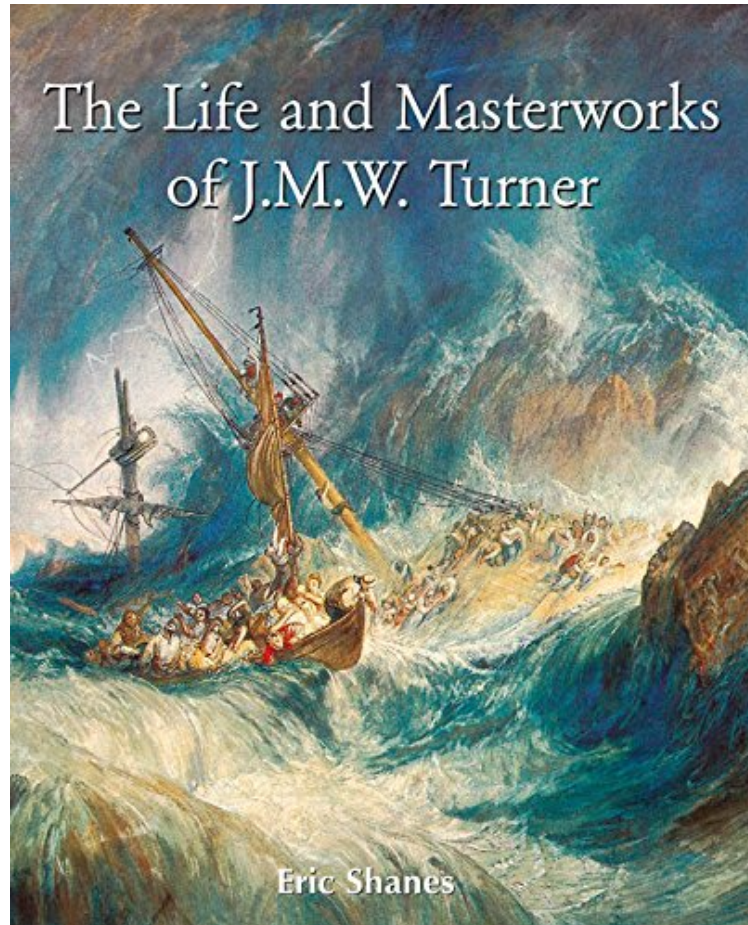


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## The Life and Masterworks of J.M.W. Turner (Temporis Series)

*Eric Shanes*

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**Eric Shanes : The Life and Masterworks of J.M.W. Turner (Temporis Series)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Life and Masterworks of J.M.W. Turner (Temporis Series):

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A masterpiece.By Bruce OksolThe book is divided into several sections. The first 60 pages is the biography of J.M.W. Turner with a scholarly description of his art and his philosophy of art ("Theory of Poetic Painting"). The next 180 pages are full page reproductions of his most famous or most representative works with a facing page detailing the important points of that particular work. The author has done an outstanding job dove-tailing the introductory section with this section. The final few pages include comments from Turner's critics (admirers) -- Thomas Hardy, William Hazlitt, John Ruskin, Henry James, Claude Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, Matisse, and many others (including Wyndham Lewis, a real scoundrel); a selected (but comprehensive) bibliography; and, a chronology of Turner's life.I highly recommend this to novices in art history, but even scholars will enjoy having his on their bookshelves to share with others. I was quite impressed, and I've collected many coffee-table art books over the years. This is one of the better such works, providing a scholarly overview

without becoming too pedantic.

At fifteen, Turner was already exhibiting *View of Lambeth*. He soon acquired the reputation of an immensely clever watercolourist. A disciple of Girtin and Cozens, he showed in his choice and presentation of theme a picturesque imagination which seemed to mark him out for a brilliant career as an illustrator. He travelled, first in his native land and then on several occasions in France, the Rhine Valley, Switzerland and Italy. He soon began to look beyond illustration. However, even in works in which we are tempted to see only picturesque imagination, there appears his dominant and guiding ideal of lyric landscape. His choice of a single master from the past is an eloquent witness for he studied profoundly such canvases of Claude as he could find in England, copying and imitating them with a marvellous degree of perfection. His cult for the great painter never failed. He desired his *Sun Rising through Vapour* and *Dido Building Carthage* to be placed in the National Gallery side by side with two of Claudersquo;s masterpieces. And, there, we may still see them and judge how legitimate was this proud and splendid homage. It was only in 1819 that Turner went to Italy, to go again in 1829 and 1840. Certainly Turner experienced emotions and found subjects for reverie which he later translated in terms of his own genius into symphonies of light and colour. Ardour is tempered with melancholy, as shadow strives with light. Melancholy, even as it appears in the enigmatic and profound creation of Albrecht Duuml;rer, finds no home in Turnersquo;s protean fairyland ndash; what place could it have in a cosmic dream? Humanity does not appear there, except perhaps as stage characters at whom we hardly glance. Turnersquo;s pictures fascinate us and yet we think of nothing precise, nothing human, only unforgettable colours and phantoms that lay hold on our imaginations. Humanity really only inspires him when linked with the idea of death ndash; a strange death, more a lyrical dissolution ndash; like the finale of an opera.