## Peter Viereck:

# Vale[1] from Carthage (Spring, 1944)

I, now at Carthage.[2] He, shot dead at Rome.
Shipmates last May. "And what if one of us,"
I asked last May, in fun, in gentleness,
"Wears doom, like dungarees, and doesn't know?"
He laughed, *"Not see Times Square*[3] *again?"* The foam,
Feathering across that deck a year ago,
Swept those five words—like seeds—beyond the seas
Into his future. There they grew like trees;
And as he passed them there next spring, they laid
Upon his road of fire their sudden shade.
Though he had always scraped his mess-kit pure
And scrubbed redeemingly his barracks floor,
Though all his buttons glowed their ritual-hymn
Like cloudless moons to intercede for him,
No furlough fluttered from the sky. He will
Not see Times Square—he will not see—he will
Not see Times
change; at Carthage (while my friend,
Living those words at Rome, screamed in the end)
I saw an ancient Roman's tomb and read
"*Vale*" in stone. Here two wars mix their dead:
Roman, my shipmate's dream walks hand in hand
With yours tonight ("New York again" and "Rome"),
Like widowed sisters bearing water home
On tired heads through hot Tunisian sand
In good cool urns, and says, "I understand."
Roman, you'll see your Forum Square no more;
What's left but this to say of any war?

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[1] *Vale* is the Latin word for farewell.
[2] Carthage is the site of the famous ancient city in Tunisia, North Africa. In ancient times the rivalry between Rome and Carthage culminated in the Punic Wars. In World War II, Tunisia again figured prominently.
[3] Times Square is the bustling center of New York City—the theater district.