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T. S. Eliot and the Carthaginian Peace

The Waste Land requires three maps for its place-names. One is a map of Greater London and the lower Thames, for the poem is a London poem even in its final form. One early plan, as Hugh Kenner has argued,¹ conceived of Part III as a vision of London through various Augustan modes, making of the city almost another character, and suggesting a geographical unity as focal point for the poem. At this stage, says Kenner, “the rest of the poem seems to have been planned around it [Part III], guided by the norms and decorums of an Augustan view of history” (p. 35). Then Eliot wrote Part V, the vision of an urban apocalypse became dominant, and Part III was cut accordingly.

The Waste Land is not only a London poem; it is also a European poem, or more precisely a Mediterranean poem. It was always so through the early drafts, and it became noticeably so when, in Part V, London was listed as the last in a series of five great cities, Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London. The poem therefore requires a second map for those place-names that are not from the London area, leaving aside the names of Ganga and the Himavant. If those place-names are plotted on a map, they may be seen to ring the Mediterranean in the following sense. The northerly names are not seen as centers, in the way our twentieth-century eyes see them. Rather, they balance Carthage and Mylae to the south, and Jerusalem and Smyrna (now

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Izmir) to the east. This map coincides roughly with the Roman Empire at its most expansive, and therefore also coincides roughly with the theater of war during World War I. The center of this second map is Rome.

This leaves us with the names of Ganga and the Himavant. The map that is useful here is a very simple and a very symmetrical one: it is Dante's map of the inhabited world.² The exact center of this world is Jerusalem. Ninety degrees to the east is the eastern limit, the mouths of the Ganges, which is also the eastern limit of *The Waste Land*. Ninety degrees to the west is the western limit, Gibraltar or the western end of the Mediterranean, which is also the western limit of *The Waste Land*. Precisely halfway between Gibraltar and Jerusalem is Rome. We have thus three maps, one of a city, one of an empire, one of a world. They are not set side by side; that is, we do not make orderly progression from one map to the next in the poem. Rather, it is as if they were layered, and we read meaning from one map into another. Urban vision, imperial vision, world vision: each illuminates the other.

The English Augustans, Mr. Kenner observes, saw encouraging parallels between their London and Rome at the time of Augustus. Eliot's early plan for *The Waste Land*, mentioned above, was to develop satiric parallels between modern London and Augustan London. Mr. Kenner argues persuasively that Eliot "may well have had in mind at one time a kind of modern *Aeneid*, the hero crossing seas to pursue his destiny, detained by one woman and prophesied to by another, and encountering visions of the past and the future, all culminated in a city both founded and yet to be founded, unreal and oppressively real, the Rome through whose past Dryden saw London's future" (pp. 39–40). London was to be "the original Fisher King as well as the original Waste Land, resembling Augustine's Carthage as Dryden's London had resembled Ovid's Rome" (p. 28). With the final revisions, however, the center of the poem became "the urban apocalypse, the great City dissolved into a desert ..." (p. 46).

But I wonder whether the pre-eminent pattern for London from first to last was not Rome. Of course, in one sense all the cities in the final version of *The Waste Land* are the same: they are Cities of Destruction. But the poem nonetheless focuses on one particular city, London. Similarly, I think that the poem focuses on one prototype for London, and that the prototype is Rome, the center of the second map, and the center of the western half of the third map. Among these three maps, studies of *The Waste Land* have tended to concentrate on the first and the third, Eliot's urban vision and his world vision. But London in 1922 was still the center of an empire. What I want to concentrate on here is Eliot's vision of imperial apocalypse in *The Waste Land*, working from the hypothesis that a vision of Rome and the Roman Empire lies behind Eliot's vision of London and the British Empire.

Rome could provide a pattern for London in *The Waste Land* for good reason. The most obvious is that Rome was once both a great city and the capital of a great empire. In this, she is no different from those other great cities in Part V that were also capitals of great though very different empires: "Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, / Vienna, London." This list is worth examining. Eliot preserves the chronological order of the flourishing of each empire. He lists three ancient empires in one line, two modern ones in the following line. The large gap between the three ancient and two modern empires is dominated by Rome, who—and here she differs from the other cities—held sway over all three old empires. The name of Vienna, capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, suggests a line of succession, for the Austro-Hungarian Empire saw itself as heir to the Holy Roman Empire, which in turn saw itself as heir to the Roman Empire. Eliot was explicit about part of this line of succession in 1951:

For Virgil's conscious mind, it [destiny] means the *imperium romanum*.... I think that he had few illusions and that he saw clearly both sides of every question—the case for the loser as well as the case for the winner.... And do you really think that Virgil was mistaken? You must remember that the Roman Empire was transformed into the Holy Roman Empire. What Virgil proposed to his contemporaries was the highest ideal even for an unholy Roman Empire, for any merely temporal empire. We are all, so far as we inherit the civilization of Europe, still citizens of the Roman Empire.... It remains an ideal, but one which Virgil passed on to Christianity to develop and to cherish.³

This is the older Eliot speaking. The younger Eliot was quite detached about Christianity, but Eliot always saw himself as heir to the riches of classical civilization, and especially Roman civilization. "Tradition and the Individual Talent" appeared in 1919, and in 1923 Eliot wrote in the *Criterion*: "If everything derived from Rome were withdrawn—everything we have from Norman-French society, from the Church, from Humanism, from every channel direct and indirect, what would be left? A few Teutonic roots and husks. England is a 'Latin' country ..." (*Criterion*, 2 [October 1923], 104).

"For at least seven years, it would seem," writes Kenner, "an urban apocalypse had haunted Eliot's imagination" (p. 42). To an imagination thus haunted, and brooding from 1919 onward⁴ over material for what was to be *The Waste Land*, it might very well have appeared that the inheritance of Rome was disintegrating. "I am all for empires," wrote Eliot in January of 1924, "especially the Austro-Hungarian Empire."⁵ But the Austro-

Hungarian Empire had just been broken up by the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. And Christianity, considered simply as a force in history in the way Henry Adams saw it, might also be disintegrating. "The struggle of 'liberal' against 'orthodox' faith is out of date," Eliot wrote as early as 1916. "The present conflict is far more momentous than that."⁶ The ghost of Rome prevails in *The Waste Land* because Rome evolved from the greatest of Western empires into a Christian one; because the various European empires that followed Rome, all the way down to the British Empire, retained something of this inheritance, including the association of church and state (at least, officially); and because Eliot at the time of *The Waste Land* sees the possibility that this inheritance and this association will come to an end in the disintegration of church and state and civilization as we know them. "Eliot ... once said to me," Spender recalls, "that *The Waste Land* could not have been written at any moment except when it was written—a remark which, while biographically true in regard to his own life, is also true of the poem's time in European history after World War I. The sense that Western civilization was in a state which was the realization of historic doom lasted from 1920 to 1926."⁷

The decline of Western civilization and the parallel between Roman and modern civilization: this suggests Spengler. We tend to associate *The Waste Land* with Spengler, in general because of this sense of the decline of civilization, and in particular because Spengler's seasonal cycle so neatly fits Eliot's allusions to English literature in Parts I to IV of the poem. But Eliot's view of history in *The Waste Land* seems to me less Spengler's than that of Henry Adams, though Stuart Hughes reminds us in his *Oswald Spengler* that the Adams brothers were precursors of Spengler. (Eliot's own dismissal of Spengler is brisk: "These are only a few of the questions suggested by Mr. Perry's work; which compels more attention, I think, than the work of such abstract philosophers of history as Otto [sic] Spengler."⁸) In *The Education of Henry Adams*, Adams argues that Christianity is the last great force that the West has known, but that its strength is coming to an end. The twentieth century will see a major shift in civilization, like the last major shift, which began at about the time of Augustine. For Spengler, the modern cycle begins in 900 AD, Augustine is not a pivotal figure as he is for Adams, and Christianity is not the latest force the West has known. Our age, according to Spengler, parallels that of the shift from Greek to Roman dominance in the Mediterranean, and we are at the beginning of another "Roman" age. "*Rome*, with its rigorous realism—uninspired, barbaric, disciplined, practical, Protestant, *Prussian*—will always give us, working as we must by analogies, the key to understanding our own future" (I.x). Adams makes no such forecasts, being altogether more tentative, at least in *The Education*. But

within what Eliot called the “sceptical patrician,” there lay a strong sense of apocalypse. Augustine’s *Confessions* do not lie behind *The Education of Henry Adams* for nothing. In 1919, Eliot wrote a review of *The Education of Henry Adams* in which he makes no mention of Adams’s view of history. But then, he makes no mention of the Maryland spring, which finds a place in *Gerontion*.⁹ (Odd that Eliot says “there is nothing to indicate that Adams’s senses either flowered or fruited,” while his subconscious tucked away that sensual, flowering Maryland spring for poetic use.) Nor does he mention Adams’s image of the Hudson and the Susquehanna, perhaps the Potomac, and the Seine rising to drown the gods of Walhalla, nor the argument that the *Götterdämmerung* was understood better in New York or in Paris than in Bayreuth. Yet in *The Waste Land* Wagner’s Rhine-daughters from the *Götterdämmerung* are given equivalents in the Thames, and it may be that Adams suggested to Eliot the usefulness of the *Götterdämmerung* in a poem about the end of things and about (in part) the life of a river. For Adams, the beginning of the end of the Roman Empire was the beginning of the age we know, and the coming change will not be the end of things, and thus not a true apocalypse. But his imagery and his sense of cataclysm are such that they would have fed an imagination already haunted by the theme of apocalypse.

So would Conrad, and so possibly would Henry James, two writers whom Eliot read and admired. Conrad, of course, enters into *The Waste Land*. Neither James in *The Golden Bowl* nor Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* looks ahead like Adams to a change in civilization such as the world has not seen in some fifteen centuries. But both books present a dark and troubled vision of empire, and both make use of a parallel between Rome and London. Here are the opening sentences of *The Golden Bowl*:

The Prince had always liked his London, when it had come to him; he was one of the Modern Romans who find by the Thames a more convincing image of the truth of the ancient state than any they have left by the Tiber. Brought up on the legend of the City to which the world paid tribute, he recognised in the present London much more than in contemporary Rome the real dimensions of such a case. If it was a question of an *Imperium*, he said to himself, and if one wished, as a Roman, to recover a little the sense of that, the place to do so was on London Bridge....

Parallels between Rome and London were common enough at the turn of the century, but only rarely did they serve to set a question-mark against the enterprise of empire itself, its uses as well as its abuses, its civilization as well as its corruption. Both *The Golden Bowl* and *Heart of Darkness* do this, though

Conrad's reaction to the kind of power that underlies the rhetoric of empire is beyond even James's darkness: it is horror. Conrad offers us an ancient Roman view of Londinium at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, and a parallel between contemporary London and ancient Rome is implicit. His red-sailed barges in the Thames are also from the beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, and they are already present in the early drafts of Part III of *The Waste Land*.

Something of the force of Conrad's great dark vision of empire on Eliot's imagination in 1919 may be seen in a review of Kipling that Eliot published two weeks before his review of *The Education of Henry Adams*.¹⁰ In 1941, when Eliot wrote an introduction to his selection of Kipling's poems, he outlined sympathetically Kipling's idea of empire. It was for Kipling "not merely an idea ... it was something the reality of which he felt." And Eliot went on to analyze Kipling's sense of the Empire as an awareness of responsibility. But not in 1919. Then, his reaction to Kipling's imperialism was contemptuous, and his sympathies clearly lay with Conrad, who provides the contrast to Kipling in the 1919 review.

Both of the poets [Kipling and Swinburne] have a few simple ideas. If we deprecate any philosophical complications, we may be allowed to call Swinburne's Liberty and Mr. Kipling's Empire "ideas." They are at least abstract, and not material which emotion can feed long upon. And they are not (in passing) very dissimilar. Swinburne had the Risorgimento, and Garibaldi, and Mazzini, and the model of Shelley, and the recoil from Tennyson, and he produced Liberty. Mr. Kipling, the Anglo-Indian, had frontier warfare, and rebellions, and Khartoum, and he produced the Empire. And we remember Swinburne's sentiments toward the Boers: he wished to intern them all. Swinburne and Mr. Kipling have these and such concepts; some poets, like Shakespeare or Dante or Villon, and some novelists, like Mr. Conrad, have, in contrast to ideas or concepts, points of view, or "worlds"—what are incorrectly called "philosophies." Mr. Conrad is very germane to the question, because he is in many ways the antithesis of Mr. Kipling. He is, for one thing, the antithesis of Empire (as well as of democracy); his characters are the denial of Empire, of Nation, of Race almost, they are fearfully alone with the Wilderness. Mr. Conrad has no ideas, but he has a point of view, a "world"; it can hardly be defined, but it pervades his work and is unmistakable. It could not be otherwise. Swinburne's and Mr. Kipling's ideas could be otherwise. Had Mr.

Kipling taken Liberty and Swinburne the Empire, the alteration would be unimportant.

And that is why both Swinburne's and Mr. Kipling's verse in spite of the positive manner which each presses to his service, appear to lack cohesion—to be, frankly, immature. There is no point of view to hold them together.

Eliot is here working out the function of ideas as against the function of a point of view. (The distinction had appeared already in 1918 in his analysis of Henry James, the analysis that includes the well-known sentence: "He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it."¹¹) But there is no doubt about Eliot's opinion of Kipling's idea as idea. In the later essay, it is Eliot's reaction to that idea that has changed. This time, he compares Kipling not with Swinburne, but with Dryden, "one other great English writer who put politics into verse."

There is another work that I think entered into the making of *The Waste Land*. It is a book contemporary with the poem; it sheds light on some of the allusions in *The Waste Land*, ties the poem to post-World-War-I history, and incidentally relates Eliot's work at Lloyd's Bank to his poetry. It treats the theme of imperial collapse, and it uses Rome as an implicit example. It is John Maynard Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*.

Eliot in 1951 observed that Virgil knew the case for the loser as well as the case for the winner. When he cut and revised the drafts of *The Waste Land*, he deleted several references to Virgil. The one specific reference he chose to retain is an allusion to Dido, a reference that stresses the price rather than the glory of empire. Virgil's Sibyl of Cumae knew the price of empire too. (Mr. Kenner notes that we are meant to recall Virgil's Sibyl, if we have any sibylline knowledge at all, when we see the ruined Sibyl of Cumae in the poem's epigraph.) In Book VI of the *Aeneid*, the Sibyl of Cumae warns Aeneas of the realities on which empires are founded: *bella, horrida bella et Thybrim multo spumentem sanguine cerno* (86–87). And the Tiber, running with blood, takes its place behind the great rivers of the poem, Cleopatra's Nile, the Rhine so recently also running with blood, the Thames. Beyond that, it merges into the larger bodies of water that provided routes for the great maritime empires. All the cities of Part V are associated with famous waters. And the great maritime empire of 1922, on which the sun never set, has behind her the great maritime empire of Rome, and behind that the greatest (we are told) maritime empire of them all, Phoenicia's, whose sailors and ships were a source of power for centuries, and a byword for good seamanship. (One of her sailors appears in Part I and Part IV of *The Waste Land*.) At the naval battle of Mylae in the First Punic War, her erstwhile

colony Carthage was defeated by Rome. In the Second and Third Punic Wars, she was again defeated; in the Third War, Carthage was besieged, and, when the city had been taken, her citizens were slaughtered, the city levelled and sown with salt in order to make the soil sterile, and the site dedicated to the infernal gods. The Carthage to which Augustine came was a rebuilt Carthage.

The phrase “a Carthaginian Peace” would therefore mean a peace settlement so punitive as to destroy the enemy entirely and even to make sterile the land on which he lives. What it does to the victor is another question. In December 1919, John Maynard Keynes published his book, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, in which he passionately denounced the Treaty of Versailles as a “Carthaginian Peace.” (He had resigned as representative of the British Treasury at the Peace Conference.) The book was widely read (according to Etienne Mantoux’s *The Carthaginian Peace*, it had been translated into eleven languages and sold some 140,000 copies by 1924), and whether or how far the peace treaties were a Carthaginian Peace was widely disputed. Eliot, as the Lloyd’s representative “in charge of settling all the pre-War Debts between the Bank and the Germans, ‘an important appointment, full of interesting legal questions’, ... was kept busy ‘trying to elucidate knotty points in that appalling document the Peace Treaty.’”¹² It is unlikely he would not have read Keynes; he would certainly have known the argument of the book. (In a “London Letter” in the *Dial* for March 1921, Eliot referred to the “respect ... with which Clemenceau and Lloyd George bonified President Wilson” [p. 450]. The view of the respect and bonifying among the three men is Keynes’s view, though the remark hardly proves Eliot had read Keynes’s book. Nor does Eliot’s later remark, cited above, “I am all for empires, especially the Austro-Hungarian Empire,” though the view of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is also Keynes’s.)

The phrasing in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* evokes an apocalyptic foreboding and sense of nightmare very like that in *The Waste Land*.¹³ Keynes wrote that he himself came to be “haunted by other and more dreadful specters. Paris was a nightmare, and everyone there was morbid. A sense of impending catastrophe overhung the frivolous scene ... the mingled significance and unreality of decisions.... The proceedings of Paris all had this air of extraordinary importance and unimportance at the same time. The decisions seemed charged with consequences to the future of human society; yet the air whispered that the word was not flesh, that it was futile, insignificant, of no effect, dissociated from events.” In the “hot, dry room in the President’s house ... the Four fulfilled their destinies in empty and arid intrigue.” Clemenceau, “dry in soul and empty of hope, very old and tired,” schemed on behalf of the “policy of an old man, whose most vivid

impressions and most lively imagination are of the past and not of the future." Paris was a "morass," its atmosphere "hot and poisoned," its halls "treacherous." "Then began the weaving of that web of sophistry and Jesuitical exegesis...." "In this autumn of 1919, in which I write, we are at the dead season of our fortunes.... Our power of feeling or caring beyond the immediate questions of our own material well-being is temporarily eclipsed." This is not Pound speaking, or Hesse: it is Keynes, who supports his plea with pages of detailed economic argument that would have interested Eliot professionally. ("I want to find out something about the science of money while I am at it: it is an extraordinarily interesting subject," Eliot wrote to his mother on April 11, 1917, just after joining Lloyd's.¹⁴ And to Lytton Strachey on June 1, 1919: "You are very—ingenuous—if you can conceive me conversing with rural deans in the cathedral close. I do not go to cathedral towns but to centres of industry. My thoughts are absorbed in questions more important than ever enters the heads of deans—as *why* it is cheaper to buy steel bars from America than from Middlesbrough, and the probable effect—the exchange difficulties with Poland—and the appreciation of the rupee."¹⁵)

Ezra Pound saw London as another Carthage: "London has just escaped from the First World War, but it is certain to be destroyed by the next one, because it is in the hands of the international financiers. The very place of it will be sown with salt, as Carthage was, and forgotten by men; or it will be sunk under water."¹⁶ But in 1922, I think Eliot saw London as primarily another Rome, who had brought a famous trading enemy to her knees. Cleanth Brooks, commenting on the use of Mylae in *The Waste Land*, notes that the "Punic War was a trade war—might be considered a rather close parallel to our late war."¹⁷ And Keynes quotes Clemenceau's view that England in the First World War, as in each preceding century, had destroyed a trade rival. The poem's one-eyed merchant and Mr. Eugenides from Smyrna with his shorthand trading terms are figures of importance in an empire.¹⁸ "Money is, after all, life blood," Spender reminds us. The sense of doom in the twenties "emanated from the revolutionary explosions and still more from the monetary collapse of central Europe."¹⁹ Carthage is in *The Waste Land* not only because of its connections with Dido and Aeneas, *The Tempest*, and St. Augustine; not only as a colony of Phoenicia, Phoenicia who had given the Greeks most of their alphabet, which in turn was given to the Romans (by Greeks at Cumae, say Crosby and Schaffer); not only as part of a great maritime empire. It is in the poem also because Carthage is for Rome the great rival, as she is at the beginning of the *Aeneid*, and the relations between the two a pattern for enmity so established that Keynes could use the phrase "a Carthaginian Peace" without further explanation. The

argument for declaring the third war against Carthage (repeated again and again by Cato the Censor, with his famous refrain *Carthago delenda est*) was the argument at the center of the controversy over the peace treaties: whether the reviving prosperity of a defeated trade rival could become a danger to the victor. In a poem of 1922, to introduce the battle of Mylae where the reader expects a reference to a World War I battle is to raise chilling questions. The line out of Baudelaire's Paris, which follows the spectral Mylae speech and ends Part I, does not help either, for those who had read Keynes: "You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!"

For a Carthaginian peace is one that slowly but surely deflects back upon the victor. It is a common argument that Roman life began to decline after the Punic wars. As long as Rome was in a state of war, Augustine writes near the beginning of *The City of God*, she could maintain concord and high standards of civic life. "But after the destruction of Carthage," he continues, quoting Sallust, "there came the highest pitch of discord, greed, ambition, and all the evils which generally spring up in times of prosperity" (II.18).²⁰ The argument was repeated by Lecky in 1877: "complete dissolution of Roman morals began shortly after the Punic wars" (*OED*, "Punic," A.1). Keynes similarly argues his case as much on behalf of the victors as the vanquished: "they [France and Italy] invite their own destruction also, being so deeply and inextricably intertwined with their victims by hidden psychic and economic bonds." "If we aim deliberately at the impoverishment of Central Europe.... nothing can then delay for very long that final civil war ... which will destroy, whoever is victor, the civilization and progress of our generation." For Rome the victor, and so long the victor that she must have seemed invincible, the eventual turn of time brings Alaric and Attila. Rome itself experiences destruction. St. Augustine, who telescopes history much as Eliot does, argues that the destruction of Rome is only fitting, for the outward devastation only matches the collapse of the inner fabric of society. "For in the ruin of our city it was stone and timber which fell to the ground; but in the lives of those Romans we saw the collapse not of material but of moral defences, not of material but of spiritual grandeur. The lust that burned in their hearts was more deadly than the flame which consumed their dwellings" (II.1). This is true not only of public life, but also of private. "Now a man's house ought to be the beginning, or rather a small component part of the city, and every beginning is directed to some end of its own kind domestic peace contributes to the peace of the city" (XIX.16).

No argument that Rome provides the pre-eminent pattern for London in *The Waste Land* can ignore the classic exposition of the *civitas Romae* and the *civitas Dei*, Augustine's *City of God*. Spender speaks of the implicit contrast in *The Waste Land* of the two cities, and he is surely right about this.²¹ The

original drafts twice included references to an ideal city, though in the end Eliot omitted any explicit reminder of a *civitas Dei*. One reference was in Part III, and read as follows: "Not here, O Glaucon [originally Ademantus], but in another world" (l. 120), which is annotated in Valerie Eliot's edition of the drafts of the poem: "Ademantus and Glaucon, brothers of Plato, were two of the interlocutors in *The Republic*. Appalled by his vision of the 'Unreal City', Eliot may be alluding to the passage (Book IX, 592 A-B) which inspired the idea of the City of God among Stoics and Christians, and found its finest exponent in St. Augustine" (pp. 127–28). As the poem's shape changed, the ideal city shifted. In a draft of the speech of Madame Sosostriis in Part I, the following line is inserted in a bracket after the present line 56: "I John saw these things, and heard them"; the quotation, from near the end of Revelations, refers not only to John's vision of judgment, but more particularly to his vision of the New Jerusalem, which immediately precedes it. Eliot finally cut all references to an ideal city, because, I think, the developing theme of urban and imperial apocalypse refused to accommodate so firm a hope as that in *The Republic* or Revelations. What Eliot kept from the Johannine vision was the dark view of the earthly city or Babylon. The sense of an impending *dies irae* hangs over most of his poem.

Augustine's earthly city is of course Babylon also, together with Babylon's daughter, Rome (*Babylonia, quasi prima Roma ... ipsa Roma quasi secunda Babylonia* [XVIII.2]). And over Augustine's earthly city, the *civitas Romae*, there also hangs a sense of doom in *The City of God*. Rome had been forewarned of her destruction, writes Augustine, by Sibylline prophecy, and the same prophecies warn her of the final apocalypse. Augustine is one of the Church fathers responsible for the conversion of Virgil's Sibyl into Christian prophetess, and, if Virgil's Sibyl of Cumae lives behind the Sibyl of Cumae in *The Waste Land*, so also, I think, may the later Christian Sibyl. "The Sibyl of Erythrae or, as some are inclined to believe, of Cumae ... is evidently to be counted among those who belong to the City of God," writes Augustine (XVIII.24). And he goes on to quote in full the Sibylline oracle which prophesies a day of judgment, using sources from both the Old and New Testaments, the oracle especially famed because its initial letters form an acrostic in Greek that spells "fish," one of the common symbols for Christ in the early Church.²² There are other fates for the Sibyl than the fate Petronius portrayed and Eliot quoted, though they offer no comfort to the inhabitant or the reader of *The Waste Land*. The Sibyl may find her way into the words of the *dies irae* (*teste David cum Sibylla*), and her verses may be called the fifteen signs of the judgment and sung in some places as late as 1549.²³ Whatever evidence is chosen, this Sibyl is associated with the collapse of Rome and also with the final apocalypse and the day of judgment.

In 1921, Eliot was considering poetic treatments of the day of judgment at least enough to make clear how not to treat it: some poets, he wrote in the Spring issue of *Tyro*, “could imagine the Last Judgment only as a lavish display of Bengal lights, Roman candles, catherine wheels, and inflammable fire-balloons. *Vous, hypocrite lecteur....*”

Eliot's dark vision of the earthly city may be close to Augustine's dark vision of the *civitas Romae*, but it goes without saying that for Augustine the activities associated with any Fisher King, like those in *The Waste Land*, would be evidence only of superstition. *The City of God* includes references to such activities only to attack them. The belief, for example, that the Delphic Apollo might have inflicted sterility upon the land is mere superstition (XVIII.12); so are fears of an evil spell cast upon the land that motivate the fertility rites (VII.24). It is likewise superstition that inspires the familiar proverb, *Pluuia deficit, causa Christiani sunt* (“No rain! It's all the fault of the Christians” [II.3]). Wellدون's edition of *The City of God* notes that Augustine makes use of this proverb frequently, and it is a proverb that, read with varying degrees of irony, may be applied very handily to *The Waste Land*.

In an apocalyptic mode, the world may seem split into the sweetness of a visionary, ideal and virtually unattainable world, and the sordidness of an actual, present, and virtually inescapable world. There is no middle ground, and practical, temporal concerns and governance are left to others. This kind of painful contrast is what gives *The Waste Land* its poignancy. It is the viewpoint of someone not at home in the world, a peregrine, like Augustine. Augustine was an outsider in more than one sense: not only was his overwhelming allegiance given to another world, but he was a provincial in the Roman Empire, one of the *peregrini* or resident aliens during his stay in Milan.²⁴ In *The Waste Land*, he takes his place among those other great exiles or provincials who perhaps understood their city and their empire all the better for having been exiles or provincials: Ezekiel, Ovid, Dante. And Eliot? One of Eliot's quotations is from the psalm of exile, with its passionate love of Jerusalem, and its cry, “How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?” The cry echoes behind the homeless voices of *The Waste Land*.

But the Jewish voices were able to utter this psalm or to include an Ezekiel. In the twentieth century, there remain only fragmented voices, a desiccated Sibyl. The apocalyptic mode in *The Waste Land* moves toward its own destruction in the disintegration of the uses of language. Augustine, whose etymology is highly idiosyncratic, thought that the name Babylon was connected with the name Babel. Babylon may thus also be called “confusion,” and “punishment in the form of a change of language” is the fate of a Babel or of any Babylon or of any Rome—a punishment which some readers may feel Eliot demonstrates with peculiar force. (Another twentieth-

century example of this punishment had been seen at the Peace Conference, where the difficulties of negotiating had been compounded by the fact that only Clemenceau, among the Four, spoke both French and English.)

The dangers of abandoning the middle ground of practical, temporal affairs are all too apparent. At the end of *The Waste Land*, there is a turning, or rather a returning, toward this middle earth and away from exile or private grief. The apocalyptic mode is useful, but not for long. It provides an ideal, but no working pattern for living in this world. A working pattern without an ideal may very well collapse sooner or later, but an ideal with no working pattern can find terrible ways to translate itself into action, or can find itself readily outmanoeuvred and paralysed. Augustine does not ignore the question of how to live in the earthly city. And Keynes, at the end of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, tempers his own dark vision with practical suggestions for relieving the nightmare.

The Waste Land, in the end, retains its geographical unity, but the unity becomes far more complex. London as a city forms one focal point. The maps shift, as we muse on the poem, and London becomes a center of empire, another Rome. Do they ever shift again, so that London and Rome become Jerusalem, the center of Dante's world? Never, in the old sense, and not until *Little Gidding* in a mystical sense, and by this time the center may be anywhere, "England and nowhere. Never and always."

NOTES

1. "The Urban Apocalypse," in A. Walton Litz, ed., *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 23–49.

2. *The Divine Comedy* (Temple Classics edition), *Paradiso*, canto xxvii, n. 11.

3. "Virgil and the Christian World," broadcast from London, Sept. 9, 1951; reprinted in *T. S. Eliot: Selected Prose*, ed. John Hayward (London, 1953), p. 97.

4. And perhaps earlier. "I hope to get started on a poem I have in mind" (Eliot to John Quinn, Nov. 5, 1919); he hopes "to write a long poem I have had on my mind for a long time" (Eliot to his mother, Dec. 18, 1919); in *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (London 1971), xviii.

5. *Transatlantic Review*, 1 (January 1924), 95.

6. *International Journal of Ethics*, 27 (1916), 117.

7. Stephen Spender, *T. S. Eliot* (New York, 1975), pp. 117–18.

8. *Criterion*, 2 (1924), 491.

9. *Athenaeum* (May 23, 1919), 361–62. On the use in *Gerontion* of material from the beginning of chap. XVIII of *The Education of Henry Adams*, see F. O. Matthiessen, *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot* (3rd ed., Oxford, 1958), p. 73.

10. *Athenaeum* (May 9, 1919), 297–98. For the 1941 essay, see *A Choice of Kipling's Verse, made by T. S. Eliot with an essay on Rudyard Kipling* (London, 1941).

11. *Little Review*, 5.4 (1918), 46.

12. *The Waste Land*, ed. Valerie Eliot, p. xviii; the two quotations are from letters of February 1920 to Eliot's mother.

13. And, for that matter, in *Gerontion*, though *Gerontion* was ready for publication on May 25, 1919 (*The Waste Land*, ed. Valerie Eliot, p. xvi) and Keynes wrote his book during August and September 1919 (Roy Harrod, *The Life of John Maynard Keynes* [London, 1951], p. 288).

Quotations from *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* are from the first United States edition (New York, 1920), pp. 5–6, 7, 32, 56, 64, 48, 49, 51, 297. Later references are to pp. 33, 5, and 268.

Keynes was fond of poetry, and was reading *The Waste Land* soon after its first appearance in the October 1922 issue of the *Criterion*. Sir Roy Harrod remembers “coming into his rooms in the autumn of 1922, to find that he was reading aloud *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot, a poet of whom I had so far not heard. His reading was intelligent and moving, and served to win one's admiration for this strange new form of expression” (in his *Life of John Maynard Keynes*, p. 29). Early in 1923, Keynes, as the new chairman of the board of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, strongly supported Eliot for the position of literary editor, against much opposition from fellow directors (Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey* [New York, 1967, 1968], II, pp. 368–69). I do not know when Eliot first met Keynes; Clive Bell recalls first meeting Eliot in 1916 when he came for dinner to Gordon Square, where Bell was living with Keynes, but Keynes was out that evening (Clive Bell, *Old Friends* [London, 1956], p. 119).

14. *The Waste Land*, ed. Valerie Eliot, p. xii.

15. Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey*, II, p. 365.

16. Cited by William Empson, *Essays in Criticism*, 22 (1972), 419.

17. From *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, reprinted in *T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land: A Casebook*, ed. C. B. Cox and Arnold P. Hinchcliffe (London, 1968), p. 136.

18. The perennial power of money and craft of bartering are central themes in both *The Golden Bowl* and *Heart of Darkness*.

19. T. S. Eliot, p. 118. On Eliot's “present decay of eastern Europe” (head-note to the notes to *The Waste Land*, Part V), see Keynes, for example, p. 4: “But perhaps it is only in England (and America) that it is possible to be so unconscious. In continental Europe the earth heaves and no one but is aware of the rumblings. There it is not just a matter of extravagance or ‘labor troubles’; but of life and death, of starvation and existence, and of the fearful convulsions of a dying civilization.” Or p. 250n.: “For months past, the reports of the health conditions in the Central Empires have been of such a character that the imagination is dulled, and one almost seems guilty of sentimentality in quoting them. But their general veracity is not disputed....”

20. *The City of God*, tr. Henry Bettenson, ed. David Knowles (London, 1972); all quotations in English are from this edition.

21. T. S. Eliot, pp. 121–22.

22. Northrop Frye (who calls Eliot's poem “intensely Latin”) mentions the symbolism of fishing in the Gospels in connection with *The Waste Land* (T. S. Eliot) [New York, 1963, 1972], pp. 67, 71.

23. Du Bellay, *Defence and Illustration of the French Language*, VIII.

24. On the theme of *peregrinatio*, the status of a *peregrinus*, and his sense of exile, see Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley, 1967), pp. 323–24.