DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART

Turner and Trafalgar
Dr. John R. Lane

May 14, 2008

Duration: 68 minutes

Heather MacDonald: Good morning, and welcome to the Dallas Museum of Art. My name is Heather MacDonald. I am the Lillian and James H. Clark Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and it is rare pleasure in both senses of the word to introduce today's speaker Jack Lane.

Dr. Lane has held the position of Eugene McDermott Director here at the DMA since 1999, and has been at the helm of this institution through some dramatic and exciting achievements, including very recently that of bringing to Dallas the wonderful retrospective of the work of J.M.W. Turner that is currently on view in our Chilton Galleries.

And I hope that all of you had a chance to see this exhibition already or that you are planning to run down the concourse after this talk, and view it this afternoon. We are kind of facing the last few days here. It's closing on the May 25 and so hopefully everyone will have a chance to see it once or many times, before it closes.

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But Dr. Lane is here today unusually to speak not in his role as the Museum Director, but in that of an art historian, a profession in which he has a distinguished resume. Having studied the History of Art at Williams of College and Harvard University where he completed his doctorate on the American painter Stuart Davis in 1976.

He has published very broadly and curated exhibitions on American modernist art, and on contemporary art, including curating or co-curating exhibitions here at the DMA on the art of Sigmar Polke and Lothar Baumgarten.

Dr. Lane's talk today draws not only on his art historical expertise, but also on his distinguished service in United States Naval Reserve in which he served as a Lieutenant, and this dual proficiency will serve all of us well as Dr. Lane guides us through the complex history of Tuner's two majestic paintings on one of the most important naval battles of the 19th century the Battle of Trafalgar and now please join me in welcoming Dr. Jack Lane.

Dr. Jack Lane: Thank you Heather. Thank you ladies and gentlemen. One of the things that I have found special comfort in serving the DMA is the, that's special little room of the Reves Gallery that holds the cigar butts and the Sunday paintings of Winston Churchill, himself never actually a Naval officer, but he had served as a First Lord of the Admiralty, that is to say the equivalent of our Secretary of the Navy, as had Franklin D. Roosevelt who also I don't believe was ever a Naval officer.

But they really liked the fleet and they really liked that service, and when they would correspond during the dark days of World War II, they would sign their massages and their telegrams "a former naval person" and that is I.

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I actually think that service as a naval officer has been of enormous help to me in my life as a museum director. My college roommate, a fellow named Rusty Powell that some of you may know, who is the Director of the National Gallery of Art and who lured me into the history of art when we were college students, but I talked him into joining, going to Officer Candidate School in the Navy.

And we were at Williams Symposium long after we graduated and talking about what it was to be like a museum director and someone asked the question to us, well what did you guys think was the instrumental experience in your training to be a museum director and we both pulled the microphones in the room, and both said, "the Navy."

But it does give as to a junior officer -- it's the legacy of the institution of the Royal Navy during Admiral Lord Nelson's days that informed the United States Navy that I served in in the 1960s and those traditions were about responsibility at a very young age, about a respect for the diverse world that lives in the fellow crew members of your ship, a commitment to the idea that the navy is a meritocracy, notions of honor, the importance of zeal, and a profound concern for those officers and crew with whom you serve.

And in my case, the great good fortune to have been stationed aboard a flagship, that is to say always had an Admiral embarked, for all three years that I was in service and I got very good at honors and ceremonies and that has been the big, big help in the ritual life of museums, as well as learning how to please Admirals.

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Well J.M.W. Turner, 1775-1851. I think most people think he is the greatest British painter. We know how much he loved the sea and ships. He lived in the seafaring nation. He is arguably the greatest maritime

painter ever. And he was personally a patriot who regarded Lord Nelson as a hero and Trafalgar as a signal event. Turner was 30 years when Trafalgar went down on October 21, 1821.

What I would propose to do today is talk something about the background of Trafalgar, the battle itself, and how it relates to three paintings, two of which are here in Dallas in the Turner exhibition, and one which could not travel, which is in the National Gallery in London.

Those three paintings are the first and it's nice that they encompass I think you would say the three major chapters in the artist's career. First of all, *The Battle of Trafalgar* that was painted almost after--immediately after the battle itself, in 1806.

It's a history painting. It relies on traditions of Dutch realism and Dutch sea battle paintings, but it takes it to a whole new place in that you have the chaos and the noise and the thunder that are associated with what is coming into fashion now, which is romantic style painting. It's a big picture; it's 6 feet by 8 feet.

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The second painting is the gigantic *Battle of Trafalgar* which was done almost 20 years after the event and this is also in the exhibition. It is 8 ½ feet by 12 feet, Turner's largest painting. It is not a realistic depiction of the battle, although there are elements of it that are drawn from actual events. It is more an epic historical painting with moral overtones, and also the style has changed.

Turner went to Italy in 1819 and it changed his vision of what a painting could be. So it's filled with light and with atmosphere and he is moved on from a 17th century set of Dutch traditions or earlier 18th century French landscape conventions to a new place which is about lightness. He got it from the Italians and from the experience of seeing the light in Italy.

The third painting is the one that is not here, it's called *The Fighting Temeraire.* It's three feet by four feet. (Oops! Sorry for that thing there.) It's in the National Gallery in London and it is again a very different kind of artistic accomplishment from the two *Battle of Trafalgars* that happened before.

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This is truly about the sublime. It is a poem in painted, colored light, and I'll talk about the poetic aspects of it as we get into the talk.

Well, Trafalgar. I mean the Brits take it pretty seriously and so do we as Texans. I mean of course Trafalgar Square is important. It has a place

called The Texas Embassy, right there. There is Nelson's Column. So we have further graced this central part of London. Here is of course the great column with the hero on top of it. And happily the most important building in London as far as I am concerned, which is the National Gallery of Art right behind it. But why was Trafalgar so important to the British and in fact to the border scheme of the history?

The English had been at war with France since the early 1790s, except for a short pause in 1801 and 1803. And Napoleon had amassed a huge army on the shores of Normandy. There was very serious concern, if you were English, that you are going to be invaded, successfully. So Trafalgar made it impossible for that invasion to occur. That was one really important thing.

The second thing is that the country was enraptured by the success of this splendid battle and its tragic implications because Nelson was killed in that battle. It was the greatest Naval battle in the era of wooden ships and that is a kind of in, say 1550-1850, so a 300-year period.

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It was the biggest battle and the most important one to happen between ships that were made of wood and were powered by sail.

And it established the British command of the world's oceans, and Britain was emerging as the first capitalist, commercial, and industrial economy and it would go on during the 19th century and all the way up until World War I to dominate the world for a century. Trafalgar allowed that to happen.

And if you look at it in the broader cultural context and think of the Scottish enlightenment of the late 18th century and persona such as Adam Smith and you think about how the Royal Navy officers behaved, there is a concordance between Smith's notion of the liberation of individual energies to ensure economic victory and the liberation of individual liberties, or the individual energies, that allowed Nelson to prevail at Trafalgar.

So, here's the man on the left. I have always chosen my institutions based on the costume and the United States Navy doesn't come close to this, but -- He was born in 1758 which made him in 1805, 47 years old and a Vice Admiral in command of the Mediterranean fleet.

He was the son of a country parson and I want to underline that he was not a member of a ruling class. Much of the Royal Navy officer core came from--we would call it the educated middle classes. They were not working classes but they were not aristocrats, although there were some aristocrats in the navy.

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He’d had a string of great victories, most conspicuously in Copenhagen and in Alexandria, also called the Battle of the Nile that had made him a national hero during the Napoleonic wars.

He was also, in a interesting way, connected to the art world because Lady Hamilton, the figure that you see on your right, was his mistress. She was the daughter of village blacksmith, allegedly gorgeous and vivacious. She had been the mistress of a London aristocrat who tired of her and sent her off to be the mistress of his uncle who was 40 years this woman’s senior and the British ambassador to the Bourbon Court in Naples. Sir William Hamilton, the person who was the older gent and eventually married the woman named Emma Hart, was one of the foremost collectors of Roman antiquities.

So you see in the picture a reference to that with the Vesuvius smoking, which also referred I think to her, passionate ways. She got old and fat, but she is really beautiful here, in sort of about six years or so before she and lord Nelson got together. She was a performance artist and what you are seeing here, you know Cicciolina the former wife of Jeff Koons and others? You'd think of who are doing things that seem like popular culture, but actually are very thoughtfully considered in their way, artistic.

She is doing what she calls an “Attitude” and it was an art form that she invented based on the Roman and Greek sculptures.

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And the paintings on the Greek pots that were owned by Sir Richard Hamilton and she would sort of surround herself with a bunch of gauzy textiles and underneath this she wound recompose her facial figures and her body and even make some clothing changes and then whip the film off. Then the informed guest would guess which goddess, the form that she had – and she was supposed to be really good at it. Anyway that's as close as I can find as an artistic connection to lord Nelson.

He was shot early into the Battle of Trafalgar. In the early part of the afternoon, he died. In the late afternoon there was a person beside him that took down every word he said including his last words which were, “Thank God I have done my duty.” The death – he was a national hero, and it was observed in all of the formal pomp and ceremony accorded to a great, grand man.

What you see on the left is the beginning of the funeral entourage which went on the Thames from Greenwich which is, if you have ever been to the Maritime Museum, it's right down there and this is the

place called the Painted Hall. These were Naval hospitals at the time of Nelson and the Painted Hall was the place where the big Trafalgar picture hung for almost a century.

So they are going to go up the Thames and then there was a state funeral in St. Paul's.

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And these are all the dignitaries lined up around the casket and they went all away across what is now Trafalgar Square because they couldn't get in, it was such a big deal.

And then there was a lot of lunatic, a sort of 18th century apotheosis painting done of him and here, Neptune, the God of the sea is passing Nelson up, looking like a pieta figure from a Renaissance painting and he is probably being assisted by Lady Hamilton here. The ultimate recipient is Britannia representing the grateful land for whom he had sacrificed himself.

Well, some comments on the institution of the Royal Navy and its officer core. As I already mentioned, the officer core was not necessarily aristocratic. In fact, to a large part it was not aristocratic and it had a special set of motivations because if you were an aristocrat, which was the case of all of the-- when we get to Trafalgar, the battle is between the Spanish and the French combined fleets and the British fleet. All the Spanish officers were aristocrats. If you are an aristocrat and you were a warrior, all you had to do is acquit yourself well in battle to be honorable.

But if you were a middle class British sea officer, your honor depended upon not just acquitting yourself well in battle but winning and that was what provided you your station in society. And if you were successful, you got the treasure galleons or you took down a number of French or Spanish men-of-war, you turned them into the price court and you were wildly remunerated.

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If you got a rich ship, as a captain you could retire for life. So they were serious incentives, I mean, this was entrepreneurial as well as just duking it out with guns and swords.

There was a big difference, also, between the capabilities of the crews, especially between the Spanish and the Brits, but to some extent with the French. I was trained and all the crews in the US Navy were trained to be both fighters and to be mariners and to be able to navigate the ship.

In the Spanish navy the senior officers were all soldiers. They knew nothing of the sea. They had like 10% of the crew were sailors, everybody else was basically trained as an army person. So they had no sense of the sea. Because the Navy was so important to keeping open the sea lanes and the commercial life of Britain in its touch with it's colonies, there was a very efficient and well financed support system of dockyards and supply facilities and expertise in ship building that allowed the Royal Navy to function successfully at sea and for sometimes -- Nelson was on blockade in the Mediterranean at sea for two years. The ship never went in. It was amazing that they could sustain this logistically.

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Then there was this thing about the entrepreneurial side of the Royal Navy officer core. Their kind of aggressiveness and the violence that they were willing to perpetrate and that it was fully embodied by Nelson and the transition conceptually between a warrior who was a gentleman and a warrior who was really in it, not for show, but to cause as much havoc as possible.

This is not to say that the French and the Spanish were in anyway cowardly or unwilling to fight, but the circumstances were different. The French navy was a mess in that after the revolution it had been an aristocratic officer core and a lot of the officers lost their heads or skedaddled for another country out of fear losing their head to the revolution. So it was kind of a mixed bag of people who were the senior officers in the French navy.

And as I said, in the Spanish navy it was all aristocrats who knew nothing about sailing a ship. As one British wag said, “The most pleasant thing about fighting the Spaniards is not that they are shy, for they are not, but it is they are never, never ready.”

What was it that was going into battle at Trafalgar? The ships all wooden hull, powered by sails. The *Victory* which was Nelson's flagship and one of the biggest ships on earth--had a hundred guns, arranged in three decks of guns. It had a crew of 850 people and it was 186 feet long by 51 feet wide and the top of the main mast rose above the ship 170 feet.

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A warship of this scale in the year 1800 was by a long way the largest and most sophisticated machine on earth.

The strategic situation: as we come into 1805 and that's what this map up here helps to visualize. Napoleon, he was a fantastic military person and he had, even though he wasn't much of a mariner, he had an interesting idea about how to win and his idea of winning was to invade England.

He amassed a grand army of about 150,000 men right here, pretty much close to where D-day happened in Normandy, but he needed to figure out how to get control of the Channel, the English Channel right here, for long enough to transport them across and he had all the boats to do this. But the Brit's had a blockade that went from the west coast of Ireland all the way over around the Bay of Biscay, down the coast of Spain into the Mediterranean and up to Toulon.

This was a major French naval base. This is where we'll see the fleet, the combined Spanish and French fleet came out of Cadiz. There was a big French fleet in La Rochelle and another big French fleet in Brest. So they were all bottled up by the Royal Navy and Napoleon needed to figure out how to break that blockade.

So he ordered the fleet in Toulon to escape from Nelson's blockade and this can happen-- when the wind is coming this way, as opposed this way, it pushed the Brit's offshore and the French could sail out through the gates of Gibraltar.

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And they headed for the West Indies and this was in the spring of 1805.

Nelson didn't know where they went. He couldn't find them. He wasted a month chasing around the Mediterranean, trying to figure it out. Finally intelligence came and he then started in the early summer to chase them over this direction.

The French idea was that they break the blockade here, and they break the blockade in La Rochelle and get those ships out and that also was successful and so the La Rochelle fleet came also to the West Indies, the two French fleets joined together.

Then, the idea was for them to sail back up to the area of Brest and to have a large enough force so that the blockading English fleet there would be overwhelmed and there would be time for the landing to occur from the Normandy area across to England.

Well, Nelson kind of catches up. They both are sailing like crazy back across the sea. The French run into the Royal navy around here, not Nelson's fleet, but another one, and they take a minor whipping and it

ruins the resolve of the French admiral and he runs into Cadiz with his ships and joins with the Spanish fleet in Cadiz.

This essentially ends Napoleon's opportunity to break the blockade here at the opening of the western approaches to the English Channel. At the same time that this is happening in July 1805, another thing is happening and that is the Brits create an alliance with the Russians and the Austrians.

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And there's suddenly a land threat to Napoleon coming from over here and he decides that he is going to give up on the invasion of Britain and he is going to move his troops from here, over to here and he did it with great success. For instance Austerlitz and Ulm are two famous Napoleon land battles that were successful, but he lost his chance to invade England.

So actually a lot of people say Trafalgar saved Britain from invasion, that isn't true. It had already happened that the movement of the troops from here had occurred, but Trafalgar did make it absolutely certain that they would never get a chance to do it again because it essentially ruined the Spanish and the French Navies.

So there we are, that takes us up to the late summer of 1805. The major Spanish, French fleet is concentrated here in Cadiz. Napoleon orders his admiral in Cadiz to take the combined French and Spanish fleets out of Cadiz, past Gibraltar and over to Italy and they were to be there to support the problems that Napoleon was having militarily over in middle Europe.

Why is Nelson famous for what he did in Trafalgar? The work of art that you see on the left is a Turner watercolor and this is Nelson's Column here in his native county, not obviously the Trafalgar Square Column. And what you have is a bunch of sailors here.

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And they are laying out rocks or sea shells in the form of naval formations and what you are seeing here is the traditional way of fighting wooden ships. One fleet would line up like this, the other fleet would line up like that and they would just bang away at each other.

It was essentially defensive. Nobody ever won. You can't sink one of those wooden ships. The only way that you loose one of those, if they were damaged badly and a storm came up, which did after Trafalgar. A whole bunch of ships could sink, but it wouldn't just sink on a calm sea. The only way you could be sure that one would sink is if somehow

somebody dropped a grenade into the hold and it got by the powder magazines and the whole ship exploded, but this was really rare. We'll see one of them.

This was 200 years of strategy. The thing that Nelson did was to instead of being a defensive plan, he created an offensive plan that was very, very aggressive and he wasn't the first to do it. There had been some successes in Royal Navy battles, for about 40 years in advance of Trafalgar that gave them the idea that this scheme would work.

Here, is how the Spanish and the French lined up at Trafalgar, traditional line-up of battle, just like this thing here. What Nelson did is he broke his fleet into two columns, one here and one here.

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And he put his most powerful ships at the front of the two columns right there and then, his ship, the *Victory* here, and the *Temeraire* which we'll also see some of today, right behind him, the biggest, toughest ones.

And the notion was that you breakup the enemy's line, you breakthrough the enemy's line. These ships in front are kind of out of the battle. These things only go three, four miles an hour and they don't turn very well. So by the time you have kind of whacked the middle of the enemy's line, it's going to take them a long time to turn around and come back and try and engage you.

So that was his scheme and actually, the French admiral Villeneuve surmised that this was what was going to happen, but he didn't know how to counteract it, so he just set himself up in the traditional way.

So the idea was to break through the line and then this amazing aggressiveness that was just ship-to-ship mêlée. Nelson thought in this way if he concentrated his forces that he could actually have a decisive victory and it really did work out that way. As Nelson said, "Never mind maneuvers, always go at them."

The French admiral was deeply depressed and demoralized. He was probably clinically depressed. An honorable man, as I said, he knew the plan, but didn't have a way to counteract it. October 21, 1805, it was a real nice day.

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The temperatures were in the low 70s. The winds were light, less than 10 knots. The two fleets sighted each other around 6:00 a.m. and they crawled towards each other for six hours before they were close enough to engage. There were 47,000 men on the two sides. 15% of the

Royal Navy's force was represented here--27 ships. There were 33 ships on the French and Spanish side.

The effective range of one of these gun ships was about 700 yards. So Nelson was making a calculated risk. The most vulnerable part of a 18th century, 19th century man-of-war is the stern where all the glass is. That's where the officers' quarters were and the Admiral's quarters were. The second most vulnerable was the bow. The sides, they were 3 feet of oak.

So if you were sailing in, Nelson is coming down like this, he has got about a 700-yard path between where he comes in to range of the enemy and when he breaks through their line and they can shoot at him at will. He’s got no guns that point forward, all the guns point to the side, but it was a calculated risk.

The Spanish and French gunnery was not of the same standard as the British. There was a heavy swell that day which made shooting even more difficult. The ship is going like this and it's harder to aim the guns when that is the state. So they took the risk. By the time that the *Victory*, which was Nelson’s ship, got to here about 50 people on the ship out 850 had been killed. It was the biggest losses of any of the royal navy ships.

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So he breaks through, there is general mêlée and it is for the French and Spanish a catastrophe and a massacre. The British lost about 1600 people, killed and wounded which is about 10% of the crews. Six ships had half of the personal losses including most especially the *Victory* and the *Temeraire*. The British lost no ships, although a number of them were badly damaged.

The Spanish and the French together had killed and wounded 8,000, and they had prisoners of another 11,000. They lost 18 ships, only 15 escaped. So the total of Spanish and French casualties and prisoners were almost 19,000 and the ratio between the British and the combined forces losses were 10:1, if you are counting prisoners. If you are only counting killed and wounded, it's 5:1, but as I said, a catastrophe and a massacre. One ship that we'll be looking at in Turner's painting is called the *Redoubtable* or *Redoubtable* in English, had a crew of 640 of which 522 were lost.

I would like to now do a pause and show you a short excerpt that gives you a sense of the violence of battle at sea. This is the wonderful film by Peter Weir called *Master and Commander*.

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Starring Russel Crowe and from the novels by Patrick O'Brian. If you ever want to know, if you want to read entertainingly and also authentically, what Nelson's navy was like, that long series by Patrick O'Brian is sensational. So let's just see how this works.

[Movie Playing -- 00:37:15 -00:44:30]

Yeah, you can get it from Netflix. It's fantastic. The attention that was given to the recreation of that experience and it is what you are seeing in Turner's paintings. The part that a museum director likes a lot of course is when you saw the Captain's steward saying, "Forget the weapons, get the silver."

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Okay on to the pictures. Here is the Battle of Trafalgar seen from the mizzen starboard shrouds of the *Victory.* On the left, the early painting from 1806-1808 by Turner, right after the event and what you are seeing of course is the thick of the action, but you are also seeing the death of Nelson, and that's occurring right here in the area that in the navy is called the quarter-deck. If you saw Russell Crowe as the commander of that frigate in the film, he raises a young midshipmen up and he says, he says something like "always stand up" and if you were an officer, and a midshipman was an officer in training, and your duty station was on the exposed deck of the ship, you stood. It was a matter of honor and you were a sitting duck, and that's what happened to Nelson. He was on his own quarter-deck and when they broke through the line, the *Victory* is here, and the French ship *Redoubtable* is here, and there is the *Redoubtable*, this is the *Victory*.

And the French captain knew his gunnery wasn't as good as the Brits, so he sent lots of soldiers and marines up into the top of the ship with rifles, muskets, and it was one of them from right up in here that shot Nelson there. The painting was carefully researched. This is an actual event. The *Victory* after having broken through the line was engaged by the French ship. They were not actually doing that well.

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They looked like maybe the *Victory* was going to get boarded and the *Temeraire*, the ship that came through right behind Nelson, went up on the other side of the French vessel and gave them the devil and eventually as we'll see in the next big painting, won the day.

You have some of the major players in here. Of course the *Victory* which is working like a wedge in the composition of the painting. Remember

that Turner was a professor of perspective with the Royal Academy. This is an exercise in that. In the background it's the grand Spanish flagship, the *Santisima Trinidad*, and then the *Redoubtable* with the French tricolore flag and then behind it the *Temeraire*.

I'll show you this diagram with a deck. This is the mizzen mast here which is where the picture is being framed from and then Nelson's death is occurring right over here. They will take him down a companion way that's located back here to the surgeon's quarters, called the cockpit, on the orlop deck which is down here just below the waterline, they brought him back down here. So this is where for three-and-a-half hours Nelson suffered before he died and of course this is some kind of combination of Christ in the Manger and a passion picture.

To suggest how ambitious Turner was, of course, his paintings on the left, this is Benjamin West, pretty much contemporary painting of the death of Nelson that's on the right.

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And West was at that point the President of the Royal Academy, a very distinguished artist, but he did what would by then be a very traditional history painting with the death of Nelson, surrounded by his officers, only a kind of schematic suggestion of the battle in the background. Of course it's not historically accurate because Nelson is dead here and Nelson in fact died down below the deck, so it's a staged occurrence. What you have in Turner's case is an attempt to create a sense of the realistic chaos of the moment as well as a factual depiction of a particular moment in the battle that incorporated the death of Admiral Nelson.

On to the next big picture, the *Battle of Trafalgar* which was done 20 years after the actual battle and that as I suggested is both epic and symbolic. It's about the glory of war and also the costs of war. It was commissioned by George IV, the King of England, and the only royal commission that Turner ever received. It was intended to serve amongst the group of pictures that depicted military triumphs of the Hanover dynasty.

It had as its major counterpart a picture that had been done in the middle of the 1790s by another well known British marine painter, De Loutherbourg, of an important battle that had occurred in the middle of the 1890 called The Glorious First of June.

Even though De Loutherbourg plays with some of the facts in this picture, when we get down to analyzing this one, there is just so much more symbolism in it and so much more meaning.

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And this is still essentially a glorification of a British sea battle and this is a lot more than just a glorification of the sea battle.

The King, who knows whether the king liked the picture, he probably didn't like it that much, this one. We know that the officers who had been involved in Trafalgar hated Turner's painting because they were looking for a literal depiction of the battle and one that was unequivocally about victory and that was not what Turner was delivering.

On the right is a painting by Nicolas Pocock who was the most embraced of all the British marine painters at that time which the admirals and the captains liked, even though they didn't like this. So George IV who had intended this big painting to go in the reception rooms at St. James' Palace, after just a few years sent it down to Greenwich to the Naval Hospital where it resided until it moved across the street to the Maritime Museum and to the Dallas Museum of Art.

Okay, what's going on in here? It's a compression of the events. We have over on the right hand side of the painting, the set of circumstances that prevailed in the former Trafalgar picture that is, it was around 1:30 in the afternoon. There is the *Victory*, there is the *Redoubtable* and there is the *Temeraire* fighting it out.

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Here is the *Victory*, here is the *Redoubtable*, and then in the background is the *Temeraire*.

You have the French tricolor here being lowered and then up in here there is a Royal Navy person who is breaking out the British ensign which means that the French ship has struck its colors and is now the captive of the British. In fact, the *Victory* was long gone and in the different part of the battle when the *Temeraire* prevailed over the *Redoubtable*. And by the time they were done this ship it didn't have any mast at all.

You see sailors tumbling into the sea and it's almost like an Italian ceiling painting of angels and putti coming down from heaven. In the foreground, there are cheering boatmen who are looking across at this British sailor who is breaking out the British ensign here reflecting that the French ship has surrendered. And then you also have a kind of golden glow right up here on the quarter deck of the *Victory* which is non-specific but it's emblematic of Nelson's death or Nelson having been shot. So these are the things that are happening at 1:30 in the afternoon.

Then we fast forward to the circumstances that prevailed towards the end of battle around four o'clock in the afternoon and you have the *Victory* here, and let's see, here is the *Victory* now. Then you have the Spanish Flagship, the *Santísima Trinidad* and that is this vessel right here with a big Spanish flag on its stern.

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And you have just beyond that, right here, the *Bucentaure* which was the French flagship. So Nelson has brought all three of the admirals together in this situation around four o'clock in the afternoon.

There is all the smoke over here that is the blowing up of the magazines of the French vessel *Achille*, that didn't happen until quarter six in the afternoon. So there are three different moments here, early afternoon, mid-afternoon, and late afternoon, all depicted at once.

There are lots of symbols in this painting. The *Victory's* foremast is coming down. She actually didn't lose her foremast in the battle. She lost her mizzen which is the stern mast, but it's important that her mast to be coming down because this is the personal flag of Vice Admiral Nelson and as it falls, so too does he here.

Then from the main mast, you see a number of flags and these are a part of a sophisticated British signal book. Nelson sent this famous signal that everyone in the Navy knows about called -- at the beginning of the battle he said, “England expects every man will do his duty” and what you are seeing here are the last three letters of the word “duty”, U, T, Y and then this flag means of end of message.

And then from the mizzen, a mast that had been shot away but Turner by a poetic license leaves still standing, there are two flags, one here and one here. And those are another -- the second famous signal that Nelson sent which was “close action”, by which he meant, get in there, mêlée, mix it up. You can do no wrong by getting as close as you can and beating them up over the head.

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Then you have the boat crews out here and the Brits were great. There were lots of Spanish and French in the sea and the British sent their boats out and were very decent about picking up the survivors. There is kind of a broken mast here with a British flag on it and one of the crew of one of the boats is pulling in the flag to keep it from sinking in the sea.

There's an inscription that's down here, I don't think you can probably read it but I will tell you what it is. It's the bottom of -- this text in the bottom of Nelson's coat of arms in Latin, *Palmam qui meruit ferat*. Literally, "Let him who has deserved it wear the palm," but colloquially "victory comes to him who dares." So that is down here. And that is the kind of glory message of this painting, but the cost of war message, all this bloody water, brown, red-stained bloody water down here, dead people, angst of chaos of a battle is really a pessimistic statement about the cost of war as well.

And Turner had seen in 1819 Géricault's famous *Raft of the Medusa* which had actually been shown in London. So there is a lot of it in this scene down here that is paying homage to this sublimely, enormous and romantic painting that's now in the Louvre.

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So as I said, symbolic and ambiguous in terms of message.

And the last painting, which is called *The Fighting Temeraire Tugged to Her Last Berth to Be Broken Up* in 1838 and which was shown with a piece of poetry by another poet but paraphrased by Turner, it was -- the painting was shown with this text by it, "the flag which braved the battle and the breeze, no longer owns her."

And in 1838 the Admiralty Board had sold the *Temeraire* to a ship breaker and she was to be taken from the mouth of the Thames where it opens in the English Channel about 50 miles up the Thames to near where London Bridge is now or Tower Bridge is now to the ship breakers and essentially sold for the value or broken up for the value of her timber.

And I think one of the reasons this painting is not in Dallas is that it is the most popular painting in the United Kingdom. BBC did a survey a few years ago and this painting won. I think it's a masterpiece, but I think it probably won for the wrong reasons. Its popularity is -- it's actually on a surface reading, it's too easy in terms of its sentimentality. It's kind of greeting card sentiments, lump and the throat movies, you know, things about the injustice done to this vessel, the disrespect of a new steam tugged to an ancient warrior.

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A kind of insensitivity to death and those easy emotions I think are what probably won it the prize, but it really -- that's not why we love this painting. There is a whole lot more going on here. The picture is entirely a fabrication. It is a complete work of the imagination and it is a chromatic poem, an elegy, a painting that is about the poetics of death.

While the *Temeraire* was sold to the ship breakers in 1838, she actually had been out of commission and had not been a proper warship since 1812. So I mean we are not like mourning something that just happened. She served as a prison ship and as a store ship and as a kind of a barrack ship before she was sold to the ship breaker.

The tug which people say, “oh well, you know it's modernism against the old ways.” Actually tugs had been working on the Thames river for 20 years before 1838, so that was nothing new. The tug, the stack, no tug ever had a stack in the front. The mast was always in front. But Turner switches it so that he get the tugs mast here and emphasizes the flag and there is no flag being carried by this vessel because she has been decommissioned from the Royal Navy and is no longer entitled to wear a flag.

So this text might be interpreted in a kind of maudlin and sentimental way. It's actually also just a fact that *Temeraire* used to be able to carry a flag.

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And the country sold her, and so she is not entitled to wear a flag anymore. The tow looks like it's happening. Well there were two tugs that actually did it because it was a very complicated maneuver. No ship this size has ever been pulled that far up the Thames. And no pilot in his right mind would ever be doing a task this complicated navigationally at twilight.

So there is a reason why. The sunset is symbolic and by this time in Turner's life light had become everything to him, symbolic of eminence. He wasn't a religious man, but sort of divine eminence. And you have a sunset and you also have up here a moon rise. And you have this golden ghost here of the *Temeraire* being pulled to her final birth, but Turner depicts her with her rigging still in place and, in fact, they wouldn't have done that. She would have looked like a dead hulk in the actual evolution. So he has preserved this vessel's dignity.

So I think that what I am trying to get at is that there is the silent water, a kind of placid, respectful pull by the tug of this ship, which has kept its dignity in Tuner's depiction. A moon-rise, a sunset.

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And what we were seeing here is not a maudlin death of a great ship. What we were seeing is an elegy and a meditation on the fate of this ghost, a three-decker that had fought bravely at Trafalgar. Yes, the symbol of the end of an era. Yes, the representation of the departed

glory. Yes, also the inevitability of death, which Turner was very much believing in and also in other one of his concerns and beliefs. The fallacy of hope and it's very rich, it's very elegiac, it's very poetic. Those are nice thoughts, inevitability of death, fallacy of hope those thoughts should liven up at the end of conclusion of what might be regarded as my retirement lecture.

So like Admiral Nelson and I will say thank God I have done my duty, but, I am not-- just one more slide, but this is Texas and as a culture we are unrelentingly positive. So here is the real ending.

[Applause]

Thank you, very kind –

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