

MY HEAD IS IN THE STARS

Being Fragments from Book I

of

**THE ODES**

**OF**

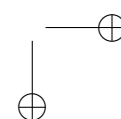
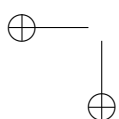
**QUINTUS HORATIUS FLACCUS**

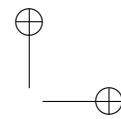
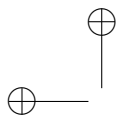
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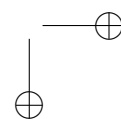
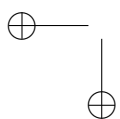
*Quincy Bass*

IWP





2024  
First Published, 1940





## FOREWORD

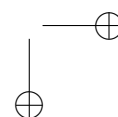
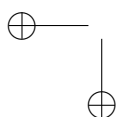
All one must do to read Horace in Latin is to brush up on his Latin grammar, and exercise a little patience. Beyond these bare essentials, there are an infinite number of degrees towards perfection, and the best attempts which have been made in five hundred years to render Horace into English have none of them done more than half justice to his remarkable poems.

Some scholars have worshipped precision above everything. *Persicos odi, puer, apparatus* becomes “The Persian luxuries hate I, O boy,” but the poem then has no more meaning for modern ears than the Roman inscription on some government building has for modern eyes.

Others, anxious to prove that Horace was a good fellow and a twentieth-century poet, dress up his originals in the fancy rhymes and metres of American and English light verse, making them sound – to me – like the popular tunes that are pirated from the classics: these are amusing, but generally they ain’t Horace.

Still worse, a few have attempted to metamorphose the Alcaic, Sapphic, or Asclepiad metres into English stanzas – about as easy and simple as making a necklace out of some drops of water in the sunlight.

It has been easy for me to avoid these temptations because I am neither a good Latin scholar nor a real poet. These renderings have been done by me selfishly, for my own enjoyment – and I have enjoyed them greatly. I doubt if they can bring much pleasure to anyone else because their whole effect is so diluted in the translating.





Horace cannot be rendered into English without sacrificing something. Either one develops a metre and rhyme at the expense of the original text; sacrifices accuracy for up-to-date, streamlined effects – such as introducing an automobile in place of a chariot; or uncovers the dusty mummy of the poem, and loses its spirit entirely.

I have chosen to ignore the demands of rhyme and metre, in order not to be lured too far from the poet's own ideas, in the belief that on the whole he had more to say than I have. At times I have departed from his grammatical constructions, or I have slightly changed his expressions, or I have added something to clarify his meaning – but always I have made these minor alterations only when it seemed impossible to set his ideas across in any other way.

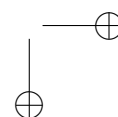
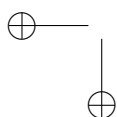
I have not included in this book several of the Odes which seemed to me too heavy or too circumstantial; others I have cut ruthlessly for similar reasons.

To read Horace is to be aware that the intelligence of human beings has not changed an iota in two thousand years; and somehow it is reassuring to know in these terrific times that It Has All Happened Before. I have done most of the translations as diversions in hours when I wanted not only diversion, but some thoughts to hang my hat on. I was in the mood for a poet who had lofty feelings about his country and kind feelings about his people, but who took his own importance not too seriously.

When the English seems stilted, pompous, or pedestrian, try to remember that the Latin from which it came is nothing short of magnificent.

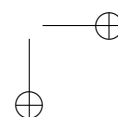
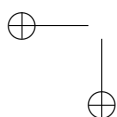
To translate Horace into English is to take a brilliant of exquisite cut, flawless texture, perfect color – and bake over it a covering of its original clay.

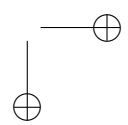
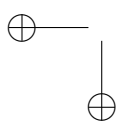
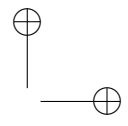
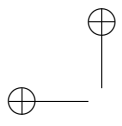
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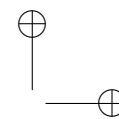
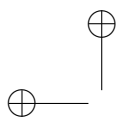




*The time is here  
When men's souls are tried,  
And the mad winds converge from the four quarters,  
And God throws fire and the heavens on us  
For our folly.  
Come then, my friend,  
Forget, if only for the swift moment,  
The cares that beset you  
And harass us both.  
Drink with me lightly of the plain Horatian wine,  
Consider the laughter and the sorrows of another day:  
The gods and goddesses, the boys, the girls,  
The green forests, the brave ships on the savage sea,  
That were there even then:  
Mercury's wand has closed the great gate on them,  
As he will close it on us;  
But does it not help, my friend,  
To live for a moment in that ancient past,  
And see them, sorely tried  
By war, by hunger, and by pestilence,  
Yer brawling, singing, laughing,  
Making love,  
Going about their daily work,  
Worshipping God,  
And dreaming of better days?*







## CARMEN I

*Maecenas atavis edite regibus,  
O et praesidium et dulce decus meum*

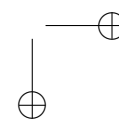
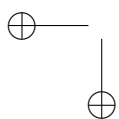
Maecenas, offspring of a royal line,  
You are my protector and my glory!

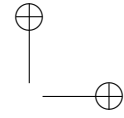
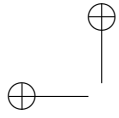
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If *you* but count me among the poets,  
My head is in the stars!

Long Island Sound  
July 1940





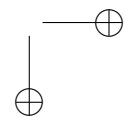
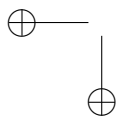
## CARMEN II

*Sic te diva potens Cypry,  
Sic Fratres Helenae, lucida sidera*

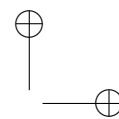
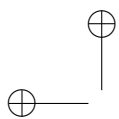
O potent Goddess of Cyprus,  
O bright stars that are Helen's brothers,  
Hear my prayers! Father of the winds,  
Chain them all except Iapyga, the Westerly!  
O ship to whom Vergil is entrusted,  
I pray that you may return him  
Safe to the Attic shores,  
That you may bring back my soul's other half!

His was a heart of oak and triple bronze  
Who first sent his fragile ship  
Against the relentless seas,  
And feared not Africus, the squally Southerly,  
Nor Aquilones, the Norther who blows to the bitter end,  
Nor the tearful Hyadae, nor mad Notus,  
Master of the Adriatic, whether he calms her,  
Or rouses her.  
Did he who with dry eyes saw monsters swimming,  
The sea swelling, and the cruel rocks at Acrocerania,  
Fear Death in any shape?  
A prudent god divided the lands from the deeps:  
Even so the godless ships leap lightly across the shallows.

Bold to try all things, the human race  
Rushes to forbidden sacrilege.  
The bold son of Iapetus brought fire to us  
By stealing it from the gods.





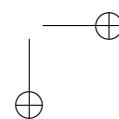
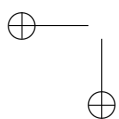


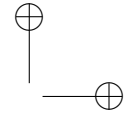
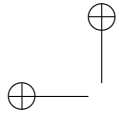
After it was taken from its heavenly home,  
Sickness and a troop of new plagues  
Brooded over the earth, hastened the oncoming of distant death,  
Hitherto a necessity, but too slow in its approach  
To matter.

Daedalus tried the empty air  
With wings not intended for humans;  
A labor of Hercules broke the walls of Hell.

Nothing is too hard for mortals:  
In our folly we seek heaven itself,  
And by our wrong-doing, prevent angry Jove  
From putting his thunderbolts away.

Long Island Sound  
July 1940





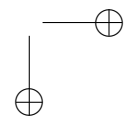
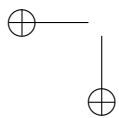
### CARMEN III

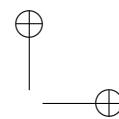
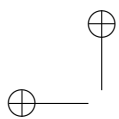
*Solvitur acris hiemps grata vice veris et Favoni  
Trahuntque siccas machinae carinas*

Sharp Winter's bonds are broken  
Giving way to welcome Spring  
And the mild Westerly. Winches  
Lower the dried-out boats.  
Flocks no longer in the stables,  
No more ploughman by the fire;  
No longer are the meadows  
Pale with hoar-frost.

Cytherean Venus leads the chorus  
By the moon's face in the evening,  
And gentle graces join with Nymphs  
To tread the dances,  
While burning Vulcan keeps the forges  
Of the busy Cyclops blazing.  
Cover your head with myrtle,  
Or put in your hair a flower  
Which the earth, relaxed, has borne.  
We'll sacrifice to Faunus  
In a shady grove this evening.

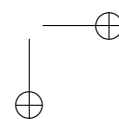
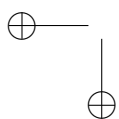
Pale Death knocks with the same knuckles  
At the doors of the poor or the potticos of the great.  
My friend Sestius, the total of our short life  
Prevents the hope of remembering anything for long.  
Already Night, and Death, the source of legends,  
The home of waiting Pluto, presses you!

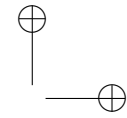
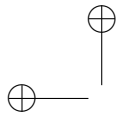




Here you will have come  
Before they toast you at the banquet,  
Before you have a chance to flatter sweet Lycidas,  
Before you warm with the passion of all youth,  
Before you have seen the virgins  
Begin to glow with love.

Off Montauk Point  
July 1940





#### CARMEN IV

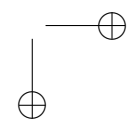
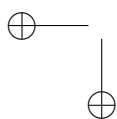
*Quis mutta gracilis te puer in rosa  
Perfusus liquidis urget odoribus*

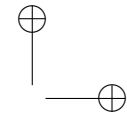
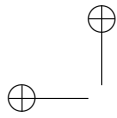
What graceful boy, suffused with liquid scents  
Makes love to you among the roses now? –  
Who, Pyrtha, who, in a pleasant forest glade?  
For whom do you do your auburn hair  
In elegance so exquisitely plain?

Today, perhaps, he mourns for Faithfulness  
And for the gods who have deserted him;  
And like a country lad who's gone to sea  
For the first time in his life, his eyes are wide,  
Marvelling at oceans bitter with black winds.

Too trusting in the golden hours is he  
Who now enjoys you; how he longs for you,  
Faithless and loveable one! Little knows he  
How fickle is the breeze. Unhappy those untried  
On whom you blow! And as for me –  
Look on the temple wall where the tablets are,  
And you will see my damp clothes hanging there  
As thanks to the God who is Master of the Sea.

Off Coiba Island, Panama  
April 1940





## CARMEN V

*Scriberis Vario fortis et hostiumt  
Victor Maconii carminis alite*

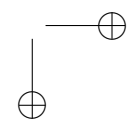
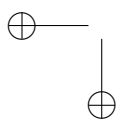
You will be made immortal in the poems of Varius:  
He is a bird of Homeric song, he will sing of you  
As a hero, a victor in battles,  
Whatever your dauntless troops  
Achieve on ships or horses under your banner.

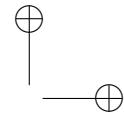
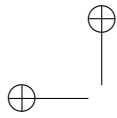
Who is worthy to write of Mars in his tunic  
Of adamant? Of Merio the Charioteer,  
Black with the dust of Troy?  
Of Diomed, with Pallas's aid a match for the Gods?

I am too easy going. I sing  
Of parties; I sing of the battles  
Of virgins with sharpened nails,  
Fiercely attacking young men.

Sometimes I am vague and gay,  
Sometimes I am burning like a furnace  
With love.

Off Babia Honda, Panama  
April 1940





## CARMEN VI

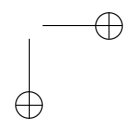
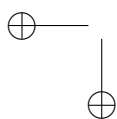
*Lydia, dic, per omnes  
te deos oro, Sybarin cur properes amando*

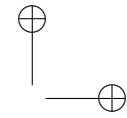
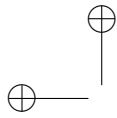
Lydia, in the name of heaven  
Tell me why you are trying so hard  
To ruin Sybaris!  
He is well able to stand dust and sun:  
Tell me why he loathes the campus,  
Why he rides no longer in the cavalry,  
Why he no longer curbs  
The Gallic chargers with the sharp-toothed bits?

Why is he afraid of the yellow Tiber?  
Why does he avoid the athlete's liniment  
As if it were viper's blood?  
Why does he no longer exercise his pale arms  
With javelin or discus, as he used to do?  
Often, this noble boy used to break records  
With his mighty heaves!

What is the secret? You know, they tell  
How the son of sea-born Thetis  
Was dragged forth in the slaughter  
That followed the fall of Troy,  
Along with his Lycian troops –  
And they were not in men's clothes at all!

Off Puerto Armuelies, Panama  
April 1940





## CARMEN VII

*Vides, ut alta stet nive candidum  
Soracte, nec iam sustineant onus*

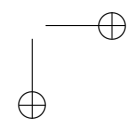
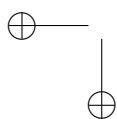
You see how the snow stands white on Soracte's peak,  
And the groaning branches do not bear their load,  
And the rivers are chained in a prison of dazzling ice.

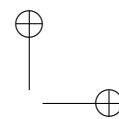
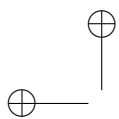
Then scatter the cold, pile logs lavishly  
On the hearth, and with special warmth  
Bring out the four-year-old Sabina wine,  
O Thaliarcus, in its two-eared jar!

Trust everything outside to the gods;  
Now they have quieted the winds on the angry seas,  
Which were fighting each other furiously:  
Now they have left the cypresses and ancient ash-trees  
Calm and at peace.

You ask what the future holds,  
And what Fortune will add to your profits?  
Forget it! You are young –  
Don't scorn the sweetness of love,  
Don't scorn the dances,  
So long as you are not cursed with selfish gray hair.

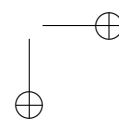
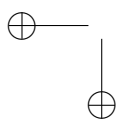
Now is the time when gentle whispers  
Are repeated under the shadows of night  
At the secret meeting-place;  
Now is the time when a girl's pleasant laugh  
Betrays her in the inmost dark corner,  
As she resists someone



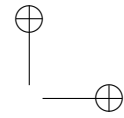
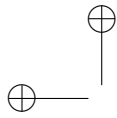


Snatching something from her arms  
Or out of her fingers,  
While she struggles  
Mischievously.

Off the Outlying Islands, Panama  
April 1940







### CARMEN VIII

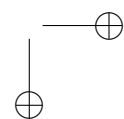
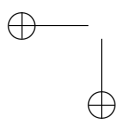
*Tu ne quaesieris, scice nefas, quem mihi, quem tibi  
Finem di dederint, Leuconoe, nec Bablyonios*

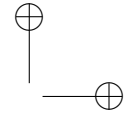
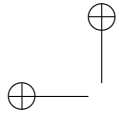
Do not seek forbidden knowledge, Leuconoë!  
– Nor try to learn what ends the gods  
Have in store for you and for me!  
Avoid the numerologists of Babylon!  
Far better to endure what comes,  
Whatever it may be.

God may give you many winters more;  
Or this may be the last winter when  
You will watch the Tuscan sea exhaust itself  
Against the volcanic shores:  
Therefore be sensible – decant your wine –  
This life is short – prune back  
Your far-distant longings.

Even as we talk, jealous Time  
Will have passed us by:  
Capture today! Count little on tomorrow!

Near Cocos Island  
April 1940





## CARMEN IX

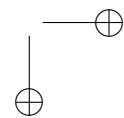
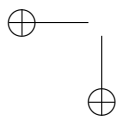
*Cum tu, Lydia, Telephi  
Cervicem roseam, cerea Telephi*

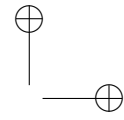
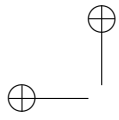
Lydia, when you praise  
Telephus' rosy neck,  
Telephus' gleaming arms,  
My heart consumes with fire,  
I hate Telephus!

My soul rises, even my color –  
Tears struggle down my cheeks,  
Showing how slow fires  
Waste me within!

I am mad with love for you,  
Even if your bouts with him,  
Fanned by wine,  
Scar your shoulders;  
Even if this passionate boy  
Cuts your lips with his kisses!

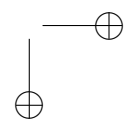
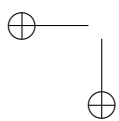
If only you will listen! –  
Not forever can you hope to hold him  
Who now hurts you so cruelly  
With his sweet kisses!  
Venus herself must have moistened them  
With the most potent essence of her nectar!  
Three times, more than three times happy they  
Whom an unbroken bond chains together:  
And whose love, not torn by quarrels,





Binds together until  
Their last day on earth!

Lat. 5° N Long. 85° W  
April 1940





## CARMEN X

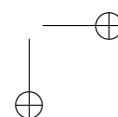
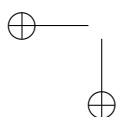
*O navis, referent in mare te novi  
Fluctus! O quid agis? Fortiter occupa*

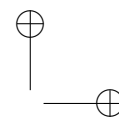
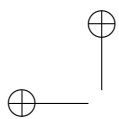
O Ship of State,  
You are drifting again to sea  
On a new ebb of folly!  
What madness is this?  
Hasten to safe harbor!

Your sides are depleted of oars:  
The swift Southerly  
Has started your mast;  
Your yards groan.  
Without the ropes to lash it,  
How can your keel endure  
The ruthless seas?

None of your sails is whole,  
No figurehead remains  
To bring you luck in evil weather.  
Pontic pine, noblest daughter of the forest  
Is a useless thing and a futile name  
When you broach to, in the gale.  
No cautious seaman banks much  
On painted idols.  
Beware, O Ship, or you will be  
A plaything of the winds!

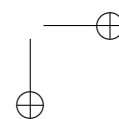
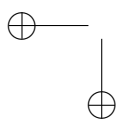
Lately you have been my grave concern,  
Soon you will be a lost regret,

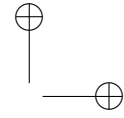
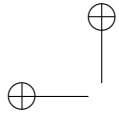




Unless you avoid the glittering seas  
That flow between the Cyclades.

Soames Sound  
August 1940

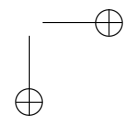
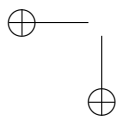


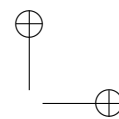
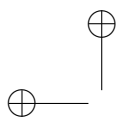


## CARMEN XI

*O matre pulchra filia pulchrior,  
Quem crimosus cunque voles modum*

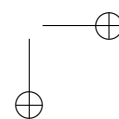
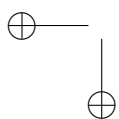
O mother lovelier than your lovely daughter,  
Burn my sarcastic rhymes  
Or throw them in the Hadrian Sea!  
Dindymian Cybele, Bacchus, and the Delphic one  
Do not terrify their priests in the inner shrines  
So much as my depressing tantrums –  
Which neither the Noric steel  
Nor the surging seas could stop,  
Nor the savage flames, nor the sky itself  
Falling with a great thunder –  
Terrify me. It is said  
That Prometheus, commanded to add to us  
Something from every animal,  
Put in our souls the temper of a mad lion.  
It is told how outbursts of rage  
Ruined Thyestes, and brought him  
To a horrible end. Rage has been  
The prime cause of the fall of lofty cities,  
Wherefore they perished utterly,  
And an arrogant conqueror  
Tore their proud ramparts with a hostile plow.  
Think kindly of me! Even in my pleasant youth  
Rage assailed my breast,  
And put madness in my headstrong rhymes.  
Now I am trying hard to swap  
Sour for sweet: provided,

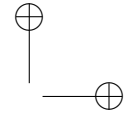
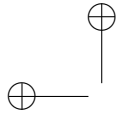




Once I have apologized, that you  
Will once again become my friend  
And let me share again your soul!

Of Block Island  
Autumnal Equinox 1940

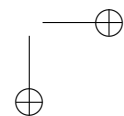
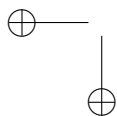




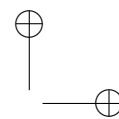
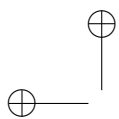
## CARMEN XII

*Velox amoenum saepe Lucretilem  
Mutat Lycaeo Faunus et igneam*

Swift Pan often deserts his native Lycaea  
To visit lovely Lucretilis; when he comes,  
He banishes the heat of Summer and the rain-winds  
For my goats.  
Out of danger they graze on the secluded arbutus  
In every grove, and the wives of my smelly creatures  
Wander after the thyme; nor do they fear  
The green snakes; and the little kids  
Can forget the Martian wolves,  
Whenever Pan makes the vales and smooth rocks of Ustica  
Vibrate with his sweet pipes.  
Tyndaris, my love, the gods protect me:  
My piety and my poems  
Must be dear to them!  
Here abundance, measured in a cornucopia!  
With the strings of Teos, with Anacreon's lyre,  
You will sing to me  
Of Penelope and glass-green Circe,  
Both lovesick for one man.  
Here under the shade,  
You will sip the harmless wine of Lesbos,  
And Bacchus will not quarrel with Mars,  
And you will be far  
From the jealous suspicions of Cyrus,  
And you will have no fear  
Of ugly incontinent hands seizing you to tear

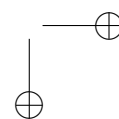
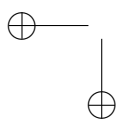


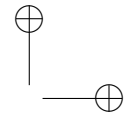
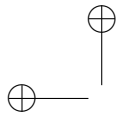




The flowers clinging in your hair,  
Nor to rip your dress away:  
It demands a better fate!

Somerset Bridge  
September 1940





### CARMEN XIII

*Nullam, Vare, sacra vite prius severis arborem  
Circa mite solum Tiburis et moenia Catili*

Varus, I hope that you will plant no tree  
Before you plant the sacred vine  
In the pleasant soil  
Around Tibur and the walls of Catilus.

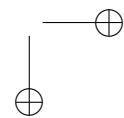
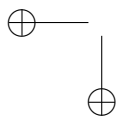
The Lord makes all things hard for non-drinkers,  
And there is no other way known  
To drive away soul-consuming cares.

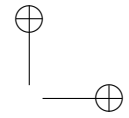
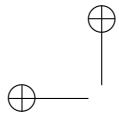
Who, after drinking wine  
Can harp on the problems of war or poverty?  
Who would not rather talk  
Of parties and of love?

Lest anyone violate the privileges granted us  
By the modest Lord of Wine,  
Remember the brawl! of the Centaurs with the Lapiths,  
Which started over wine  
And ended in blood.

Remember how Bacchus very gravely warns  
The Sithonians of Thrace  
That in their cups, men overcome with passion  
Divide right from wrong  
By the fine distinctions of lust alone.

I do not flout your canons,  
O open-hearted Bassareu,

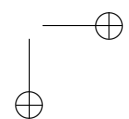
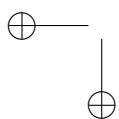


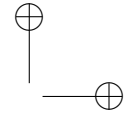
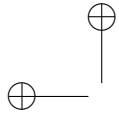


Nor do I uncover things hidden  
Under the ceremonial leaves.

Make the noisy ones cease beating the drums,  
And blasting on the Berecyntian horns –  
Blind conceit follows them –  
Boastfulness, exalting its empty heart –  
Trust, become generous with secrets,  
And more transparent than glass!

Somerset Bridge  
October 1940





## CARMEN XIV

*Mater saeva Cupidinum  
Thebanaeque iubet me Semeles puer*

A girl's voice, the wine's taste,  
Thoughts of women I knew:  
These are my masters.  
They say: "Give yourself back to us Horace  
You are not through with love yet!"

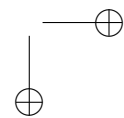
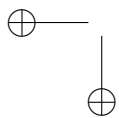
Her name is Glycera. I think she is lovelier  
Than Parian marble. Her beauty  
Burns me. Her sweet petulance  
Completely consumes me.

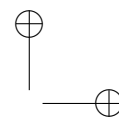
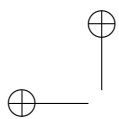
Her face has some elusive quality  
That I cannot quite catch  
When I look at her  
Out of the corner of my eye.

If there is a Goddess of Passion,  
She seems to have given up her other work  
To concentrate on me.

I cannot write now about the Cossacks,  
Nor about the Parthian, who shoots  
His deadliest arrows as he retreats,  
Nor about any such trivial subjects.

Here, men, build me a shrine out of green sod,  
Put the sacred myrtle on it,  
Scatter incense over it,

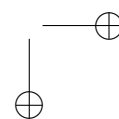
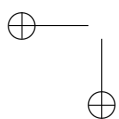


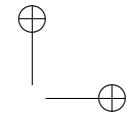
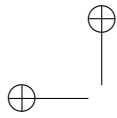


Break out a bottle of the 28 B.C.,  
And we'll kill a chicken!

The goddess may come with less violence  
If I have offered up a victim.

Somerset Bridge  
September 1940

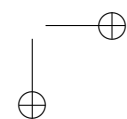
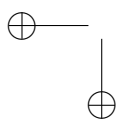


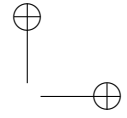
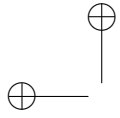


## CARMEN XV

*Integer vitae scelerisque purus  
Non eget Mauris iaculis neque arcu*

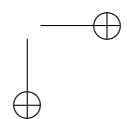
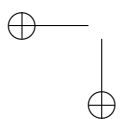
The good man, conscience free,  
Needs no Moorish javelins,  
Nor any bow, nor quiver  
Heavy with poisoned arrows,  
O Fuscus, whether he crosses boiling quicksands  
Or ventures into the inhospitable Caucasians,  
Or lands on whatever shores  
Are washed by the mystic Hydaspes!  
I for example: a wolf in the Sabine wood  
Fled from me though I was unarmed,  
While I was singing a song  
About my Lalage,  
And wandering beyond my fields,  
Divorced from care.  
No such monster dwells in the oak forests  
Of Daunia, home of soldiers,  
Nor does the dry soil of Iuba breed  
Any lion's nurse so fierce.  
Put me in the cold wastes  
Where no tree wakens in the warmth of summer,  
Where mists and an evil sky  
Hang always low;  
Put me in a land where no houses are,  
Too near under the Sun's chariot:

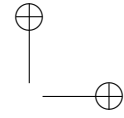
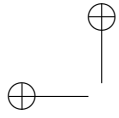




Even in these places  
I shall love Lalage smiling a sweet smile,  
Speaking a sweet word.

Somerset Bridge  
October 1940





## CARMEN XVI

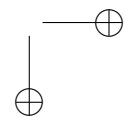
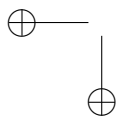
*Vitas hinnuleo me similis, Chloë,  
Quaerenti pavidam montibus aviis*

Chloë, you avoid me  
Like a young deer seeking her timid mother,  
Who is afraid of the pathless mountain places,  
Dreading the very breezes  
And the forest itself.

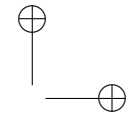
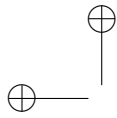
She trembles in her heart  
And her knees shake,  
Whether the breath of spring  
Quivers the restless leaves,  
Or the green lizards  
Skitter in the brambles.

Listen, Chloë! No snarling tigress I,  
Nor Graetulian lion  
Pursuing you to crush you:  
Stop following your mother about –  
You are old enough for a man!

Off David Bay, Panama  
April 1940







## CARMEN XVII

*Quis desiderio sit pudor aut modus  
Tam cari capitis? praecipite lugubres*

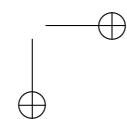
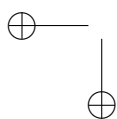
What is sorrow? How can you measure  
The loss of a life so dear?  
O Muse of Mourning to whom God gave  
A liquid voice and magic lyre,  
Teach us the sad songs.

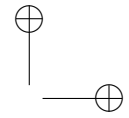
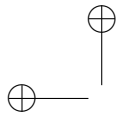
The sleep everlasting heavy lies  
On Quinctilius;  
When will Modesty, and Faith Incorruptible,  
Sister of Justice, and Truth the Pure  
Find a peer to him?

Mourned by many of the good and brave, he dies,  
But mourned by no-one more than you, Vergil;  
Alas! You ask the gods in vain  
Quinctilius to return,  
Who was not thus entrusted to their care.

If yet more beautifully than Thracian Orpheus,  
You were to sound the music  
That moved the trees,  
The living blood-would not return  
To his empty shadow.

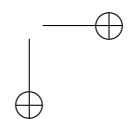
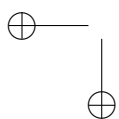
Once and for all the fearful wand of Mercury  
Has swung the great gates shut  
Against the dark massed shadows –  
Prayers do not open them.

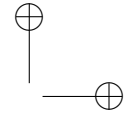
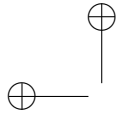




Hard! but fortitude makes easier  
The inscrutable laws of God.

Lat. 34° N Long. 73° W Altitude 9,000 ft.  
October 1940





## CARMEN XVIII

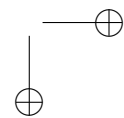
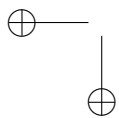
*Parcius iunctas quatiant fenestras  
Ictibus crebris iuvenes protervi*

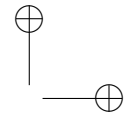
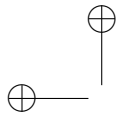
Not often now the lecherous lads  
Shake at your shutters in the night,  
No longer now they rob your sleep;  
Your closed door hugs its threshold,  
Whose hinges used to move so busily.

Less and less now you hear them call:  
“I’ve been longing for you all night long!  
Are you asleep, Lydia?”

The wheel has turned, and now you mourn  
The arrogant adulterers,  
A hag in a lonely lane, despised;  
When the new moon comes,  
And the wind raves  
In a wild Thracian bacchanal,  
Flagrant passion and the hot desire  
Which maddens the mares,  
Will rage in your rotten heart,  
Unsatisfied –  
For the gay young men prefer their myrtle dark,  
And their ivy green –  
But the dead dry leaves, they dedicate  
To the cold waters of the Hebrus.

New York City



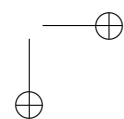
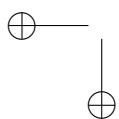


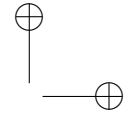
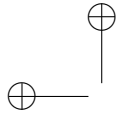
## CARMEN XIX

*Musis amicus tristitiam et metus  
Tradam protervis in mare Creticum*

Being a friend of the Muses,  
I throw sadness and dread  
To the headstrong winds in the Cretan Sea:  
What ruler is feared  
On the icy shores of the North,  
Or what terrifies  
The King of Armenia,  
Are no concern of mine!  
O, sweet lady who dwells  
In fountains unspoiled by mortals,  
Weave a garland of sunny flowers  
For my friend Lamia!  
My honors are as nothing  
Without him.  
Here in harmonies yet unheard,  
Here with my lyre of Lesbos,  
I am going to  
Immortalize Lamia.

*idem*

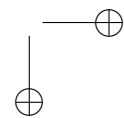
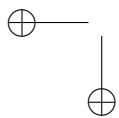


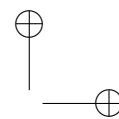
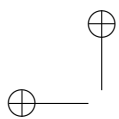


## CARMEN XX

*Natis in usum laetitiae scyphis  
Pugnare Thracum ets: tollite barbarum*

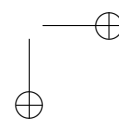
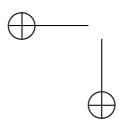
The Thracians raise their wine-cups, meant for pleasure,  
Only to throw them at each other:  
Blow such barbarian boorishness,  
And save bright Bacchus  
From all bloody brawls!  
The daggers of the Medes are different, far,  
From the warm wine, and the lamp  
That will burn all night.  
Pipe down, good friends,  
Pipe down and keep your seats!  
Me drink a bumper of the sharp Falernum?  
Well, then: first let Megilla's brother  
From Opus have the floor,  
To tell us with what cosy wound he's blessed,  
And all about the arrow which  
Has pierced his heart – What?  
You cannot bring yourself to answer?  
Then I refuse to drink!  
Whoever this enchanting creature be,  
Surely she glows with fires which need  
To raise no blush;  
Surely you never sin  
With a girl not quite,  
Shall we say, well-born?  
Whoever is on your mind, come,  
Confide it to the confidential breezes.

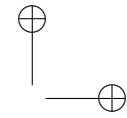
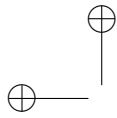




Ah, so? Too bad, too bad!  
With what a fearful vampire  
You have been struggling!  
Young man, you are worthy of a better flame!  
I wonder what witch, or what magician  
Can hope to set you free  
With Thessalian poisons?  
It's a task  
Which many a god would stumble at.  
Even on Pegasus, I doubt if you  
Could hope to rid yourself of this  
Fire-eating,  
Lion-headed,  
Snake-tailed apparition!

*idem*





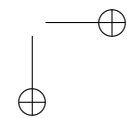
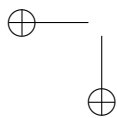
## CARMEN XXI

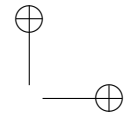
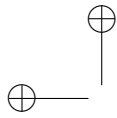
*Te maris et terrae numeroque carentis harenae  
Mensorem cohibent, Archyta*

*Argument: A sailor lying drowned on the  
shore near the tomb of Archytas, speaks*

Archytas, thou who didst measure the sands of the land and sea  
That know no number,  
A layer of earth confines you now  
In your tomb on this Matine shore,  
And little it helps that your genius soared  
To heaven's round vault,  
For Death was only waiting after all.

Tantalus, guest of the gods,  
Tithonus, love of the Dawn  
Minos, whom Jove trusted with secrets,  
Even these, even these are all gone.  
In hell Euphorbus dwells, whom Death  
Sent there a second time;  
– Archytas, you remember the account –  
How Pythagoras did prove,  
By choosing from a heap Euphorbus' shield,  
That in an earlier life,  
He was Euphorbus, and had lived in Troy,  
Which demonstrated – so he made the claim –  
That he had yielded naught to gloomy Death  
Except his skin and sinews.  
Pythagoras? No mean philosopher!





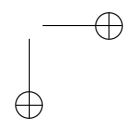
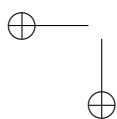
One single night awaits us everyone,  
And each of us must walk the road to hell:  
Whether the Furies drag us to war's grim show,  
Or the greedy ocean yawns to swallow us;  
Well-massed the dead, the young and old together, –  
And never a head  
Escapes the Scepter of Proserpine.

Me, Notus the Norther, swift companion of  
Orion as he dwindles in the sky,  
Drowned in the steep Illyrian waves.

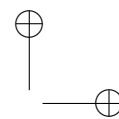
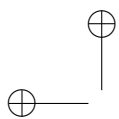
Pause, sailor, standing there,  
To scatter a handful of the wandering sand  
Upon me where I lie! – And if thou dost,  
Whatever the East Wind in the Hesperian Sea  
Threatens, however the elms of Venusia  
Are struck, may thou be spared, and may  
A great reward flow down upon thy soul  
From kindly Jove, and Neptune, He  
Who is Tarentum's holy guardian.

Surely it would not seem a trivial thing  
To you, to take upon yourself the guilt  
Of a crime against the harmless and innocent?  
– For if you do, the circumstance may come  
When justice pays its debt to you yourself,  
And you will see  
The homecoming of your shame;  
Nor unavenged my prayers would remain,  
Nor any sacrifice could set you free!

You have no time; I know, sailor,  
But it will not take you long –  
Then you may hasten on,

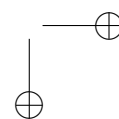
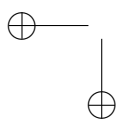


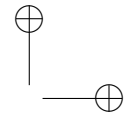
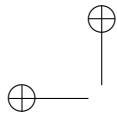




Having sprinkled the earth thrice over my remains,  
And spoken the holy words.

*idem*





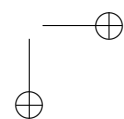
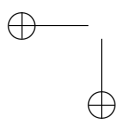
## CARMEN XXII

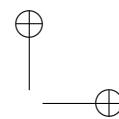
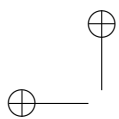
*Icci, beatis nunc Acabum invides  
Gazis, et acrem militiam paras*

Iccius, is it true that you  
Covet the riches of the Arabs,  
And that you are making up  
A military expedition? –  
Even forging fetters for  
The far-off Persian emirs?  
Not to mention, off still farther  
The Afghanistans,  
And others who are free and undefeated?

What virgin on barbarian shores,  
Her lover slain,  
Will be your slave?  
What boy from an oriental court,  
Trained to draw Chinese arrows  
In his father's bow,  
Will fetch your drinks?

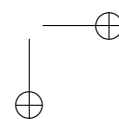
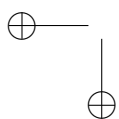
Who dares deny that the cascading torrents  
Can flow backwards  
Up the steep mountains,  
And the Tiber  
Turn in its course,  
When you, of all people,  
In the hope of better things,  
Are planning to exchange  
Your philosopher's house,

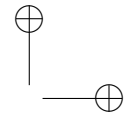
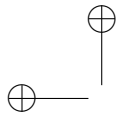




And the priceless volumes in it,  
Which you have collected from everywhere –  
For Spanish breastplates!

*idem*





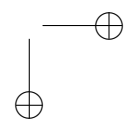
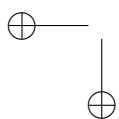
### CARMEN XXIII

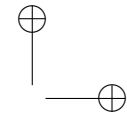
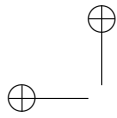
*O Venus, regina Cnidi Paphique,  
Sperne dilectam Cypron; et vocantis*

O Venus, queen of Cnidus and Paphos,  
Leave your favorite Cyprus for a while;  
Come, visit Glycera's little shrine –  
She is calling you,  
She is burning incense.

Bring Cupid and one of the graces,  
Bring Mercury along  
To stimulate the conversation –  
Bring Youth, who lacking love  
Lacks charm!

*idem*





## CARMEN XXIV

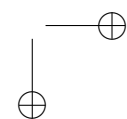
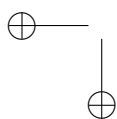
*Quid dedicatum poscit Apollinen  
Vates? quid orat de patera novum*

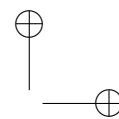
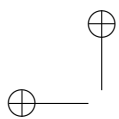
What is the poet's prayer  
To Apollo in his new temple?  
While he pours the holy wine,  
What blessings shall he ask?

Not the finest cornfields in Sardinia,  
Nor the fat kine of hot Calabria,  
Not the gold and ivory from India,  
Nor even all the meadows  
Which silent Liris washes  
With its quiet waters.

Let those who can afford their own vineyards  
Cut back their vines with Calenian knives,  
Let the rich merchant drain his Syrian wines  
To the dregs from his goblets of gold;  
To the gods, he must be very dear, because  
On three, – nay, four – occasions every year  
He revisits the Atlantic Ocean,  
And returns without a scratch!

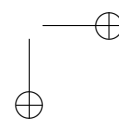
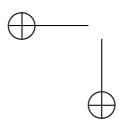
For my part, I live  
On olives, chickory, and the agreeable mallow.  
Here is my prayer, Apollo:  
Keep me well, keep me sane,  
To enjoy what I have,  
And when I grow old

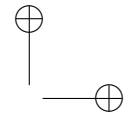
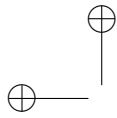




Let me not become too hideous,  
Nor take from me my zither!

*idem*



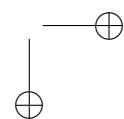
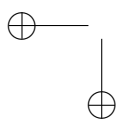


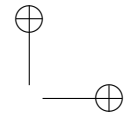
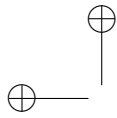
## CARMEN XXV

*Albi, ne doleas plus nimio memor  
Immitis Glycerae, neu miserabiles*

Albius, lest you grieve too much  
For Glycera, who is heartless –  
Lest you sing until the cows come home  
Your piteous elegies, asking  
Why a younger man outshines you,  
And why she is unfaithful,  
Consider this:  
Lycotis of the lovely forehead  
Loves Cyrus so madly, that  
To put it mildly, she  
Is in a state of conflagration!  
Cyrus inclines to cruel Pholoë;  
Pholoë would no sooner misbehave  
With such a fellow, whom she thinks repulsive,  
Than the roes would mate with the Apulian wolves.  
That is Venus for you: it pleases her,  
By way of a savage jest, to hitch together  
Ill-matched pairs in her enduring yokes.  
And I'm in the same boat!  
For when a certain divine creature lured me on –  
Myrtale, in case you don't know –  
– She's only a freed slave! –  
I found my bondage positively pleasant,  
And her more violent than the straits  
Of the Hadrian Sea, which cut the Calabrian shore.

*idem*



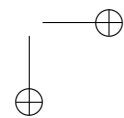
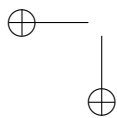


## CARMEN XXVI

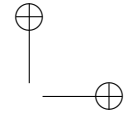
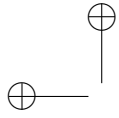
*Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens,  
Insanientis dum sapientiae*

I used to be a rare and seldom worshipper  
Of the gods,  
And I wandered through life  
Full of foolish brilliance.  
Now I must put my helm hard over,  
And sail back whence I came,  
For the Lord of Might,  
Who usually cleaves the clouds  
With His flashing flame,  
Lately sent horses and flying chariots  
Thundering through a sky  
That was absolutely clear.  
And the insensate earth, the meandering streams,  
The horrid Styx, and the hidden haunts  
Of Taenarus, near Hell's Gate,  
And Atlas, boundary of our world,  
Shook with the mighty force.  
He hath power to change  
The lowest into the highest;  
God maketh the great man weak,  
Bringing to light things hidden in gloom.  
From this one, greedy Fate  
Snatches the crown with a mighty tumult,  
And on that one,  
Places it, rejoicing!

*idem*







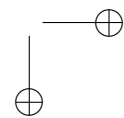
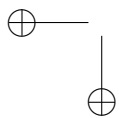
## CARMEN XXVII

*O diva, gratum quae regis Antium,  
Praesens vel imo tollere de gradu*

O Goddess, queen of lovely Antium,  
Quick to glorify some homely mortal,  
But ready to turn the haughty cavalcade  
Into a march of death:  
The farmer to Thee prays anxiously,  
And the mariner,  
Braving the Carpathian shore in his Bithynian keel,  
Woos Thee, the mistress of the seas.

The fierce Balkan, the nomad Scythian towns,  
Stern Latium, and the mothers  
Of warlike barbarian kings – these all  
Fear Thee – even the tyrants  
Dread Thee in their robes of state,  
Lest with an insulting foot  
Thou overthrow the pillar of their rule,  
And set the surging mobs to yelling,  
“Awake! To arms! To arms!”  
And shatter their empire’s power.

To herald Thee, strides savage Need,  
Wielding nails for beams  
In her hands of bronze –  
Wedges and clamps, molten lead, and all  
The hardware of permanence.  
Hope attends Thee, and Faith, so rare,  
Gives Thee her companionship, veiled  
In a robe of white.





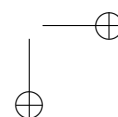
But if Thou turn unfriendly,  
And frowning, leave some prince's home;  
Faith follows him alone;  
The faithless mob and the lying harlot –  
Turn back and fade away,  
And when the wine-casks are empty,  
And the cups are drained to the lees,  
The friends of yesterday are gone,  
Too treacherous to bear the yoke  
Of his misfortune.

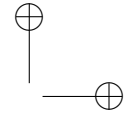
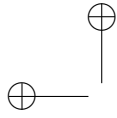
May Thou help Caesar, destined  
For the distant shores of Britain,  
And the young recruits who soon  
Will terrorize the regions of the East,  
And the Indian seas!

Alas! Our shame is deep  
For the crime of the scars  
Which brother has left on brother!  
What age of iron is on us?  
What is there that we godless fools  
Have not left in ruins?  
Has Youth restrained its hand  
In the fear of God  
Once, or spared one altar?

O Goddess of Fortune, it is Thou  
Who must help us to reforge  
Our blunted sword  
Against the Arabs and the Scythians!

*idem*





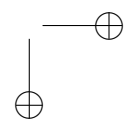
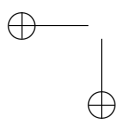
## CARMEN XXVIII

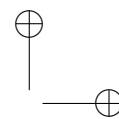
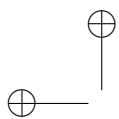
*Et thure et fidibus iuvat  
Placare et vituli sanguine debito*

Our joy is the worship of the gods  
With incense and with stringed music,  
And with the blood of a fatted bull-calf  
To praise them for the safe return  
Of Numida from the far Hesperian shores,  
Sharing now the welcome of his friends.  
None is more glad of his return  
Than Lamia, thinking of their boyhood days together,  
Under the same ruler – the days that are gone,  
When they wore the togas of youth.

May this happy celebration  
Be blessed with lucky signs,  
And may the jars of wine  
Be brought forth into the light,  
And may your feet  
Be rested in quiet tranquillity,  
And may Damalis,  
That girl who drinks so much,  
Not vanquish Bassus in the old Thracian game  
Of drinking bumpers,  
And may roses be not lacking from the feast,  
Nor the long-lived parsley for the wreaths,  
Nor the short-lived lily!

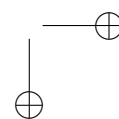
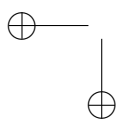
Everyone's hungry eyes  
Dwell on Damalis,

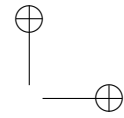
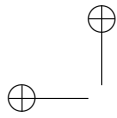




But Damalis will not be lured  
Away from her new lover:  
She clings to him more lovingly  
Than clings the lascivious ivy to the wall!

*idem*





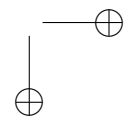
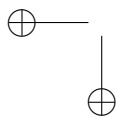
## CARMEN XXIX

*Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero  
Putsanda tellus, nunc Saliaribus*

Drink, my companions, drink!  
Shake the ground with your dancing,  
Deck the couch of the gods,  
And eat as you would eat  
At an old-time Saliar feast!

Ere now it would not have been fitting  
To take the Caecuban wine  
Out from the cellars ancestral,  
While that queen was preparing  
The ruin of our city,  
And the funeral of our empire,  
For which she had hoped in her madness –  
She, and her loathsome herd  
Of creatures vile with disease,  
So ungoverned,  
So drunk with success,  
That they could hope for anything!

But when the battle had ended,  
When the sound and the fury was done,  
She found herself  
With scarce one ship  
Saved from the flames;  
And the captives,  
Whom the Marean battle  
Had made mad with fright,  
Knew true terror now.





Caesar pressed on from Italy  
Against the fugitives,  
Like a hawk after doves,  
Or a hunter in the snowy Haemonian fields  
Against a swift hare,  
So that he might give  
This monstrous queen to chains.

Seeking a more noble end,  
She shuddered not  
With a woman's fear of the sword:  
She sought not to escape  
With her swift fleet to some distant realm,  
To supplant her lost Egypt.  
With eyes serene, she dared  
To look upon her fallen palace –  
Dared to take in her hands  
The maddened vipers,  
That her body might deeply drink  
Of their deadly venom.  
And once resolved to die,  
She was more fiercely proud –  
– How she hated our crue! Liburnian sailors! –  
She was a woman,  
Yet her spirit fell never so low  
That she could let herself,  
Yesterday a queen,  
Become tomorrow  
A captive in a Roman triumph.

*idem*





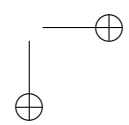
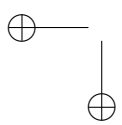
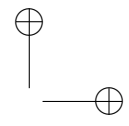
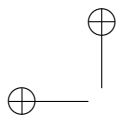
### CARMEN XXX

*Persicos odi, puer, apparatus,  
Displicent nexae philyra coronae*

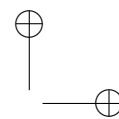
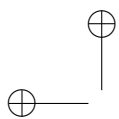
My lad, I loathe those Persian fellows!  
Lord! The wreaths they wear,  
Bound in their hair with linden bark!  
And – listen, my lad! – don't ever waste  
Your time in seeking the single,  
The too-too precious spot  
Where the last rose lingers;  
Nor would I fret too-much  
About how to improve the simple myrtle –  
That's not your worry – nor mine,  
As you serve me,  
And I drink wine,  
Here beneath the close-packed vine.

Long Island Sound  
July 1940









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