

Knowing
After JMW Turner's The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire

I think I know you,
a conquered people
once united in a voice
under Ba'al. You were
a crowd—a multitude.
And I watch your sun set,
indifferent to the inevitable
fall of your republic,
you became stepping stone for
the larger nation
of Rome who ravished and
invaded. Your decline was
prolonged but no less tragic.
But I think I know you,
your struggles, your questions.
How did the candid Carthage fall?
How have our gods gone their ways?
Turned their backs on us? How
have we displeased you?
Are the wars we waged,
the blood we spilled,
the prayers we made,
worth nothing but the return of indifference?
Yes, I think I know you.
I know the fear as you cling
to those you hold most dear.
Within the light of the majestic
sunset, kingdoms fall.
So close to me within these
brushstrokes, your time is far removed.
Yet today's kingdom is tomorrow's ruin.
One day I will be like you,
oil on a canvas, nature's
sunset the focus—while all else
crumbles before me.