

PARODY



James Joyce

(1882-1941)

“The Waste Land” (1925)

*from letter to Harriet Weaver about his family excursion
from Rouen to Arcahon, south of Bordeaux, France*

Rouen is the rainiest place getting
Inside all impermeables, wetting
Damp marrow in drenched bones.
Midwinter soused us coming over Le Mans
Our inn at Miort was the Grape of Burgundy

But the winepress of the Lord thundered over that
grape of Burgundy
And we left in a hurgundy.
(Hurry up, Joyce, it's time!)

I heard mosquitoes swarm in old Bordeaux
So many!
I had not thought the earth contained so many
(Hurry up, Joyce, it's time!)

Mr Anthologos, the local gardener,
Greycapped, with politeness full of cunning
Has made wine these fifty years
And told me in his southern French
Le petit vin is the surest drink to buy
For if 'tis bad
Vous ne l'avez pas paye
(Hurry up, hurry up, now, now, now!)

But we shall have great times,
When we return to Clinic, that waste land
O Esculapios!
(Shan't we? Shan't we? Shan't we?)

COMMENTARY

“The ‘Clinic’ referred to is one where Joyce was due to have an eye-operation on his return to Paris. ‘Shan’t we?’ is a neatly sarcastic riposte to the serene line of Sanskrit which closes ‘The Waste Land’—‘Shantih shantih shantih’; but in *Finnegan’s Wake* Joyce permitted himself a wilder departure from Eliot: ‘Thou in Shanty! Thou in scanty shanty!! Thou in slanty scanty shanty!!!’”

John Gross, ed.
The Oxford Book of Parodies
(Oxford 2010) 259