in London in 1822. Turner's own subject is the wreck of the *Amphitrite* off Boulogne in 1833. The ship's captain abandoned his cargo of female convicts, claiming that he was only authorised to land them in New South Wales.'

Breakers on a Flat Beach, c.1835–40



The Chain Pier, Brighton, c.1828

A Ship Aground, Yarmouth; Sample Study, c.1827-8

Shipping at the Mouth of the Thames, c.1806-7



Coming out of the room into the corridor, turn right and go to the room at the far end of the corridor.



Room at the end of the corridor

Top painting: *The Bay of Baiae, with Apollo and the Sibyl*, exhibited 1823

Bottom painting: *View of Orvieto, Painted in Rome*, 1828, reworked 1830



Fishing upon the Blythe-Sand, Tide Setting In, exhibited 1809

The Shipwreck, exhibited 1805

The Fall of an Avalanche in the Grisons, exhibited 1810



Rome, from the Vatican. Raffaele, Accompanied by La Fornarina, Preparing his Pictures for the Decoration of the Loggia, exhibited 1820



*Spithead: Two Captured Danish Ships Entering Portsmouth Harbour, 1807–9
The Battle of Trafalgar, as Seen from the Mizen Starboard Shrouds of the
Victory, 1806–8*

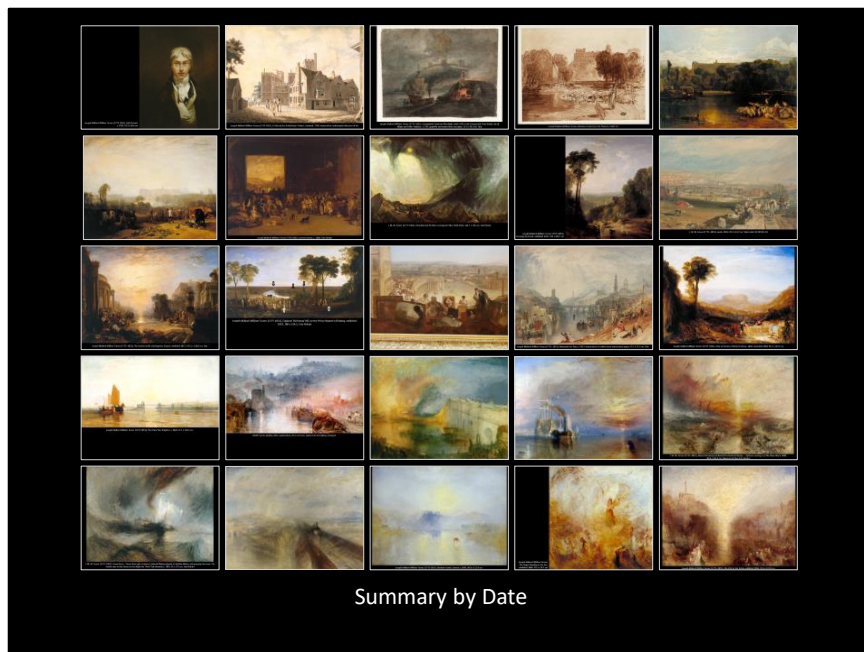


Forum Romanum, for Mr Soane's Museum, exhibited 1826

- Tate display caption, 'One of the most important locations in Rome is the Forum, an area of ruined temples and monuments which represents the heart of the ancient city. Over the centuries, the Forum had been allowed to decay. By the nineteenth century, however, excavations had begun in earnest on the site and the broken fragments of Roman architecture were slowly re-emerging into the light. This painting, designed for the architect Sir John Soane, captures the view looking towards the Capitoline Hill. On the left is the Arch of Titus, and on the right, the giant vaults of the Basilica of Constantine.'

The Hero of a Hundred Fights, c.1800–10, reworked and exhibited 1847

- Tate display caption, 'This canvas was originally an exploration of industrial machinery, but it was reworked to show the moment when a bronze statue of the Duke of Wellington was removed from its mould. Using the intense light of the foundry to obscure the figure, Turner transforms Wellington into an ethereal presence. The image is in stark contrast to Turner's carefully researched battle scenes. Here, tone and colour are employed to endow a national hero with elemental force.'



We have already looked at many of these paintings in detail but they are not displayed chronologically in the Tate. I have ordered them by date and added a few to complete the picture.

J. M. W. TURNER (1775-1851)

- Early life – 0-14 (1775-1789)
- First tours – 15-23 (1790-1798)
- From ARA to RA – 24-27 (1799-1802)
- First Foreign Tour – 27 (1802)
- Wealth and Fame – 28-36 (1803-1811)
- Consolidation – 37-44 (1812-1819)
- First Visit to Italy – 44-45 (1819-1820)
- Travels – 45-50 (1820-1830)
- Exhibitions – 50-65 (1830s)
- The Modern Master – 65-76 (1840s)



Tate Britain has some 300 finished and unfinished oil paintings, 20,000 watercolours and drawings (many of the drawings in his 300 or so sketchbooks). Some 120 oil paintings are on display at any one time.

A Brief Turner Chronology

1775 Birth of Turner in Maiden Lane, possibly on 23 April. Baptised at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, on 14 May.

1783 Death of younger sister, Mary Ann, aged 4.

1789 Starts attending classes at the Royal Academy Schools.

1790 Watercolour accepted by the Royal Academy for the first time: *The Archbishop's Palace, Lambeth*.

1793 Outbreak of war between Britain and France.

1796 Oil painting accepted by the Royal Academy for the first time: *Fishermen at Sea*.

1799 Elected an Associate member of the Royal Academy. Moves from his father's house in Covent Garden to Harley Street.

1800 Mother admitted to Bethlem Hospital.

1802 Elected a full member of the Royal Academy and presents *Dolbadern Castle* as his 'Diploma picture'. Makes the first of many visits to France and Switzerland.

1804 Death of Turner's mother in Bethlem Hospital. Turner opens a gallery in his own

house to show his pictures

1807 Elected Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy. Starts issuing his *Liber Studiorum*.

1809 Moves round the corner from Harley Street to Queen Anne Street West, retaining his gallery.

1812 Paints *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps*.

1815 Paints *Dido building Carthage* and *Crossing the Brook*. Defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo and return of peace to Europe.

1817 First of several visits to the Low Countries and Germany.

1819 First of several visits to Italy.

1820-1 Creates a new gallery at his house.

1828 Uses a studio in Rome and exhibits three paintings there.

1829 Paints *Ulysses deriding Polyphemus*. Death of Turner's father.

1834 Witnesses the burning of the Houses of Parliament.

1835 Makes a tour which includes Copenhagen, Berlin and Prague.

1836 Criticism of Turner's art in the press arouses the anger of the 17-year-old John Ruskin.

1839 Paints *The Fighting Temeraire*.

1843 Ruskin begins publishing *Modern Painters* in Turner's defence.

1844 Paints *Rain, Steam, and Speed*.

1845 Last trip abroad, to the north French coast.

1845-6 Serves as Acting President of the Royal Academy during the illness of the President.

1850 Exhibits for the last time at the Royal Academy.

1851 Death of Turner in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, on 19 December. Buried in St Paul's Cathedral on 30 December.

Chronology of his Life

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/chronology-r1109229>

The Turner Project

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner>



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Self-Portrait*, c.1799, 74.3 x 58.4 cm

- Turner was born in 1775, according to his own account on t. George's Day, 23 April. He was the son of William Turner (1745–1829), barber and wig-maker, of 21 Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, and his wife, Mary Marshall (1739–1804). He was baptised 'Joseph Mallad William' on 14 May, a mistake for 'Mallord'. He started to use the initials 'J.M.W.' about 1802 as there were many other artists called Turner. It was about this time that he made it clear that his middle name was 'Mallord' not 'Mallard' (or 'Mallad'). His mother's family name had originally been 'Mallard'.
- "This self-portrait appears to date from around 1799 when Turner was about twenty-four years old. It was possibly intended to mark an important moment in his career, his election as an Associate of the Royal Academy. Despite his relative youth, Turner had already made a name for himself as an original, accomplished painter with the technical abilities of someone more mature. He had been described in the newspapers as an artist who 'seems thoroughly to understand the mode of adjusting and applying his various materials' and 'their effect in oil or on paper is equally sublime'. " (Tate)

- Turner was an **unusual character, very strong-willed** he retained his cockney accent and was a **very poor presenter**.
- **Unlike many artists he was very interested in all the latest scientific developments.** Herschel 1801 lecture on the imperfections of the sun's surface may have changed how Turner portrayed the sun (see <https://www.newscientist.com/blogs/culturelab/2011/11/did-herschel-change-how-turner-painted-the-sun.html> and <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/nov/13/turner-science-sun>). Luke Howard developed the nomenclature of clouds in 1802. Sir Francis Beaufort created the Beaufort scale of wind force in 1805. Bell Rock lighthouse was designed by Stephenson who requested Turner to paint it who shows it defying nature. Turner painting *Life-Boat and Manby Apparatus Going Off to a Stranded Vessel Making Signal (Blue Lights) of Distress* in 1831. Captain George Manby invented the Manby mortar in 1808 to fire a rescue line to a sinking ship off shore. He also invented the portable fire extinguisher. Turner discussed pigments with Faraday who encouraged him to experiment but putting his pigments in the sun and covering half. Turner gave lectures on perspective but his lecturing style meant they were poorly attended.
- Turners **mother was sectioned to Bedlam** (Bethlem Royal Hospital) when he could have arranged private treatment and she died in Bedlam in 1804, the same year he moved to impressive new premises in Harley Street. His father came to live with him and he never married. His partner was Sarah Danby who had two daughters but they lived apart and he rarely saw them. He was cold and had a hard demeanour.
- Although many writers, such as **Dickens, were horrified by factories** **Turner was inspired by new developments** and technology. In *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (exhibited 1842) the sea and sky merge. Turner found a new way to paint flux and vortices.
- Mary Sommerville was any early populariser of science and explained Faraday's ideas. She knew Faraday and Turner well.
- **Margate became his second home** and he settled there with Mrs Booth although he lived under a false name and had carriages drop him a few streets away from his house.
- A series of articles by Edward Ripplingille (c. 1790-1859) entitled 'Personal reflections of artists' was published, mostly posthumously, in the *Art Journal*. Among them is the famous description of J. M. W. Turner on varnishing day at the Royal Academy. Ripplingille saw him painting but they could not understand how he did it.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-self-portrait-n00458>



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *A View of the Archbishop's Palace, Lambeth*, 1790, watercolour, Indianapolis Museum of Art

- A View of the Archbishop's Palace, Lambeth – this watercolour was Turner's first to be accepted for the Royal Academy's annual exhibition in April 1790, **the month he turned fifteen**. In the next 60 years Turner displayed 267 paintings at the Royal Academy.
- The image is a technical presentation of Turner's strong grasp of the elements of perspective with several buildings at sharp angles to each other, demonstrating Turner's thorough mastery of Thomas Malton's (1748-1804) topographical style. Malton was a tutor of both Girtin and Turner and he is best known for the book 'A Picturesque Tour through the Cities of London and Westminster', illustrated with a hundred aquatint plates.
- By the late 1780s Turner was working for various architects, including Malton, and architectural topographers. He had been interviewed by Sir Joshua Reynolds the previous year (1789) and admitted as a student. Until

1816 the Royal Academy only taught drawing not painting. A student would normally spend two and a half years drawing casts before being allowed to enter the life class.

- The watercolour demonstrates Turner's early ability to control tonal variation. With watercolour it is necessary to work from light to dark and Turner learnt to mix a light one and then apply it across a number of drawing before mixing a slightly darker tone and applying that until he had added the darkest tone to all the paintings.

London's Bridges

- For 600 years the nearest bridge to London Bridge was Kingston Bridge
- Then Putney Bridge 1729
- Old Westminster bridge, in the background, was built between 1732 and 1750.
- London Bridge was widened and houses were pulled down in 1760
- Kew Bridge (1759), Battersea Bridge (1773) and Richmond Bridge (1777) followed.
- The current Lambeth Bridge was not built until 1862. It was built on the site of the horse ferry by Peter Barlow and Charles Dickens considered it 'on the whole, the ugliest ever built'. The current bridge was opened in 1932.

History

- Lambeth Palace is the official home of the Archbishop of Canterbury and was acquired in about 1200. The oldest remaining part is the Lollard Tower which dates from 1435-1440. The front is an early Tudor brick gatehouse built by Cardinal John Morton and completed in 1495.
- In 1790 anything south of the river such as Southwark and Lambeth were not part of London and Westminster on the other side of the river was regarded as a separate city from London.
- The horse ferry was on the left. It was a flat bottomed boat that had many accidents. The road on the right is **Horseferry Road** (now on the other side of the river). The river was so low here it could sometimes be crossed at low tide. In the eighteenth century this area was used for fairs and public entertainment. Just to the right there was a windmill and behind us another two.
- This was just about to become an area of **massive expansion** in the next ten years the number of houses doubled and from 1778 to 1822 it increased six-fold.

- In the nineteenth century Lambeth Bridge was built, the Swan pub was pulled down and the area became full of factories and slums including the first factory of John **Doulton** which became Royal Doulton. The population increase from 25,000 in 1800 to 300,000 in 1900 (12-fold). It becomes industrialized and massively overcrowded.
- Opposite, where **Tate Britain** (1897) is now, was the massive **Millbank Penitentiary** (1816-1890). Millbank Penitentiary was purchased for the Crown by **Jeremy Bentham** to build a panopticon but this idea was abandoned. It was unhealthy as it was built on marshy land and the **labyrinthine** corridors so complex even the warders got lost. It was replaced by **Pentonville** (1842) but continued to be used as a holding prison for 4,000 inmates awaiting transportation until the practice was abandoned in 1853-1867 when it became a local prison and then a military prison.
- In 1848 the **railway** cut through alongside the **Ragged School** that taught 800 poor children. **Pigs and chickens** still ran through the streets. In 1850 this whole area was **flooded** as the Thames (London's sewer) regularly burst its banks.
- It is now a roundabout and Westminster Tower and Parliament View apartments. Westminster Tower contains the Al-Jazeera TV channel and the International Maritime Organization.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *Llanstephan Castle by Moonlight, with a Kiln in the Foreground From Welsh, Isle of Wight and Other Subjects*, c.1795, graphite and watercolour on paper, 21.3 x 28.1 cm

- ‘**Turner’s tours of Britain in the 1790s** led him to explore the pictorial potential of a wide variety of themes. This watercolour was based on sketches Turner made on his tour of South Wales in 1795. Modern industry, in the form of a **lime kiln in the foreground**, is set against ancient heritage, represented in the silhouetted ruins of **Llanstephan Castle**. This was a device Turner used in many of his landscape views, presenting a vision of Britain as a place at once **historic and modern**.’ (Tate display caption)
- This is based on the pencil drawing in the South Wales sketchbook (Tate D00571; Turner Bequest XXVI 18). The contrast of medieval ruins with modern industry prefigures various later works, notably the view of Dudley, Worcestershire executed in about 1832 for the ***Picturesque Views in England and Wales*** series (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight).¹ There is a more direct connection, as well, with the subject of **Turner’s first exhibited oil painting, *Fishermen at Sea*, which appeared at the Royal Academy in 1796** (305) (Tate T01585).² It is a night scene, with both moonlight and firelight.

- **The sheet is stained.** Having been severely damaged by a spill of varnish, it had **evidently been abandoned.** It remained effectively ignored in the Turner Bequest until conservation including the removal of the varnish rendered it fit for display for the first time in the exhibition *Young Turner* of 1988.



Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Windsor Castle from the Thames*, c.1807-19

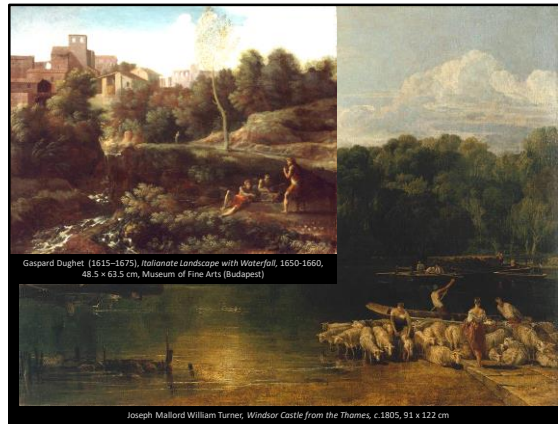
- This drawing CXVIII-e, is catalogued simply as '**Sketch for *Liber Studiorum* subject**', which, despite one or two minor architectural peculiarities, seems certainly to depict Windsor, and the group of figures and sheep in the foreground on the right are closely connected with the oil painting we see next. In the drawing a flagstaff is visible on the turret in the centre and the Round Tower can be clearly seen whereas in the picture it is obscured by trees.
- ***Liber Studiorum*** (Latin: Book of Studies) is a collection of prints by J. M. W. Turner. The collected works included **seventy-one prints** that he worked on and printed from **1807 to 1819**. For the production of the prints, Turner created the etchings for the prints, which were worked in mezzotint by his collaborating engravers. The *Liber Studiorum* was an expression of his intentions for landscape art. Loosely based on Claude Lorrain's *Liber Veritatis* (Book of Truth); the plates were meant to be widely disseminated, and categorised the genre into six types: **Marine, Mountainous, Pastoral, Historical, Architectural, and Elevated or Epic Pastoral**.
- The *Liber Studiorum* has been described as perhaps containing '**the pith of all that**

is best in his life and work', 'central to Turner's career as the most personal and carefully conceived series of prints in his entire *oeuvre*', or at least the 'most complete document of Turner's attitude to his art in the first decade of the [nineteenth] century', and 'one of the most comprehensive exercises in publication ever mounted by a great artist.' The Latin title may be translated as 'Book of Studies', although it was not issued as a bound book, and did not contain any explanatory text beyond the titles of (most of) the compositions, and letters printed above each of them to indicate general categories of landscape discussed in detail below.

- In terms of the published prints, the *Liber Studiorum* has been one of the most extensively documented aspects of Turner's career.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/liber-studiorum-drawings-and-related-works-r1131702#entry-main>



Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Windsor Castle from the Thames*, c.1805, 91 x 122 cm

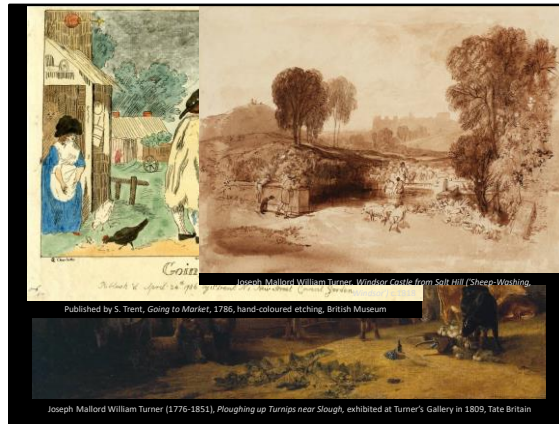
Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675), *Italianate Landscape with Waterfall*, 1650-1660, 48.5 x 63.5 cm, Museum of Fine Arts (Budapest)

- It shows Turner's early interest in a classical form of composition, based 'mainly on forms lying parallel to the picture surface' and there is also an **echo of Gaspard Poussin**.
- Turner was **living at Isleworth at the time that Lord Egremont bought the picture**. There is also a possibility that Turner exhibited it at his own gallery in 1805 or 1806. It was bought from Turner by the third Earl of Egremont; by descent to the third Lord Leconfield, who in 1947 conveyed Petworth to the National Trust; in 1957 the contents of the State Rooms were accepted by the Treasury in part payment of death duties.
- Note that there is a contradiction between the date of the sketchbook (1807-1819) and the date of this painting (1805). It is

possible the sketchbook was started much earlier as it has details of bank notes in use in 1804.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-windsor-castle-from-the-thames-t03870>



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1776-1851), *Ploughing up Turnips near Slough*, exhibited at Turner's Gallery in 1809, Tate Britain
 Published by S. Trent, *Going to Market*, 1786, hand-coloured etching, British Museum
 Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Windsor Castle from Salt Hill* ('*Sheep-Washing, Windsor*'), c.1818, 22.7 x 31.6 cm

- The view is from Salt Hill near Slough? In modern terms it is looking towards the M4 motorway towards the Thames, Eton College and Windsor Castle. Turner would have known the view and there was a famous inn, called Castle Inn, at Salt Hill a mile from Slough. It was named for its view of Windsor Castle and the Inn and its view were so well known that in 1814 the Prince Regent hosted a breakfast there for the King of Prussia and his three sons.
- Turner's drawing, engraved but not published in the *Liber Studiorum*, shows **Windsor Castle from Salt Hill, Slough**, a couple of miles to the north. It relates to an 1818 visit to the Fourth of June commemoration at nearby Eton College with the family of his friend and patron Walter Fawkes, whose sons were then at the school; Mrs Fawkes's diary notes: 'Thursday, 4th June. Went to Eton to see the boat-race. Dined and slept at Salt Hill. Little Turner came with us.'

Pastoral

- The painting was first exhibited April 1809 in Turner's gallery. At first glance we see a Romantic painting of the pastoral or bucolic type. That is it shows the herding of livestock. It is also known as Georgic based on Virgil's (70 BCE-19 BCE, an ancient Roman poet of the Augustan period)) *Georgics*, a poem about agriculture and animal husbandry which was very popular in the eighteenth century. The poem describes man's struggle against a hostile natural world and how hard work and animal husbandry can overcome setbacks (published 29BCE). Related to the Greek Hesiod's *Works and Days* regarding man's relationship to the land and the importance of hard work.

Interpretations

- Turner's painting supports many levels of analysis. It will limit this to **three levels** as I slowly unravel this intriguing painting.

First Level - Pastoral

- For many years it was simply seen as an example of the pastoral or more specifically the Georgic. However, most descriptions of the painting were formal and stylistic, for example, focusing on Turner's success in representing sunlight seen through haze and the 'poetically heightened atmospheric effects'.

Second Level - Patriotic

- The art historian John Barrell was the first to point out its celebration of progressive English agriculture. It was during the Napoleonic Wars and the French had blockaded our ports so we depended on farmers to produce our food. In this light we see the Royal Palace at Windsor, representing monarchy, part of Eton school representing education and the aristocracy and in the foreground the labourers working to produce the food needed by everyone during the war. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of increased agricultural productivity resulting from new scientific agricultural practices.
- The academic **John Barrell** was the first to draw attention to the labourers and subsequently it was seen as **supporting progressive English agriculture** that was helping us win the **war against France**. This needs some explanation. The painting was first exhibited in 1809 at the height of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815, started when Napoleon seized power in 1799 apart from the one year Peace of Amiens in 1802). In 1805 Nelson beat the French fleet at Trafalgar and in response the **French blockaded** European ports to **stop food** being imported into England. It therefore became critical for England to grow all its own food and agricultural productivity became

critical for the war effort. The painting would therefore have been seen as patriotically supporting the war.

- The Tate says, *'As well as its distant view of Windsor Castle, this picture of a turnip harvest depicts current efforts to maximise yields and increase the food supply to serve the needs of a wartime economy'*. There is a lot of history that was very significance at the time tied up in this sentence.

Third level - Political

- The third level of meaning was suggested by **Michele Miller** in 2004. She found **anomalies** in the work that suggested a different interpretation. Let us examine these anomalies one by one.

Enclosure

- **First** it is necessary to understand the **importance of the turnip**. The most significant agricultural advance made in the eighteenth century was **crop rotation**. This was first practiced **8,000 years ago** in the Middle East but ancient practice involved letting a field lie fallow for part of the year. The big advance was **four-field rotation** which was first used in England in the 18th century and was promoted by Turnip Townsend, Viscount Charles Townshend. It consists of growing wheat, then turnips or swedes (winter fodder), then barley and then clover or ryegrass (gazed) each year. Using four fields each one could be at a different stage of the rotation. This enabled the land to be used all the time to grow a useful crop. Turnips leaves would feed the crops in the autumn and the turnip could be stored over winter to feed the livestock. This in turn meant that livestock did not need to be slaughtered in the autumn but could over winter.
- Turnips enabled four crop rotation but only if the **land was enclosed** so that livestock could be prevented from eating other farmer's turnips. In the Middle Ages all land was owned by the lord but the tenants had certain rights over part of the land. One such right was the right to pasture cattle, horses and sheep (another was turbary – the right to take turfs for fuel and estovers – the right to take sufficient wood for the commoner's house). Over a period of hundreds of years common land had slowly been taken away by enclosing it. It was a major issue in the Tudor period and enclosures were constructed by the lord of the manor to create large fields to graze more sheep as our main export was wool. The final and **most contentious** wave of enclosures was later, between **1750 and 1850** and was justified by **improving productivity**. In this period **one sixth of England** was enclosed and this took the ability to grow food away from a large part of the population. The smallholders and commoners became dependent on poor

relief and had to buy food.

- The **main food** of the poor was **bread** and in **1815** the Government passed **Corn Laws** that **fixed a high price** for wheat which increased the price of a bread. At the same time land was being **enclosed** in the name of improved agricultural productivity. Four crop rotation enabled fields to be productive all the time, they no longer needed to lie fallow. However, the poor needed the common land to eke out their existence. It enabled them to grow crops and even keep a cow for milk and cheese. The **last wave of enclosures** was mostly in the South East - Kent and Sussex and later Essex - and it led to what became known as the **Swing Riots**. That was still in the future when this was painted but unrest was growing because of bad harvests and the enclosure of common land.
- Despite the new agriculture wheat production fell during the war, mostly because of bad weather and in Buckinghamshire it fell after enclosure because enclosed fields were used to pasture livestock an inefficient way to use the land. Bread shortages for the poor were caused by using enclosed fields produce grain-fed wheat for the monied classes.

Broken Plough

- In the distance we see **Windsor Castle**, a palace of George III, known as 'Farmer George'. During the late 1780s he had converted large parts of Windsor and Richmond into farms that used the latest agricultural techniques. The women are sitting on part of a harrow and a man is carrying a seedlip, both indicators of progressive agriculture and that the field will be replanted with another crop as soon as the turnips have been gathered. But the group of men directly below Windsor Castle are looking at a **broken plough**
- The King promoted the new intensive agriculture which was particularly important as food supplies had been cut off by the French blockage. This was painted at the height of the Napoleonic Wars. By 1808 all foreign food had been cut off and for the previous nine years the harvest had been poor to terrible. For this reason it has been interpreted as a patriotic painting showing a symbol of the King and the agriculture workers working hard to save the nation. But if this were true, why is the work so disorderly, **why is the plough broken** and the workers dispirited.
- The open fields of common land did not allow turnip growing as your neighbours livestock would eat all your turnips. Turnips therefore called to mind enclosure. Lord Winchilsea had noted a few years previously that

farmers pressed for enclosure to keep labourers dependent. Class differences are indicated by the lone figure in the white coat on the raised ground who has just dismounted from the white horse at the left. This juxtaposition of workers with a higher social class is unusual.

Slough

- Turner has made the **castle more prominent** that it would be from the site and for a while it was known as 'Windsor' but Turner explicitly named it as 'near Slough' even though the site is nearer Eton than Slough. **Slough** was a **very small hamlet** until the railway came in 1836 when it was known as the station nearest to Windsor. The site was known at the time as offering a fine vantage point to view Windsor. The word 'slough' means a muddy or boggy place. The most famous slough is the **Slough of Despond** in **John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*** (1678), which was the most popular book after the Bible. In the book the slough is **a place that cannot be mended**. Help explains to Christian that the King's labourers have been working on it for 16 hundred years but it remains the Slough of Despond. The area around Windsor was boggy and not fully drained. We can see a four horse Berkshire plough which in 1808 was considered old-fashioned and inefficient. Yet even this heavy plough has broken down. Like the Slough of Despond this turnip field resists the efforts of the King's labourers.

Boggy Soil

- Turnips were not a miracle crop and prefer light sandy soils and do not grow well in boggy soils. They also have low nutritional value. In the right soil they are an excellent preparation but in the wrong soil they 'will do more injury to the land than the turnips are worth' (1794, Board of Agriculture, Arthur Young).

Weeds

- The harvest we can see consists of a small wheelbarrow of turnips alongside a large area of weeds. Notice the weeds vertically align with the broken plough and the palace. Turner tends to link important connected details using vertical alignment.

Bottle

- At this time the poor were often blamed for their circumstances and one thing that distinguished the deserving from the undeserving poor was

idleness and **drunkenness**. It is significant that a bottle is located in the middle of the brightest patch of land.

Women Workers

- During the war the shortage of men meant that women worked the fields, known as the '**petticoat harvests**'. It has even been suggested that the development of farm machinery was a result of farmers' **dissatisfaction** with the **productivity** of the women compared with the men (*Women, Work, and Wages in England, 1600-1850*, Michael Roberts, ed. Penelope Lane). We see one of the women is nursing showing the farmer is desperate for labour and the women for work.

Turnips = Extreme Poverty

- Viewers at the time would have understood everything I have been telling you. They would also have known that **turnips were associated with hunger**. They were used to feed livestock and as human food they implied extreme desperation. Many writers at the time use **turnips** as the example of **extreme poverty** in *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (**Henry Fielding**, 1749) Squire Western says '*the Hanover rats have eat up all our corn, and left us nothing but turneps to feed upon*'.
the Hanover rats have eat up all our corn, and left us nothing but turneps to feed upon'.
- There was not widespread starvation but the following year, 1809, the harvest was even worse driving up bread prices further and there were demonstrations in Cookham.
- Finally, turnips were associated with **George III**, his rural associations and his **miserliness**. Royalty cannot win as his son was mocked for his profligacy and debauchery. From 1793 (during the war) satire was directed against France and Napoleon. George III was shown as a simple, affable and harmless 'Farmer George'.
- There are few **representations of turnips**, there is Constable's *Flailing Turnip-heads* and Gainsborough's *Going to Market* but generally they are poorly represented. Perhaps because they have little beauty or because they were a relatively new crop and did not represent timeless continuity but a new technique.

Cartoon Mocking George II using Turnips

- This shows the type of satirical cartoon that Turner might have seen. A farm-yard scene with **Windsor Castle** on a hill in the background. **George III**, wearing a smock frock, his **Garter ribbon** hanging down his leg, and holding

a pitchfork, gives orders to two guardsmen who are taking his carrots and turnips to market. One rides off (right), the vegetables on the back of his saddle, the other loads his horse with a bundle. Outside a farm-building (left) **Queen Charlotte** scatters corn to chickens. Queen Charlotte was reputedly ugly and dull. Cartoonists normally showed her goggling eyes and pointed chin.

- George III's admirable farming activities in the Great Park at Windsor, on land reclaimed from marsh, were a favourite **subject of ridicule**. They were usually associated with insinuations of **miserliness**.

Summary

- The **third level** of meaning is therefore that Turner was surreptitiously suggesting **all is not right** with the farming world. I do not mean this was a revolutionary painting and that Turner was calling for riots. I mean that for those who look carefully there is a whole world of levels of meaning, of ambiguity and uncertainty. Like the real world there is no simple answer, no single interpretation, it is **neither patriotic nor unpatriotic**, it shows **beauty and ugliness**, power confronting poverty, **agricultural advances and their negative impact**, hard work and idleness, patriotism and the causes of revolution. I believe it is these **levels of meaning** and this **ambiguity** that makes it a **masterpiece**.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-windsor-castle-from-salt-hill-sheep-washing-windsor-d08171>



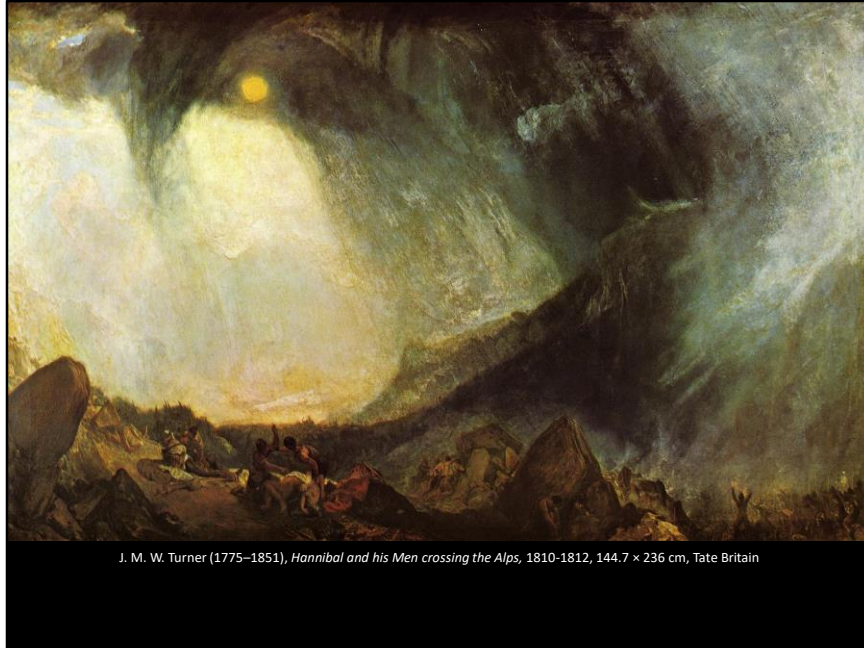
Joseph Mallord William Turner (1776-1851), *Harvest Home*, c. 1809, Tate Britain

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1776-1851), *Harvest Home*, c. 1809, Tate Britain

- This Turner scene was painted the same year and leads us into another category - **social realism**.
- This **unfinished** painting shows a **Harvest Home**, an **annual celebration** of the harvest where the **rural tenants** pay their **dues** to the landowner and everyone celebrates the harvest.
- It was painted at Cassiobury Park for Lord Essex and was in response to a painting by the up and coming **David Wilkie**.
- It may not have been finished because **Turner's patron** Lord Essex told him to **stick** to landscapes and stop trying to **do a 'Wilkie'**.
- The interesting thing however is that it shows the landowner mixing with the rural workers, a practice that was soon to stop.
- The Harvest Home was a dying tradition at this time. It was replaced by a harvest thanks giving service invented by Rev. R. S. **Hawker** in **1843**.
- The other interesting point is that the painting shows a **black man** in an English rural setting.
- Half the land in England was owned by only 4,000 people.
- The **semi-feudal relationship** between landowners and rural workers was **starting to break down** partly because so many workers were moving to the cities.

Notes

- David Wilkie (1785-1841) was a Scottish genre painter, famous for *The Chelsea Pensioners reading the Waterloo Dispatch*, a huge success in 1822. He was elected an ARA in 1809 aged 24 and an RA in 1811 aged 26.
- Turner entered the RA School in 1789 aged 14 and his first painting (watercolour, *A View of the Archbishop's Palace, Lambeth*) was exhibited the following year. He was made an ARA in 1799 aged 24, the youngest permitted age, and moved to a smart Harley Street address where he opened his own gallery and studio. Turner's private life was secretive, unsociable, and somewhat eccentric. In 1798 he began an affair, which was to last about 10 years, with **Sarah Danby**, a widow who probably bore him two children. In 1800 Turner's **mother** became hopelessly ill and was committed to a **mental hospital**. His **father** went to live with him and devoted the rest of his life to serving as his **son's studio assistant** and general agent. He became a RA in 1802. He was **criticized** even early on by Benjamin West (PRA) and Sir George Beaumont for his 'crude blotches' and was described as a 'white painter' because of his luminous pale tones. In 1807 Turner began his great enterprise of publishing a series of 100 plates known as the ***Liber Studiorum***, inspired, in part, by Claude's own studio record, *Liber veritatis* (begun in 1635 and continued until his death in 1682). Turner's aim was to document the great variety and range of landscape including historical, architectural, mountainous, pastoral, and marine. The first part appeared in June 1807 and the last in 1819



J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Hannibal and his Men crossing the Alps*, 1810-1812, 144.7 × 236 cm, Tate Britain

- **Hannibal** was a Punic (Carthaginian) military commander generally considered one of the **greatest military commanders in history, a Romantic 'hero'**. One of his most famous achievements was at the outbreak of the **Second Punic War**, when he **marched an army**, which included **elephants**, from Iberia **over the Pyrenees** and the Alps **into Italy**. In his first few years in Italy, he won **three dramatic victories**, in which he distinguished himself for his ability to determine his and his opponent's strengths and weaknesses, and to play the battle to his strengths and the enemy's weaknesses—and won over many allies of Rome. Hannibal **occupied much of Italy** for **15 years**, but a Roman **counter-invasion of North Africa** forced him to return to **Carthage**, where he was decisively **defeated** by Scipio Africanus at the Battle of Zama.
- The painting depicts Hannibal's struggle to **cross the Alps in 218 BCE** opposed by nature and local tribes. A black storm cloud dominates the sky and threatens to swamp the soldiers while an **avalanche descends** on the right. We are looking **from the Alps down into the sunlit plains of Italy** and at the front of the army it might be Hannibal riding an elephant. The rear of the army is **fighting Salassian**

tribesmen (Italian Celts) as described in histories of the period. Turner saw parallels between **Hannibal and Napoleon** and between the Punic Wars between Carthage and Rome and the Napoleonic Wars between Britain and France.

Identifying Napoleon and France with Hannibal and Carthage was unusual because as a land power with a relatively weak navy, France was more usually identified with Rome, and the naval power of Britain drew parallels with Carthage.

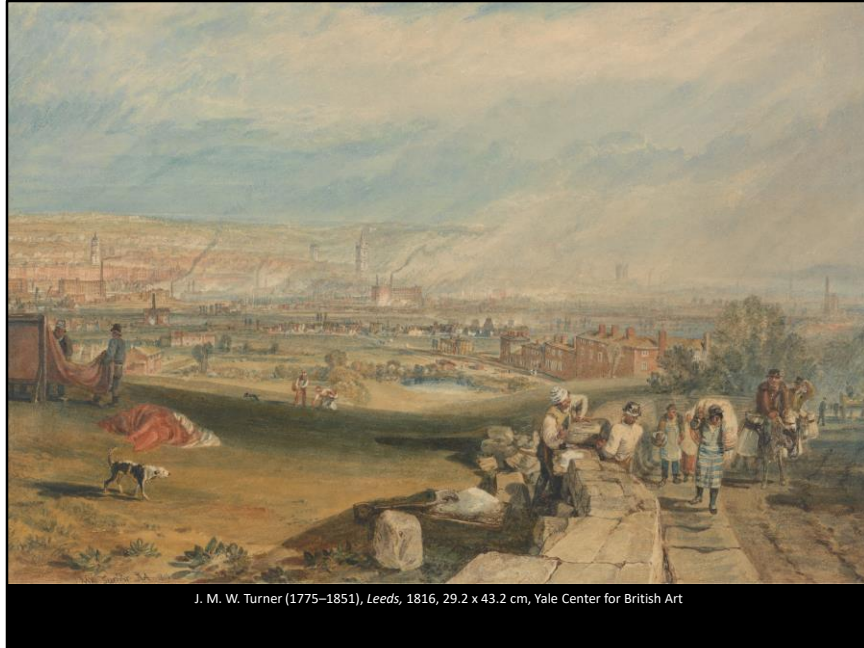
- Possible influences are Jacques-Louis **David's portrait of Napoleon Crossing the Alps**, of Napoleon leading his army over the Great St Bernard Pass in May 1800, which Turner had seen during a visit to Paris in 1802. Also, possibly an oil painting of Hannibal's army descending the Alps into northern Italy by watercolourist John Robert Cozens, *A Landscape with Hannibal in His March over the Alps, Showing to His Army the Fertile Plains of Italy*, the only oil painting that Cozens exhibited at the Royal Academy. Thomas Gray speculated that Salvator Rosa could have painted "Hannibal passing the Alps" and another spur could have been the visit of a delegation from the Tyrol to London in 1809, seeking support to oppose Napoleon.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Crossing the Brook*, exhibited 1815, 193 x 165.1 cm

- Tate display caption 'This painting is the culmination of Turner's studies of Devon, which he visited in 1811 and 1813. His watercolours and drawings of the area were remarkably fresh and informal. Here, however, he creates a more monumental and self-consciously artful image in the mould of the seventeenth-century classical landscape painter, Claude Lorrain. Even so, contemporaries recognised that the scene was intended to show a particular place: the Tamar valley. This painting was exhibited in the year of the battle of Waterloo. It would have been hard to avoid the patriotic subtext of such a grandly ambitious depiction of the national landscape.'
- This is called 'Crossing the Brook' and it looks like an Italy landscape by one of the Old Masters [such as Claude]. It is, in fact, the culmination of his studies in Devon in 1813 and according to the president of the Royal Academy '**The bridge ... is Calstock Bridge [over the Tamar]; some mining works are indicated in the middle distance. The extreme distance extends to the mouth of the Tamar, ... and those on the opposite side of Plymouth Sound. The whole scene is extremely faithful**'.

- Most of the critics were full of praise, one said, '**Never have we seen a more elegant landscape than this**' however one influential critic [Sir George Beaumont] thought it weak and it failed to sell and was still for sale in his gallery twenty years later. This is surprising as it is now considered one of his finest early landscapes in the tradition of the Old Masters. There may be another explanation as his engraver claimed that Turner had refused £1,500 for the painting so it is possible he did not want to part with it.
- In the composition, he followed in the tradition of the Old Masters. First, we can see carefully delineated planes that lead the eye back gradually. The distance landscape is enclosed by trees either side, a technique known as *repoussoir* which means 'pushing back' as by framing the edge the eye is pushed back into the distant landscape. The trees act like the wings of a stage setting the scene within a frame. The foreground has been stage managed to capture our immediate attention by lighting the centre as if with a spotlight. The eye is taken between the two girls through the angle of the dog.
- It has been suggested that there is a personal story behind the painting. Turner never married but had a relationship with Sarah Danby, a musician's widow, who bore him two daughters, Evelina and Georgina, although some writers claim there were his father's children and therefore his half-sisters. The painting has been interpreted as symbolic of life as Turner claimed that life is like crossing a brook. At the time, it was claimed that the girl on the left looked like Evelina and so the girl on the right could be Georgina, although she was only four at the time, or a younger Evelina. The crossing the brook then represents puberty and her coming to womanhood. Various other parts of the painting have been picked out to support this idea of which I will only mention the womb-like grotto on the right [and the bottle containing a red liquid which some claim is blood].



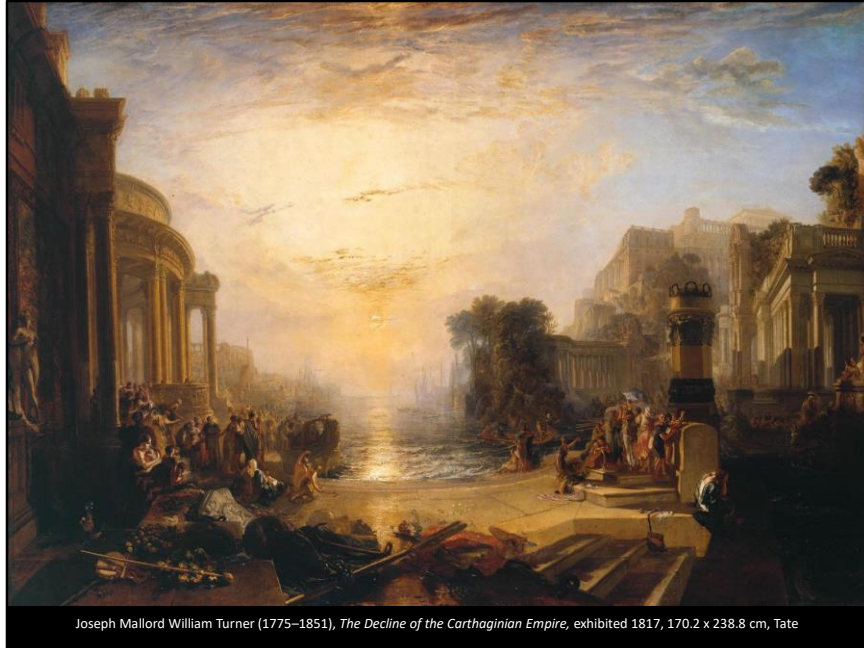
J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Leeds*, 1816, 29.2 x 43.2 cm, Yale Center for British Art

- “Of all the British landscape artists of the Romantic period, Turner was the most fascinated by modernity, and many of his images chronicle technological advances. While touring Yorkshire in 1816 to gather material for Thomas Dunham Whitaker’s ‘The History of Yorkshire’, Turner visited Leeds, the hub of the nation’s wool and flax industries, and made meticulous graphite sketches of the city, which he elaborated into this watercolour on his return to London. Turner’s remarkable drawing celebrates the economic success and resilience of Leeds—and by extension, that of Britain—in the immediate aftermath of the wars with Napoleon. As Stephen Daniels has noted in his penetrating analysis of the watercolour, to which this entry is indebted, Turner’s image is a complex and richly allusive portrayal of a rapidly developing industrial city, an amalgam of sources rather than a straightforward topographical record (Daniels, 1986, 1993).
- The watercolour, which depicts the city **from Beeston Hill**, about a mile and half south of the city, draws on the conventions of the prospect or panorama, a well-established genre for representing urban development and prosperity. Daniels has suggested convincingly that Turner used two eighteenth-century sources, Samuel

Buck's 1720 engraved prospect of Leeds and an allegorical poem by John Dyer, 'The Fleece', which **details the processes of wool manufacture and offers a vision of Britain united through labour**. With similar patriotic intention, though perhaps not without ambivalence, Turner mapped the **smoky industrial landscape of Leeds, placing John Marshall's flax mill at the centre** of his composition and carefully differentiating its figures' occupations—tentermen hanging cloth to dry, masons, milk carriers, and a millworker carrying a roll of cloth. It is likely that Turner intended 'Leeds' to be engraved for Whitaker's publication, but it was not included, perhaps because its industrial subject matter was considered unsuitable for this somewhat conservative publication. The watercolour was published in 1823, translated, appropriately, into the modern medium of lithography. "

References

- Yale Center for British Art website, Gillian Forrester, 2007



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire*, exhibited 1817, 170.2 x 238.8 cm, Tate

- Claude Lorrain was Turner's favourite old master painter. This is one of his greatest essays in Claude's style. It is part of a pair of paintings showing the rise and fall of a great empire; here, Carthage's decline is symbolised by the setting sun.
- Turner saw the rise and fall of once-great empires as a historical inevitability, confirmed by the fall of Napoleon, but threatening to overtake the victorious British. Today, the other half of the pair *Dido building Carthage; or the Rise of the Carthaginian Empire* hangs, at Turner's request, alongside a painting by Claude in the National Gallery.
- This is *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire* painted a few years after the previous picture. He painted a companion piece called *Dido building Carthage; or the Rise of the Carthaginian Empire* which hangs alongside a painting by Claude Lorrain in the National Gallery (see Visual Aids).
- Turner was both demonstrating his ability to out-Claude Claude, then regarded as one of the great Old Masters, and making a comment on the fate of empires. Turner, following Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,

saw the rise and fall of empires as inevitable as shown by the recent fall of Napoleon. The painting could be seen, and Turner would have intended it as, a warning about the inevitable fall of the British Empire.

- What we see here are children being loaded onto ships. It was fifty years since they lost the Second Punic War, the one that involved Hannibal, and the Romans were increasingly worried about its growing wealth. Carthage had to ask Rome to resolve all disputes so when it was attacked by a neighbour and defended itself Rome imposed increasingly severe punishments such as the surrender of three hundred children of the nobility as hostages, which is what we see here. Finally, Rome asked the Carthaginians to destroy their city and rebuild it inland. When the Carthaginians refused Rome declared the Third Punic War and at the end of a three-year siege Rome won and burned the city to the ground, salted and ploughed the soil and sold the Carthaginians into slavery.
- The brilliant sunset has become a hallmark of Turner's painting and it has been suggested it has a natural cause. In April 1815 Mount Tambora erupted in Indonesia. It was the biggest volcanic eruption in recorded history and darkened the skies all over the world to the extent that the following year was called 'The Year without a Summer' and the dust gave rise to brilliant sunsets for many years afterwards.



Claude Lorrain, *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, 1648

- Included as this and similar works by Claude inspired Turner to paint *Dido Building Carthage* and *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire*, which Turner left to the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, on condition that they were hung besides Claude's pair of works.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent's Birthday*, exhibited 1819, 180 x 334.5 cm, Tate Britain

Landscape

- Turner painted this great panorama of the Thames after the Napoleonic War. It shows the view from Richmond Hill, looking west towards Twickenham, and brought Turner's early series of river scenes to a splendid conclusion. The scene is treated in the grand, classical manner of the seventeenth-century French artist, Claude Lorrain. It presents an Arcadian vision of English scenery, with an explicitly patriotic message in the reference to the birthday of the Prince Regent.
- The Prince's official birthday, **23 April**, was also St George's Day (the patron saint of England) and Turner's own birthday
- There was a garden party on Tuesday, 12 August 1817 in private grounds on Richmond Hill given by Dowager Countess of cardigan to celebrate the prince Regent's birthday. Turner was not present as he had sailed for the Continent two days earlier. The Prince Regent attended with the Mayor of London whose barge is shown on the Thames below. In the centre a woman stares out at us while other women seem to be talking about her and she could represent Princess Caroline, the estranged wife of the Regent. On the right a man in military uniform with small

canon near him who could be the Duke of Wellington. The canon were fired at the party to salute the Regent's birthday. There is a game of cricket being played on Petersham meadows below.

- The poets Alexander Pope and James Thomson, whose 'Summer' he quoted with the picture, and the painter Joshua Reynolds had lived at Richmond or nearby at Twickenham where Turner had his own property, Sandycombe Lodge (which is in the picture at the point where the cypress tree above the discarded drum intersects with the horizon). Sandycombe Lodge was built by 1813 as a quiet retreat in a fashionable area. It was also a home for his aging father, William, who had retired by this time. Turner sold the house in 1826 and it is now a museum.
- Turner had known this view since childhood and he painted watercolour views of this scene both before and after this oil painting. The view from Richmond Hill is very similar today.
- The Prince Regent had ridden to Richmond Hill in 1818 from Kew Palace on 10 August, two days before his actual birthday.
- The *Annals of Fine Art* recommended he pumice it down, coat it with priming and paint another picture like that of Carthage.
- It may have been painted specifically to procure Royal patronage.
- It was exhibited with the verse (which was hung upon a tree at the top of the hill),
 'Which way, Amanda, shall we bend our course?
 The choice perplexes. Wherefore should we chuse?
 All is the same with thee. Say, shall we wind
 Along the streams? or walk the smiling mead?
 Or court the forest-glades? or wander wild
 Among the waving harvests? or ascend,
 While radiant Summer opens all its pride,
 Thy Hill, delightful Shene?'

James Thomson (1700-1748, he wrote the lyrics of 'Rule Britannia!' and died in Richmond), *The Four Season: Summer*



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *Rome, from the Vatican. Raffaele, Accompanied by La Fornarina, Preparing his Pictures for the Decoration of the Loggia*, exhibited 1820, 177.2 x 335.3 cm

Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino (1483–1520), *Portrait of a Young Woman*, 1518-19, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Palazzo Barberini, Rome

- Tate display caption, 'Turner was forty-two years old, and at the height of his powers, when he first visited Rome. The city was filled with associations with the subjects from classical mythology which Turner dramatised in his work. On his return home, Turner painted this sweeping view from the Vatican loggia, across St Peter's Square towards the Abruzzi hills. It embraces all that Rome meant to him as the historic centre, first of the Roman Empire, then of its successor, the Christian Church, and then of the great artists of the Renaissance - crowned by Raphael, who stands in the foreground.'
- The central painting is *Madonna della seggiola* (*Madonna with the Child and Young St. John*), also known as *The Madonna of the Chair* (1514-15, Palazzo Pitti, Florence). This may symbolize modern, Christian Rome while the statue of the Tiber to its left is placed next to a picture representing the biblical Expulsion (see *Angel in the Sun: Turner's Vision of History* by Gerald Finley).

- The painting was exhibited on the 300th anniversary of Raphael's death. Turner makes no attempt to set the scene in Raphael's time and shows us a view of Rome in 1819 complete with Bernini's Baroque sweeping colonnade was built after Raphael had died. Turner may be playing with time and we are looking at his ghost. Raphael had traditionally thought to have died after a night of passion with his mistress who is shown alongside him. Turner is commenting on the dangers of love, the nature of time, the grandeur of Rome, fame and on art itself. However, although it was admired by some critics many complained of its 'excessive yellowness' and how it was seen 'without experiencing the slightest sensation of pleasure' and it was described as a 'brilliant but outré and unsuccessful experiment'.
- The *Portrait of a Young Woman* (also known as *La fornarina*, 'the baker') is a painting by the Italian High Renaissance master Raphael, made between 1518 and 1519. It is in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in Palazzo Barberini, Rome. The woman is traditionally identified with the fornarina (baker) Margherita Luti, Raphael's Roman lover, though this has been questioned. The woman is pictured with an oriental style hat and bare breasts.

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- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-rome-from-the-vatican-raffaello-accompanied-by-la-fornarina-preparing-his-pictures-n00503>
- <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=uxroHjm2QAIC>



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *Newcastle-on-Tyne*, c.1823, watercolour on white wove watercolour paper, 15.2 x 21.5 cm, Tate

- “This watercolour is worked up from a study in the *Scotch Antiquities* sketchbook, drawn when Turner made his way up to Scotland in 1818 to research the *Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland* project initiated by the publisher Robert Cadell and novelist Walter Scott.
- One author wrote that Newcastle offered ‘**to the eye the most striking and pleasing objects**’ which ‘**characterise the wealth, science, and enterprising spirit of the place**’. The city was ‘well known as the great emporium of the coal-trade, and for its possession of almost **illimitable collieries**’. It had ‘a fine Exchange, splendid assembly rooms, numerous charitable institutions, and literary ones’. In essence, the city possessed all the signifiers of prosperity and gentility which spoke of ‘the intellectual taste and the advanced civilization of its inhabitants’.
- Turner depicts the city and the adjoining town of Gateshead, looking west, with the River Tyne running between. The river is ‘crowded with shipping, keels, wherries, steam-boats, and other small craft’. From the left to right are the city’s most conspicuous historic landmarks: first, the tower of St Mary’s, Gateshead and next to it, the Tyne Bridge of 1772. Above the bridge is Elswick shot tower, for the

manufacturing of lead 'sheets, pipes, shot, white-lead, red-lead, and litharge. The metal was mined in the nearby towns of Stella and Swalwell and then transported to the tower for processing. To the right of Elswick is the keep of the eleventh-century castle, and next to this is the spire of the late eighteenth-century elliptical Church of All Saints'. The last landmark to be featured is the medieval steeple of St Nicholas Church.

- Turner has peopled the staithes (a landing stage for loading and unloading boats) and steep hillsides of the river with a 'cross-section of the town's population'. A marine, a sailor, and a pair of women waving at the boatmen on a barge laden with cargo populate the immediate foreground. Beyond them labourers haul timbers next to an iron pulley towards a Union Jack at full mast and keelmen transport coal from the moored colliers. The masts of dozens of docked ships line the banks of the Tyne, the finely wrought lines of their cruciform frames layered and interspersed with the slack trapezoid shapes of white sails. The atmosphere is heavy with the **effluvia of industry: smoke from Elswick tower and local lime kilns; fumes from the collieries and coal fires** at the riverside; and dirtied vapour from the stationary steam engines pumping water from the mines. Indeed, as the art historian William Rodner writes, Turner here:
 - *gives greater play to the theme of an old city-district engulfed by the choking atmospheric effects of modern industrial development...the gray haze over the far and middle ranges of the watercolour [are] relieved only in the immediate foreground by elements of colour – brown on the sloping riverbank, the ships' white sails, red for the soldier's uniform.*
- The colouring in Newcastle is complex: it is built up of minute stipples and hatching of multiple tones, creating a chromatic and textural richness." (Alice Rylance-Watson, Tate website, 2013)

References

- Alice Rylance-Watson, Tate website, 2013



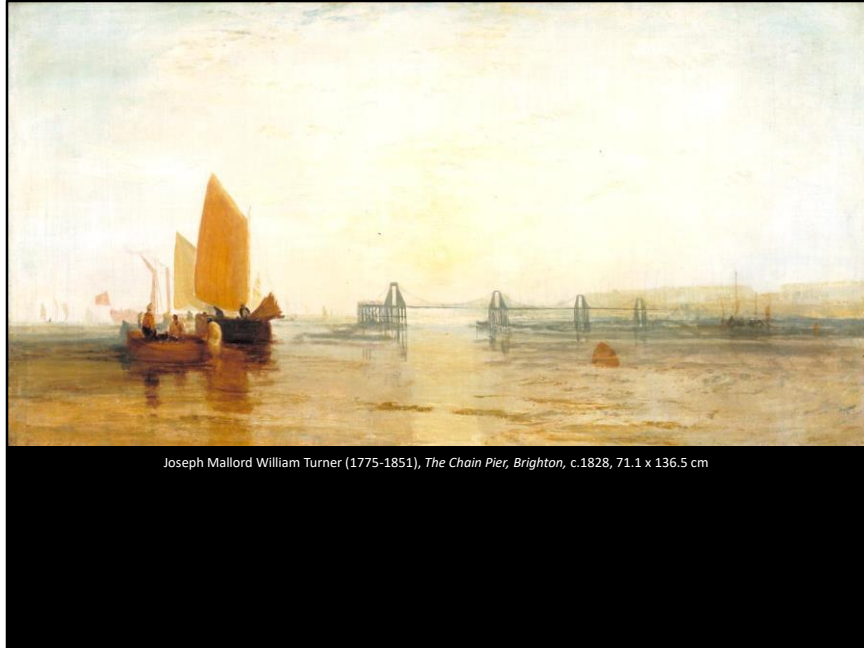
Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *View of Orvieto, Painted in Rome*, 1828, reworked 1830, 91.4 x 123.2 cm

- ‘Turner painted this picture during his stay in Rome in 1828. More than most of his Italian landscapes, it describes the actual appearance of a particular place: Turner made several sketches of Orvieto on his journey to Rome. However, the final painting blends this description with the compositions Turner admired in the work of the seventeenth-century classical landscape painter, Claude Lorrain. This is one of a small group of paintings which Turner showed in an exhibition he held at his lodgings in Rome in 1828, though he re-worked it before showing it in London two years later.’ (Tate display caption)
- This is one of the pictures that were exhibited in Rome in some rooms which Turner subsequently occupied at the Quattro Fontane. The foreign artists who went to see them could make nothing of them’. However, Eastlake reported a more mixed reception in a letter to England in February 1829: **‘More than a thousand persons went to see his works when exhibited, so you can imagine how astonished, enraged or delighted the different schools of artists were, at seeing things with methods so new, so daring and excellences so unequivocal.**

The angry critics have, I believe, talked most, and it is possible you may hear of *general* severity of judgment, but many did justice, and many more were fain to admire what they confessed they dared not imitate.'

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-view-of-orvieto-painted-in-rome-n00511>



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *The Chain Pier, Brighton*, c.1828, 71.1 x 136.5 cm

- This is *Chain Pier, Brighton*. Originally Brighton was a tiny fishing hamlet until the Prince Regent made it his summer residence. From then on it grew in prestige and popularity every year. The chain pier opened in 1823 and was one of the wonders of the age. It was built to enable the cross-channel ferry to berth easily and Brighton became the most popular location for crossing the channel particularly after the railway opened in 1841. People would pay 2d to walk along the pier to get the benefits of sea air without the need to hire a boat and in 1828 up to 4,000 people a day would walk along the pier. It is reported that during one storm thirty or forty people stood at the end and were covered by waves breaking over the tower.
- Turner shows us the pier on a calm day. He has painted the pier from the sea although he has shown the water as shallow when at this point it is deep. This was done to vary the form of the waves for the sake of the composition. In the distance we can see the shoreline of Hove and the sun is setting in the west in a beautiful golden sky.
- It was also painted by John Constable about two years before Turner (see Visual

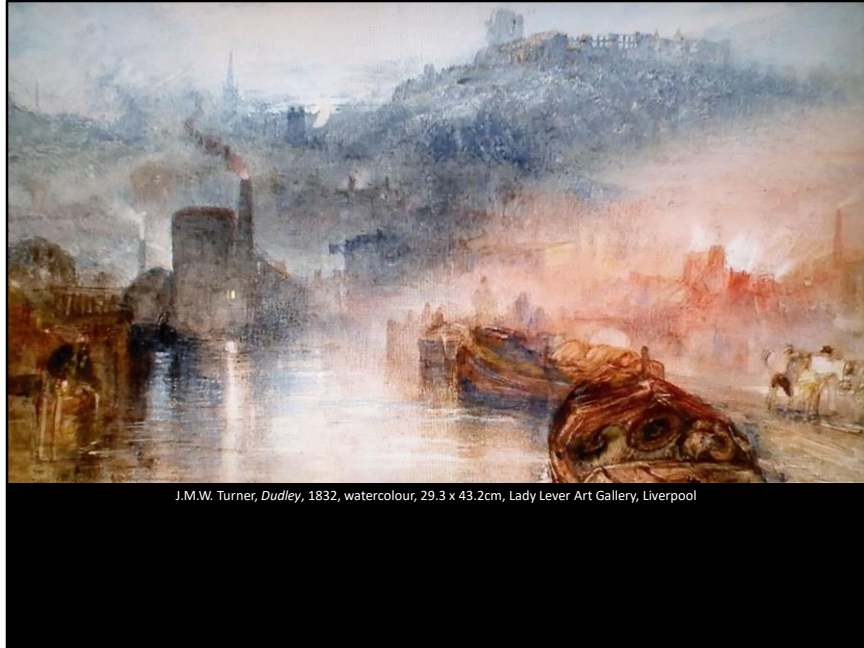
Aids) and Turner would have seen the painting when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy. Constable has painted the pier from the shore with an interesting collection of boats and people. However, like most of his paintings Constable's it was criticised for its bold colours and it never sold.

Notes

- Tate display caption, 'The Chain Pier shown here had only recently been completed. Both Turner and John Constable painted pictures of this pier, which was the most visible sign of Brighton's status as a centre for modern trade and tourism. This is a version of one of the four compositions Turner painted for the Carved Room at Petworth in Sussex, the great house belonging to the Earl of Egremont. The unusually long format was used so that the pictures would fit under full-length portraits. The subjects of these pictures reflected Egremont's interests in local agriculture and commerce'
- This is one of what are known as the Petworth landscapes, c. 1828-30. There is a more finished version of the chain-pier at the Tate painted in 1829 but it is not on display. The owner of Petworth, Lord Egremont commissioned the landscapes and was also one of the sponsors of the pier.
- The Royal Suspension Chain Pier was the first major pier built in Brighton and was built in 1823, it was destroyed during a storm in 1896. It was 350 yards long and was used as a landing stage for packet boats from Dieppe but also had other attractions, such as a camera obscura. It was painted by John Constable in about 1826-27. Brighton became the busiest cross-channel port although in bad weather Newhaven's sheltered port was more attractive. The pier consisted of four enormous towers and two chains with ten-foot links were hung between them. One end of the chain was fixed in the cliff and the other embedded in the sea bed. In 1828 the pier was at the height of its popularity and up to 4,000 people a day paid 2d to walk along the pier. It was reported that during one storm thirty of forty people were covered by the sea breaking over the outer towers. It declined in popularity in the 1860s after the West Pier was opened in 1866 and the Palace Pier in 1891.

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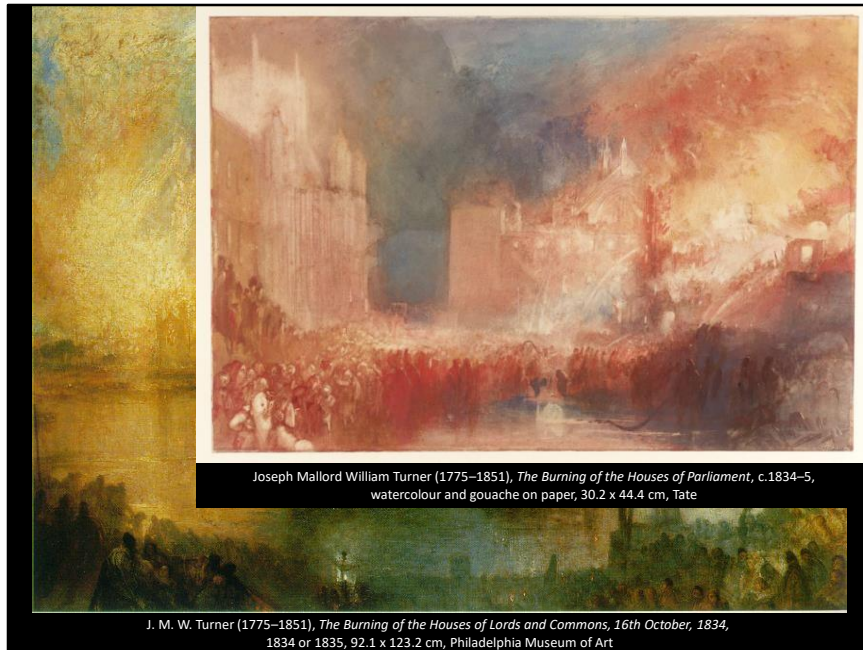


J.M.W. Turner, *Dudley*, 1832, watercolour, 29.3 x 43.2cm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool

- Throughout his career, Turner visited and sketched towns and cities which were centres of manufacturing industry, including London, Newcastle, Sheffield and Leeds. He visited Dudley, Worcestershire in the late summer and autumn of 1830. The town is situated half-way between Birmingham and Wolverhampton in the heart of England's Black Country, so called because of 'the dense clouds of smoke which belched continuously from thousands of coal-fired hearths and furnaces'.
- Dudley was associated with the invention of the steam engine (it was first operated near Dudley Castle in 1712) and in 1821 the first iron steamship was built in the Dudley area at the Horseley Ironworks. If Turner wanted to capture the essence of English industrialisation, he could hardly have chosen a better subject than Dudley.
- For the writer and painter John Ruskin (1819-1900), who owned the work at one stage, 'Dudley' represented Turner's own hatred of industrialisation. In 1878, he wrote that he found it a clear expression 'of what England was to become', with its 'ruined castle on the hill and the church spire scarcely discernible among the moon-lighted clouds, as emblems of the passing away of the baron and the monk'.

In fact, Ruskin's interpretation is distorted by his own increasing antipathy towards industrialisation and probably had little to do with Turner's real intentions.

- By the 1830s Dudley had become the place to visit to observe the industrial revolution in action. **Charles Dickens** visited the Black Country in the 1830s and described it as a '**cheerless region**' in which 'tall chimneys, crowding on each other and presenting that endless repetition of the same, dull, ugly form poured out their plague of smoke, obscured the light, and made foul the melancholy air'. However, just as many other observers found the vision of modern industry surprisingly appealing.
- The Reverend Luke Booker, Vicar of Dudley (1812-1835) published in 1825 'A Descriptive Account of Dudley Castle' which celebrated Dudley's ancient past along with its present. Booker wrote that this land of forges, coal fires and the '**wonderful phenomenon**' of steam engines, represented 'a region of **almost exhaustless wealth**' and was '**alive with worthy human activity**'.
- Whilst we have no evidence to suggest that Turner ever read Booker, his watercolour can be seen to mirror these sentiments. The text that accompanied the engraving of the work, written by Hannibal Evans Lloyd, wrote of the economic benefit of this industrialisation: 'The neighbourhood abounds in mines of coal, iron-stone, and limestone, which furnishes employment for a great number of the inhabitants'. Indeed, in 'Dudley', the artist omits any suggestion of the social and economic problems associated with industrialisation which would preoccupy later critics like Ruskin.



J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons, 16th October, 1834*, 1834 or 1835, 92.1 x 123.2 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art
 Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *The Burning of the Houses of Parliament*, c.1834–5, watercolour and gouache on paper, 30.2 x 44.4 cm, Tate

- Turner painted **two oil paintings of the fire that broke out** in the Palace of Westminster on the evening of 16 October 1834. Turner witnessed the fire from the south bank at Westminster and made sketches from different points, including **possibly from a rented boat**. The first painting was exhibited at the British Institution in February 1835 and shows the fire consuming the chamber of the House of Commons in St Stephens Hall. In the distance the towers of Westminster Abbey can be seen illuminated by the fire.
- The distorted perspective of Westminster Bridge intensify the drama. The next day *The Times* wrote 'Shortly before 7 o'clock last night the inhabitants of Westminster, and of the districts on the opposite bank of the river, were thrown into the utmost confusion and alarm by the sudden breaking out of one of the most terrific conflagrations that has been witnessed for many years past....The Houses of the Lords and Commons and the adjacent buildings were on fire.'
- Many saw this as **divine retribution for the passing of the Reform Act of 1832** and

the **fortuitous destruction of the poor architecture** of some extension buildings by others. The House of Lords had recently been rebuilt in a mixture of **neo-Classical** by Sir **John Soane** and **neo-Gothic** by **James Wyatt** (1746-1813) and some saw the burning as God's displeasure with the resulting aesthetic mess.

- Some thought the fire was an arson attempt but it was caused by the excessive **burning of 'tallies'**. These are square hazelwood sticks notched to show amounts of tax paid or deposited and then split in half to record the transaction. The system went back to William the Conqueror. Two cartloads of tallies had accumulated and the Board of Works decided to burn them in stoves. The two workers assigned were overly enthusiastic and despite warnings from the housekeeper who told them that two tourists could not see the tapestries for the thick smoke, they continued to pile on the wood. They left at five o'clock and by six some oak panels had ignited. Within nine hours all the buildings except the Westminster Hall had been destroyed. Some of the destroyed buildings dated back to Edward the Confessor.
- Benjamin Robert Haydon wrote, '**The terrify burning ... from the bridge it was sublime ... The feeling among the people was extraordinary—jokes and radicalism universal.**'
- Among the spectators were Charles Barry (1795-1860) who realised a new building would be required and Augustus Pugin (1812-1852) who rejoiced in the destruction of Soane's mixtures and Wyatt's heresies.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last Berth to be broken up*, 1839, National Gallery

- If you were born in the 1930s or 40s think how much the world has changed. This was Turner's view as he was **64** in **1838**. He was born in 1775, at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1830) and this had brought factories, steam power, gas lamps, affordable consumer goods, and an rapidly growing middle class. In 1839 there was a real feeling that the world was changing fundamentally and changing forever. But there were many terrible consequences, standards of living fell for most people, child labour was expected and women had few rights.
- The Temeraire was retired in 1812 and became a prison ship and storage depot and was decommissioned in 1838. She was towed 55 miles **up river** from Sheerness (Isle of Sheppey) to John Beatson's shipbreaking yard in Rotherhithe (near the Tower of London) to be broken into scrap.
- Regarded by Turner and critics as one of his greatest painting. In 2005 voted Britain's "greatest painting" (BBC poll). He never sold it and bequeathed it to the nation.
- The Temeraire came to the aid of the Victory in the battle of Trafalgar (1805).
- The scene is Romanticized. The **masts** had been **removed**, it was pulled by **two**

tugs not one and Turner has added a sunset, or, from the direction, a sunrise.

- The great ship is painted in white, grey and brown and looks like a ghost ship that is pulled by a much smaller but stronger black tugboat. Tugboats were so new there was not even a word for them and Turner's use of the word 'tugged' is the first ever recorded use according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
- Sailing ships were being replaced by steam and steel so this represents the passing of an age.
- Turner used light and loose brushstrokes to invoke an elusive feeling of old age and nostalgia.
- Turner modified from a poem by Thomas Campbell's "Ye Mariners of England":

*The flag which braved the battle and the breeze
No long owns her*

- This was literally true: Temeraire flies a white flag instead of the British flag, indicating it has been sold by the military to a private company.



J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Slavers throwing overboard the Dead and Dying — Typhoon coming on* ('*The Slave Ship*'), 1840, 90.8 × 122.6 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

- This perhaps most famous seascape after *The Fighting Temeraire*, he was inspired to paint *The Slave Ship* in 1840 after reading *The History and Abolition of the Slave Trade* by Thomas Clarkson. In 1781, the **captain** of the slave ship Zong had **ordered 133 slaves to be thrown overboard** so that **insurance payments could be collected**. This event probably **inspired Turner** to create his landscape and to choose to coincide its exhibition with a meeting of the British Anti-Slavery Society. Although slavery had been outlawed in the British Empire since 1833, Turner and many other abolitionists believed that slavery should be **outlawed around the world**. Anti-slavery campaigner Granville Sharp, worked unsuccessfully to have the ship's crew prosecuted for murder. The painting was shown at an important time in the movement to abolish slavery worldwide, as the Royal Academy exhibition opened one month before the first World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. The painting was admired by its owner, John Ruskin. It has been described by the 20th-century critic Marcus Wood, as one of the few truly great depictions in Western art of the Atlantic slave trade.

- The sails are furled as it prepares for a typhoon. There are a number of chained bodies in the foreground indicating they are slaves thrown overboard. One can see fish and sea monsters swimming in the water. Objects are defined by their colour rather than by their outlines and the predominant colour is red of blood and death.
- The indistinct shapes, the emphasis on colour and emotion are typically Romantic and the focus is on nature as superior to man. The tiny figures and small shift further place the emphasis on the power of nature and the insignificance of man. This is enhanced by the quick, frenzied brushstrokes. The idea of the sublime is demonstrated by the utter powerlessness and terror of humanity in the face of nature.
- Some have seen the painting as an allegory of the exploitation of human labour associated with capitalism and the storm is either the coming collapse of capitalism as it is overwhelmed by its own immorality or the storm demonstrates that all man's efforts are insignificant before the power of nature.
- **John Ruskin**, who was the first owner of *The Slave Ship*, wrote, '**If I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this.**'

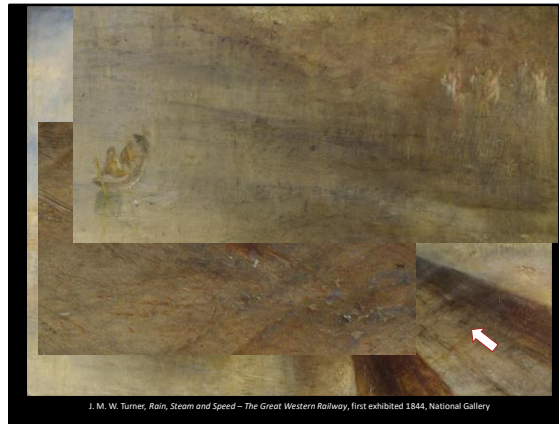


J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), *Snow Storm, or Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth, (full title: Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth Making Signals in Shallow Water, and going by the Lead. The Author was in this Storm on the Night the 'Ariel' left Harwich), c. 1842, 91 x 122 cm, Tate Britain*

- Although criticized by contemporary critics, one described it as '**soapsuds and whitewash**', John **Ruskin** commented in *Modern Painters* (1843) that it was '**one of the very grandest statements of sea-motion, mist and light, that has ever been put on canvas**'. Reportedly Turner was hurt by the criticism, repeating 'soapsuds and whitewash' over and over again, and saying, 'What would they have? I wonder what they think the sea's like? I wish they'd been in it'. Ruskin commented, '**It is thus, too often, that ignorance sits in judgment on the works of genius**'. More recently, art historian Alexandra Wettlaufer wrote that the painting is one of Turner's '**most famous, and most obscure, sublime depictions**'.
- There is a story that Turner asked to be **tied to the mast** of a steam-ship during a nocturnal storm at sea, to experience the feeling of it, and was there for four hours. He **was 67 years then**. Some later **commentators doubt the literal truth** of this account. Other critics accept Turner's account, and one wrote, 'He empathized completely with the dynamic form of sovereign nature.' This inscription allows us

to better understand the scene represented and the confusion of elements.

- The paddle steamer '*Ariel*' was formerly called the '*Arrow*', being built in 1821-1822. In 1837 she was acquired by the Admiralty and renamed '*Ariel*', and was used as the Dover packet up to 1846. This is a **late Turner** when he was at the **peak of his ability to capture the terror and awe** caused by the power of the sea during a violent storm. Turner uses different layers of paint which are brought to life by the intensity of his brushstrokes. The palette is limited to similar tones of greens, browns and greys and Turner draws us into the central action by using pale, silvery grey wrapped in the dark brown smoke from the steamship and its hull.



J. M. W. Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway*, first exhibited 1844, National Gallery

- This is an example of one of Turner's late landscapes. It is not clear whether some of his late landscapes are finished works that were intended to be displayed but this is clearly the case with *Rain, Steam and Speed*.
- Turner redefined landscape painting by pushing the boundaries of how we appreciate colour and light. In this painting, a **conventional** interpretation is that it is a celebration of **power and progress** and the new scientific age. It shows Maidenhead Railway Bridge, across the River Thames between Taplow and Maidenhead and the view is looking east towards London.
- The **bridge** was designed by **Isambard Kingdom Brunel** (1806-1859, died aged 53 of a stroke) and completed in **1838**. The Great Western Railway was one of a number of private British railway companies created to develop the new means of transport.
- A **tiny hare** appears in the bottom right corner of the painting. Some have interpreted this as a **positive statement** about technology as the train is able to **outrun** what was the fastest animal before the steam train. Others see the hare **running in fear** of the new machinery and Turner warning us of the **danger** of

man's **new technology** destroying the beauty of nature. My view is that this is a masterpiece precisely because it contains both contradictory interpretations.

- The other interesting element of the picture is the **boat** on the river. It looks possible that this is an artist on the river with a parasol to keep off the sun and sketching a group of wild, **bacchanalian dancers** on the shore. Is this this Turner saying he prefers a **bucolic** scene of dancers to the new technology **or** are they **celebrating** the wonders of the new form transport that was changing the face of Britain? Again it is up to you to decide.



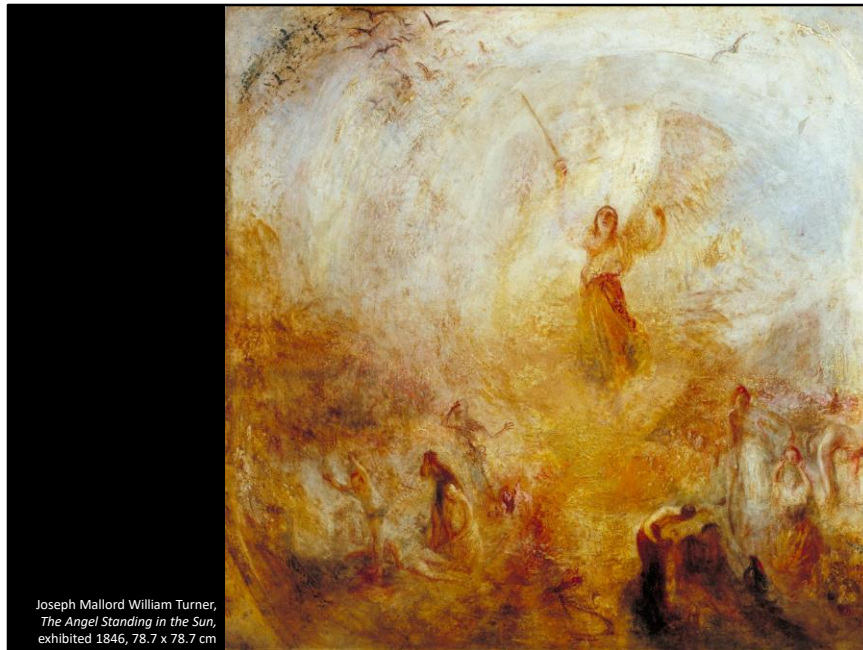
Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Norham Castle, Sunrise*, c.1845, 90.8 x 121.9 cm

- This is 'Norham Castle, Sunrise' and it is an archetypical example of late Turner. This is the style he painted in from about 1835 to his last exhibition in 1850.
- Over the years Turner produced more than fifteen versions of Norham Castle and this is the last and greatest. It is said that on his final visit he bowed to the castle. Over the years he radically simplified his composition. This is an example, 'Norham Castle, on the River Tweed' that he painted over twenty years previously (see Visual Aids). He had painted his first picture of Norham Castle nearly fifty years before, in 1797 when he was just 22.
- It is possible this work was never finished and never intended for exhibition, we shall never know. Some see it as the earliest example of a modernist work years ahead of its time and others as simply an unfinished painting. Another explanation is that it was part of an experiment to see if he could sell this idyllic, sketchy landscape paintings that he called 'elevated pastoral'. The cold, ghostly blue of the castle contrasts with the fireball of the glowing sun and the soft browns of the river banks. An umber cow appears ethereal and suspended between air and water until we realise that we are looking at its reflection in the river.

- The work was never seen by the public. It was first shown in 1906 at an exhibition at the Tate the marked the rediscovery of Turner. The Spectator commented that Turner was an artist who, more than any other before him, painted light rather than the objects themselves. In the twentieth century, many people saw this painting as the forerunner of the whole of modern art but more recently cynical historians have said that that is imposing too much on Turner and it is simply an unfinished painting. What do I think? I am reminded of a story told by the great abstract impressionist mark Rothko. When he first saw this painting in New York in 1966 he joked, **“This man Turner, he learnt a lot from me.”**
- This beautiful scene suggests that towards the end of his life not all his paintings had a bleak message. However, some would disagree. Today we look at the countryside as a place where nothing much happens full of beautiful scenery. Turner though always saw the bloody background, the hungry workers and the bloody battles. Norham Castle was the scene of more bloody battles than any other on the Scottish border and it changed hands many times. It is an imposing, dark medieval castle that dates back to 1121 to protect Northumberland from the Scots. The light has been described as corpse-like and that Turner saw the sun as a cruel and terrible God.
- The interesting thing is that Turner leaves it up to us how we interpret it. You can see it either way, as an idyllic sunrise in a beautiful setting or as the scene of many terrible and bloody battles.
- Tate display caption, ‘Turner first saw Norham, bordering Scotland on the river Tweed in Northumberland, in 1797. He was at the limits of his trip to northern England, when he also visited Buttermere, seen in the painting of nearly fifty years earlier shown nearby. After that first visit he made watercolours showing the ruin at sunrise, and visits in 1801 and 1831 resulted in further views. Here, finally, is one of a series of unfinished, unexhibited paintings reworking his monochrome *Liber Studiorum* landscape prints. Pure colours rather than contrasting tones express the blazing light as the historic building and landscape merge.’
- Turner first visited Norham Castle in 1797 at the age of 22 and he liked to explain that his first picture of the castle was the work that launched his career. Norham Castle was to become a favourite subject always from the Scottish side of the river looking towards England across the Tweed.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-norham-castle-sunrise-n01981>
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Joseph Mallord William Turner, *The Angel Standing in the Sun*, exhibited 1846, 78.7 x 78.7 cm

- Turner challenges the familiar features of traditional landscape painting – horizon line, single-point perspective, the illusion of depth, the scenery itself – dissolve into a painterly mist, while the perceptual effects of light and colour emerge as objects of contemplation in their own right.
- ‘This late painting shows the Archangel Michael appearing on the Day of Judgement with his flaming sword. In the foreground are Old Testament scenes of murder and betrayal: Adam and Eve weeps over the body of Abel (left), and Judith stands over the headless body of Holofernes (right). Turner's pessimistic picture seems to show death is everywhere in this fallen world. It may also reflect his concern that his own life and art would be judged. He got his revenge on his critics by showing the painting with lines describing 'the feast of vultures when the day is done.’ (Tate display caption)
- This is *The Angel Standing in the Sun* and was painted a few years before Turner died [in 1851]. He included two quotations in the catalogue when it was exhibited. The first was taken from the Bible's *Book of Revelations*, and includes the line ‘**And**

I saw an angel standing in the sun’. The second is from a poem by Samuel Rogers [*Voyage of Columbus*]: **‘The morning march that flashes to the sun; The feast of vultures when the day is done’**. The poem contrasts the glory of our life when young with the vultures, in Turner’s case the critics, that circle us near the end of our life. The overall image is bathed or rather swamped by the light from the sun and some say Turner’s last words were ‘The sun is God’.

- In the centre of the painting we see the Archangel Michael appearing on the Day of Judgement with his flaming sword. The sun behind represents God and in the foreground are Old Testament scenes of murder and betrayal: on the left Adam and Eve weeps over the body of their son Abel killed by their other son Cain, and on the right Judith holds the head of Holofernes and Samson and Delilah are shown behind her.
- There have been many interpretations. It shows death and judgement and he may be concerned that his own life and art would be judged. The second quotation refers to a ‘feast of vultures’ referring to the critics and so Turner may be having his revenge. He was right to be concerned as one critic called it **‘an aberration of talent’**, another said, **‘Turner seems to have taken leave of form altogether’** and even his supporter John Ruskin wrote that it had been painted in a **‘period of decline’** and the style was **‘indicative of mental disease’**.
- Ruskin is referring to the accepted model which was that artists rise in ability, peak and then decline. The idea began to arise later in the century that an artist’s late work could be a summation of their life’s work. Beethoven’s late string quartets, Goethe late works, such as Faust, had been seen as evidence of their senility but were re-evaluated as their greatest works and a stark final vision.
- From about 1835 onwards Turner’s work was increasingly what we would now call impressionistic. In his later paintings, such as this one, he challenged the basic conventions of the landscape—the horizon disappears, perspective is distorted, he does not use techniques used to shown depth and the scenery itself disappears in a swirling mist of paint in which light and colour become the objects to be represented.
- Towards the end of his life Turner grew increasingly pessimistic and there is the possibility that, in declining health, he saw it as a summing up of his career. He had been disappointed at not becoming President of the Royal Academy the previous summer and he might have seen himself as the archangel Michael standing for truth and justice while the Old Testament scenes reflect the way in which critics, the Royal Academy and even his mother attacked him. His mother had outbursts of extreme violence and was sectioned to Bedlam where she died in 1804 when he was 29. By this age Turner was wealthy and could have arranged private treatment. When he died his estate was estimated to be £140,000 difficult to convert to today but in terms of the average wage it would be over £100 million.

Notes

- Accompanied in the R.A. catalogue by the following passage from the *Book of Revelation*:
 - ‘And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, both free and bond, both small and great’.—*Revelation*, xix., 17, 18.
- and also a quotation from Samuel Rogers' *Voyage of Columbus*:
 - ‘The morning march that flashes to the sun;
The feast of vultures when the day is done’-*Rogers*.
- In the foreground Adam and Eve lament over the dead body of Abel and Judith stands over the decapitated body of Holofernes, perhaps one of the captains mentioned in the quotation from *Revelation*. Samson and Delilah are also shown. The chained serpent derives from *Revelation*xx, 1–2. Turner may have conflated the Angel of the Apocalypse with the Cherubim with flaming sword at the Gate of Paradise, enforcing the Expulsion of Adam and Eve.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-angel-standing-in-the-sun-n00550>



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *The Visit to the Tomb*, exhibited 1850, 91.4 x 121.9 cm

- 'Turner's final exhibits at the Royal Academy were four pictures of Dido and Aeneas. According to his housekeeper he worked on all four paintings 'in rotation.' This painting is the third in the series. In the foreground are Dido, Queen of Carthage (in white) and Aeneas (in red), accompanied by Cupid in disguise. They are visiting the tomb of Dido's husband, Sychaeus, in the hope that his memory might restrain her fatal passion for Aeneas. Turner showed the picture with a line from his poem, *The Fallacies of Hope*: 'The sun went down in wrath at such deceit.' (Tate display caption)
- In his final years he started to lose all his teeth and had to suck his food. Gradually he lost the physical co-ordination to paint but he summoned his strength to complete four final oil paintings on the theme of 'Dido and Aeneas'. The story may have had a personal significance for him as Aeneas devoted his life to duty and abandoned Queen Dido, to leave for Italy and found Rome. Turner had forsworn and easy life, the enjoyment of wealth and marriage, like Aeneas. After displaying these four works at the Royal Academy Turner was too weak to continue painting and sadly awaited death over the next eighteen months.

- He died in the house of his mistress Sophia Caroline Booth in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea on 19 December 1851. He is said to have uttered the **last words "The sun is God"** before expiring. At his request he was buried in St Paul's Cathedral, where he lies next to Sir Joshua Reynolds. His last exhibition at the Royal Academy was in 1850.
- The architect Philip Hardwick (1792–1870) who was a friend of Turner's and also the son of the artist's tutor, Thomas Hardwick, was one in charge of his funeral arrangements and wrote to those who knew Turner to tell them at the time of his death that "I must inform you, we have lost him".
- Turner had saved all his life to create a charitable trust, 'Turner's Gift' that would support impoverished artists. His relatives contested the will and overturned it on a technicality. They received all the money he had saved for 'Turner's Gift' but the nation acquired all the finished and unfinished oil paintings, watercolours, sketchbooks, sketches and studies.
- Turner was the last of the Old Masters and the first modern artist.

NEXT WEEK

John Constable

