The Romantic Pilgrim: Narrative Structure in Samuel Barber's *Hermit Songs*

by

Sara E. Kimbell

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Music History and Literature

in the

Master of Music

Program

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
May, 2010

The Romantic Pilgrim: Narrative Structure in Samuel Barber's *Hermit Songs*

Sara E. Kimbell

I hereby release this thesis to the public. I understand that this thesis will be made available from the OhioLINK ETD Center and the Maag Library Circulation Desk for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Sara E. Kimbell, Student	Date

Approvals:

Randall Goldberg, Thesis Advisor	Date

Allan Mosher, Committee Member	Date

Jena Root, Committee Member	Date

William Slocum, Committee Member	Date

Peter J. Kasvinsky, Dean of School of Graduate Studies and Research	Date

THE HERMIT SONGS, OP. 29
By Samuel Barber

ABSTRACT

Samuel Barber's professional career covered the majority of the twentieth century, spanning from the early 1930s to the late 1970s. An honored and frequently performed American composer, many of Barber's compositions have gained a place in the standard repertoire. Despite his success, scholarly sources have a tendency to treat Barber as a twentieth-century afterthought. This thesis takes the question of Barber's historical reception as a point of departure to study his song cycle the *Hermit Songs* (1952-53).

The *Hermit Songs*, written during the peak of Barber's career, demonstrate many of the compositional features associated with his mature style. Alone, the texts constitute a collection of poetry related through a number of contrasting themes: solitude and community, faith and doubt, and piety and promiscuity. More corporeal relations among the texts include the repeated appearance of birds and bells. Barber's treatment of the texts enhances these thematic connections and unites the poetry through a number of musical devices.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of this representative work, this thesis will examine the personal and educational experiences that helped shape Barber's predilection for Romantic and post-romantic techniques. The subsequent analysis of the *Hermit Songs* will address the history, composition, and premiere of the cycle, followed by an examination of the songs' harmonic language and analysis of narrative structure as articulated through textual and musical cross-references, time-determined events, and abstract patterning and symmetry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

Musical Examples

Tables

Charts

Figures

INTRODUCTION

Samuel Barber: A Twentieth-Century Romantic

Samuel Barber's professional career covered the majority of the twentieth

century, spanning from the early 1930s to the late 1970s. During the mid and late 1940s,

there was a stark division of style among American composers.[1] On one side were those

who fully embraced modernistic styles and strove to break free of tonality to create a

new, experimental music. In apparent opposition to modern trends, other composers

remained faithful to the European traditions of late Romanticism and to the neo-classical

styles that were prevalent before WWII. In his music, Barber merged the expanding

tonality of twentieth century modernism with the musical forms and romantic lyricism of

his nineteenth-century predecessors. He is now one of the most honored and frequently

performed American composers, and many of his compositions have gained a place in the

standard repertoire.[2]

Despite his success, scholarly sources have a tendency to treat Barber as a

twentieth-century afterthought. Nathan Broder observed this phenomenon as early as

1948 and made note of it in an article in *The Music Quarterly*:

> As was to be expected, critics and historians have found it convenient to lump all
> these men into a few groups and to label each group. Allotted to the class of "neo-
> romantics," and regarded by some as one of its most outstanding representatives,
> is Samuel Barber. Now pigeonholing of this sort often results in
> oversimplification; and labeling Barber's music neo-romantic, while helpful in

---

[1] William Brooks, "The Americans, 1945-70," in *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present*, ed. Robert P. Morgan (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), 316-17.

[2] Barbara B. Heyman, *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), vii.

describing his earlier works, disregards significant elements in his later and more important products.[3]

In the early 1990s, Barbara Heyman also noticed the lack of scholarly attention, and remarked on the state of Barber research in the introduction of her biography of the composer.

> In spite of his position as a major American composer of the twentieth century, there has been a relative paucity of scholarly writings about Barber's music and no exhaustive, documented study of his career and oeuvre.[4]

Even Barber himself was aware of this problem during his lifetime: "It's true I've had little success in intellectual circles. I'm not talked about in the *New York Review of Books*, and I was never part of the Stravinsky 'inner circle.' In Aaron Copland's book *Our American Music,* my name appears as a footnote."[5]

Copland was not the only author to pass over Barber; numerous historical studies neglect to mention the American composer. The most recent and perhaps shocking neglect occurs in Richard Taruskin's comprehensive *Oxford History of Western Music*. One might expect such a large study to pass over less important (or rather, less innovation-oriented) composers, and that Barber's name might be reduced to a brief mentioning within a list of composers. Taruskin goes even further—Barber is entirely absent from the two volumes covering the twentieth century.[6]

---

[3] Nathan Broder, "The Music of Samuel Barber," *The Musical Quarterly* 34, No. 3 (July 1948): 325. Broder later used this article as part of his biography on Barber, published in 1954.

[4] Heyman, *Samuel Barber*, vii.

[5] John Gruen, "And Where Has Samuel Barber Been…?," *New York Times*, October 3, 1971, Arts and Leisure Section, 30. Barber probably meant *The New Music: 1900-60* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), the "revised and enlarged edition" of Aaron Copland's *Our New Music* (1941). Copland briefly mentioned Barber in the chapter "New Music in the U.S.A." (page 105). He is not actually listed in a footnote but as part of an alphabetical list of composers who came to popularity in the 1930s. Copland states after the list: "These men form, for better or worse, the American school of our own day."

[6] Richard Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music*, 6 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Smaller period studies also have a tendency to overlook Barber. Carol Oja's chapter, "The USA, 1918-46," in *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present*, contains an extensive discussion of both Ives and Copland, yet Barber is only briefly mentioned as part of a small list of "conservative figures."[7] Both Robert P. Morgan's *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* and Paul Griffiths's *Modern music: The Avant Garde Since 1945* fail to mention Barber in the chapters on American music.[8] Of course Barber is not entirely absent from historical accounts. Numerous studies include his name in discussions of American music, although often as part of a list of composers, or as Barber observed, in a footnote.[9]

Why is Samuel Barber so often pushed aside by historical narratives and scholarly studies of twentieth century music? More than once he represented the United States in prominent international conventions and festivals. He attended the international music festival in Prague in 1946, acted as the vice-president of the International Music Council in 1952, and became the first American composer to attend the biennial Congress of Soviet Composers in Moscow in 1962.[10] Twice Barber was awarded the Pulitzer Prize: first in 1958, for his opera *Vanessa,* and again in 1963 for his Piano Concerto, which was commissioned for the inaugural week of Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall, now known

---

[7] Carol J. Oja, "The USA, 1918-46," in *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present*, ed. Robert P. Morgan (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), 210-13; 227.

[8] Robert P. Morgan. *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991); Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: The Avant Garde Since 1945* (New York: G. Braziller, 1981).

[9] Wayne C. Wentzel, *Samuel Barber: A Guide to Research* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 1.

[10] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 245, 329, 414.

as Avery Fisher Hall.[11] Given this level of recognition, why has Barber been largely ignored by the scholarly community?

The Latin proverb *fortes fortuna adiuvat*, or "fortune favors the brave," seems an appropriate phrase to describe music historiography of the twentieth century. Broder's observation about stylistic labels somewhat anticipated this issue. Barber's music, while immensely popular at the time, did not push the boundaries of tonality or experiment with electronic sounds. He did not concern himself with trends, but instead composed in a style that he felt to be authentic in its emotional content.[12] Although Barber was one of the most frequently performed American composers in the 1940s and 50s, the trend toward modernism (or the avant-garde) in the 1960s made his music seem passé.[13]

Barber's status as a neo-romantic raised an academic barrier which resulted in a lack of scholarly focus that lasted until the mid-1990s. When Heyman wrote her biography in 1991, it was the first attempt at a documented study of Barber's career and oeuvre. Up to that point, the only available biography was written in 1954 by Nathan Broder, and while it contained information from Barber himself, the study was obviously incomplete due to its year of publication.[14] Don A. Hennessee's 1985 bio-bibliography for Barber demonstrates that shortly after the composer's death in 1981, articles, dissertations and theses were scarce.[15] Wayne C. Wentzel's *Samuel Barber: A Guide to Research,* written in 2001, sheds light on the current state of Barber research. Wentzel

---

[11] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 393, 420.

[12] Ibid., 512.

[13] Ibid., 514.

[14] Nathan Broder, *Samuel Barber* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1954).

[15] Don A. Hennessee, *Samuel Barber: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1985).

states that while there is still a shortage of scholarly articles, there seems to be a growing interest in Barber's works, specifically on college campuses.[16] Not only are his works becoming more frequently performed, but as another sign of increased interest in Barber's music, more graduate students and doctoral candidates are writing theses and dissertations concerning specific pieces and his works in general.[17]

This thesis takes the question of Barber's historical reception as a point of departure to study his song cycle the *Hermit Songs*, composed in 1952-53. Written during the peak of his career, the *Hermit Songs* are arguably one of Barber's most significant contributions to American art song. This particular cycle embodies many aspects commonly associated with Barber's mature compositional style. Themes of solitude in the *Hermit Songs* mirror Barber's personal and professional life, medieval Irish texts represent his long-standing interest with Irish literature and culture, and modal-chromatic harmonies reveal influences from the Romantic and post-romantic eras while also demonstrating Barber's interaction with modernist styles.

The *Hermit Songs* constitute a collection of poetry related through a number of contrasting themes: solitude and community, faith and doubt, and piety and promiscuity. Barber's arrangement and musical treatment of the medieval Irish texts enhances these connections through textual and musical cross-references, time-determined events, and abstract patterning and symmetry. The subsequent analysis of the *Hermit Songs* will address the history, composition, and premiere of the cycle, followed by an examination of the harmonic language and analysis of narrative structure.

---

[16] Wentzel, *A Guide to Research*, 1.

[17] Ibid.

CHAPTER 1

Reception and Scholarship

Although serious studies of Barber are by no means numerous, recent history has witnessed a rise in scholarly interest. Since Barber's death in 1981, investigations into his life and music have steadily increased. Prior to that time, studies were scarce.[18] The largest, and perhaps most well-known of recent works is Heyman's 1991 biography, *Samuel Barber: The Composer and his Music*. Heyman traces Barber's life chronologically, and addresses his compositions within the context of biographical information. This integrated approach provides insight into both Barber's personal and professional life through the inclusion of primary sources such as interviews, correspondence, and manuscripts. The most complete study of its kind, Heyman's book serves as one of the main sources of biographical information for aspiring Barber scholars.

Other recent contributions to Barber studies focus on specific works and genres. While a few studies discuss Barber's operas, most focus on his choral, vocal, and piano compositions; less studied are his orchestral and chamber works.[19] Several dissertations and theses examine the *Hermit Songs* in regards to both textual and formal musical aspects. Studies by the following scholars are of particular interest to this thesis: Jean

---

[18] The earliest Barber study was a biography by Nathan Broder in 1954, followed by Russell Edward Friedewald's dissertation in 1957. Friedewald's work contains the first analytical study of the *Hermit Songs*, and is frequently cited by other scholars. Russell Edward Friedewald, "A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber," (Ph.D. diss., Iowa State University, 1957).

[19] Wetzel, *A Guide to Research*, 1.

Louise Kreiling, Judith E. Carman, Alycia Kathleann Davis, and Greg Alan Coutts.[20] Because these texts are frequently cited, the following is a brief review and summary of their main points.

Kreiling's dissertation centers on Barber's long-standing fascination with literature and art song, and explores his literary preferences and treatments of song texts. Through literary and musical analysis, Kreiling addresses Barber's entire song output. Her study is organized in an unusual but logical manner, with chapters arranged according to textual origin rather than chronological order. Many of the musical examples come from primary sources, such as sketches, notes, and autograph scores. The chapter on British literature includes a discussion about Barber's preference for British and Irish poets, and also details his fondness for particular themes and poetic techniques. Kreiling's analyses of the *Hermit Songs* addresses both the poetry and music, with particular attention to Barber's text setting techniques, as demonstrated through changes in early sketches of the cycle. Kreiling's findings contribute to our understanding of Barber's compositional technique and his historical position, and also to the complex relationships between music and language.

Although Carman's dissertation is not specifically about Barber or his compositions, her examination of the song cycle in the twentieth century is particularly valuable to this study. Carman's dissertation focuses on the concept of circular or cyclical imagery, and comes as the result of extensive historical research into the song cycle as a

---

[20] Jean Louise Kreiling, "The Songs of Samuel Barber: A Study in Literary Taste and Text Setting" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1986); Judith Elaine Carman, "Twentieth-Century American Song Cycles: A Study in Circle Imagery" (D.M.A., University of Iowa, 1973); Alycia Kathleann Davis, "Samuel Barber's 'Hermit songs,' Opus 29: An Analytical Study" (M.M. thesis, Webster College, 1983.); Greg Alan Coutts, "A Formal, Melodic and Harmonic Analysis of the Published Solo-Song Compositions of Samuel Barber" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1991).

genre. She discusses at length the concept of circular imagery in music, the definition and

history of the song cycle as a genre, and the development of the song cycle in the United

States from 1900-1970. Following these discussions, Carman presents a method for

categorizing cycles that contain forms of circular imagery. She outlines four major

categories based on prominent circular features. Below is a summary of the four

categories.

1) **Poetic Circular Imagery, Symbols and Themes:** Cycles in which circle imagery is present mainly in the poetry – either in its symbols or its theme(s).
2) **Circle Imagery, Arrangement of Poems**: Cycles in which circle imagery is present mainly in the arrangement of the poems and in which there are some circular musical devices.
3) **Strongly Musical Circularity**: Cycles in which circle imagery (or cyclical procedure) is strongly musical
4) **Circle Imagery, Formal Structure**: A cycle in which circle imagery is present in all of these aspects as well as in its overall formal structure.[21]

Her study culminates with the analysis of circular imagery in fifteen song cycles from the

twentieth century. She divides her analyses into the four categories shown above and

includes three cycles in the first category, seven in the second, four in the third, and one

in the fourth.[22] While the *Hermit Songs* are not featured as one of the fifteen cycles,

Carman mentions the cycle several times in the section on historical development and

refers to it as a prime example of a thematic cycle.[23]

---

[21] Carman, "A Study in Circle Imagery," 149-237.

[22] While at first this division appears uneven, Carman gives ample reason for why she does not include more cycles in the fourth category. This particular category relies on the following: imagery in the poetry itself, recurring musical devices, and a formal structure that as a whole rests upon the circular arrangement of the poems. The last prerequisite is found in cycles which have repetitive circular poetry which essentially creates a mirror image of itself. Very few cycles have such a formal poetic and musical structure.

[23] Carman, "A Study in Circle Imagery," 132.

Davis's study of Barber's *Hermit Songs* focuses primarily on musical analysis. She also provides a brief biography of Barber and information about the origins of each text, including references to the translations that Barber did not use. Her analyses include the identification of tonal centers, metric characteristics, rhythmic and melodic patterns, and formal structures. Davis's use of Alan Forte's system of set theory analysis assists in demonstrating Barber's use of contemporary idioms. Her discussion with regard to a three-note motive is of particular interest to this study, and will be addressed in chapter 5.

As the title suggests, Coutts's dissertation analyzes all thirty-six of Barber's published solo-song compositions that appear in the G. Schirmer collection first published in 1971.[24] Coutts presents the songs in order of opus number, and analyzes each with a systematic method. Each chapter begins with a comparison of the original text and Barber's modifications (if any), followed by an analytical discussion on the formal, melodic, and harmonic structure of the song. In his chapter on the *Hermit Songs*, Coutts also includes other translations which Barber did not use. The final chapter catalogues trends in Barber's songs, and notes compositional frequencies in text types and settings, musical form, melodic, harmonic and tonal elements, and types of modulations and cadences. Some of the interesting trends which Coutts points out include Barber's recurrent use of ostinati and pedal points, techniques which can be found in one-fourth and one-half of his songs, respectively.

---

[24] This is the only collection of Barber's solo songs. It is available in both "high voice" and "low voice" editions; all analyses in this thesis refer to the original keys found in the edition for "high voice."

CHAPTER 2

Education and Influences

Throughout his career, Barber maintained what others refer to as a neo-romantic, or even conservative style. While he included modernist idioms in his works after 1940, he never fully abandoned the formal and harmonic language that originally attracted him to composition. In Barber's own words:

> Skyscrapers, subways, and train lights play no part in the music I write. Neither am I at all concerned with the musical values inherent in geometric cerebrations. My aim is to write good music that will be comprehensible to as many people as possible, instead of music heard only by small, snobbish musical societies in the large cities…The universal basis of artistic spiritual communication by means of art is through the emotions.[25]

The above quotation comes from a 1935 interview with the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, only two years after his graduation from the Curtis Institute. It highlights Barber's early dedication to the creation of music which expressed emotions through the use of accessible harmonies and melodies. Nathan Broder also observed this dedication in 1948: "His visions were not of the sort that required the forging of an individual idiom; they could be best expressed in an existing and well known tongue."[26]

Barber's lifelong commitment to the tonal language of the nineteenth century was influenced by a variety of factors. Heyman suggests three main influences on the development of his musical language: the mentorship and guidance of his uncle, Sydney Homer, Barber's formal musical education, and his European travels, which broadened

---

[25] Gama Gilbert, "Philharmonic Plays Youth's Work Today," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 1935, 24, quoted in Heyman, *Samuel Barber*, 130.

[26] Broder, "The Music of Samuel Barber," 332.

his taste in music, literature and other intellectual pursuits.[27] The combination of these three influences helped form Barber's artistic principles and firmly established his predilection for Romantic styles. This chapter will briefly discuss how each of these three aspects, among others, influenced Barber's musical language.

Barber as a Student

Barber's fascination with music began early in his childhood. He started piano lessons at the age of six, and was writing music by the age of seven. Despite his parents' encouragement to pursue "normal American boy" activities, Barber knew by the time he was nine that he wanted to be a composer:

> Notice to *Mother* and *nobody else*
> Dear Mother: I have written this to tell you my worrying secret….To begin with I was not meant to be an athlete [*sic*]. I was meant to be a composer, and will be I'm sure. I'll ask you one more thing.—Don't ask me to try to forget this unpleasant thing and go play football.—*Please*—Sometimes I've been worrying about this so much that it makes me mad (not very),
> *Love,*
> *Sam Barber II*[28]

Barber's interest in composition was largely influenced and encouraged by his maternal aunt, and her husband—Louise and Sidney Homer. Barber's aunt Louise was a successful contralto and enjoyed a career at the Metropolitan Opera that spanned over two decades. Sidney Homer was a successful American composer who wrote over one hundred songs, many of which were widely popular during his lifetime.[29]

---

[27] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 4-5.

[28] Ibid., 7.

[29] Dee Baily, "Homer, Sidney," *Grove Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13283.

While Barber's parents were hesitant towards music as a profession, the Homers recognized a great talent in their young nephew. Sidney Homer often critiqued Barber's works and encouraged him to study the compositions of great composers.[30] Homer's early guidance became the driving force that inspired Barber to follow his love of music. Barber frequently sought his uncle's advice, which Homer readily supplied. When Barber asked his uncle if he had the talent to become a professional composer, Homer answered carefully by detailing the ambitions for which he felt an aspiring composer must aim:

> There are three things you must aim for definitely. The first is the development of a taste that should, in time, amount to a passion, for the best in music in all forms.… The second … is to have a good teacher in composition.… The third is that you should master a practical instrument … I should say either the piano or the violin, or, better still, both. That is what Beethoven and Mozart did.[31]

In the years to come, Barber would follow Homer's advice with great fervor.

Through a series of letters Homer convinced Barber's parents to send him to the Curtis Institute of Music at the age of fourteen.[32] As a young composition student at Curtis, Barber found ample opportunity to attend concerts. Every Friday afternoon he and the other composition students received an early dismissal so that they could attend the matinee performances of the Philadelphia Orchestra. There he was exposed to music by the great masters such as Beethoven, Mozart, and Brahms, and also contemporary composers Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky.[33]

While at Curtis, and for many years after, Barber continually turned to Homer for guidance in his life and his compositions. Numerous extant correspondences shed light

---

[30] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 18.

[31] Homer to Barber, 19 December 1922, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 18.

[32] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 17.

[33] Ibid., 37.

on their close relationship and rare kinship. In a 1941 letter Homer remarked, "You are the only one in my narrow life with whom I see eye to eye."[34] Homer's influence can be seen throughout many aspects of Barber's works, from his interest in art song, to his partiality for music of the Romantic era and post-romantic styles of the early twentieth century. Barber's literary tastes also show the influence of his uncle. Both shared a fondness for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British poets such as Browning, Tennyson, Shelley, Burns, and Byron, and for Celtic poets such as James Stephens, James Joyce, and William Butler Yeats.[35]At the end of her biography, Heyman remarks on Homer's long standing influence on Barber:

> It is a rare mentor who can sustain his influence for as long a time as Homer did. The wisdom and optimism that he transferred to the younger composer for more than twenty-five years fostered Barber's mission, supported his own inclination to adhere unwaveringly to the Romantic style, and inspired the direction of his intellectual environment.

Without a doubt, Homer's constant support and advice left a lasting impression on his nephew. In July of 1953, Homer passed away in Winter Park, Florida.

Barber's formal education began at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia in 1924, the institute's fledgling year. For nine years he received a rigorous education which Heyman describes as "traditional, Europe-oriented, and institutionalized."[36] Barber took formal lessons in composition with the Italian violinist and composer Rosario Scalero, a student of the well-known Romanian musicologist Eusebius Mandyczewski. Barber also studied piano with George Boyle and later Isabelle Vengerova. After his first year of

---

[34] Homer to Barber, 4 March 1941, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 196.

[35] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 43-46.

[36] Ibid., 4.

piano lessons, Boyle remarked on Barber's report card: "Only fourteen. Technically not

far advanced yet but very promising indeed. Astonishing musical insight and a very

extraordinary gift for composition."[37] By the beginning of his third year at Curtis, Barber

received permission to study voice with baritone Emilio de Gogorza, and became the first

student at the Institute allowed to major in three subjects.[38]

Barber studied theory and composition with Scalero from 1925 until 1934.

Scalero's pedagogical methods were derived from Mandyczewski, an associate of

Brahms's who in turn had studied with the Beethoven authority Martin Gustav

Nottebohm.[39] Above all, Scalero's training stressed the importance of form and

counterpoint:

> Two years of study were devoted to counterpoint, beginning with the simplest two-part writing and ending with double (eight-part) choruses … After mastering strict counterpoint, the students were set to writing canons and fugues, variations, songs and piano pieces embodying the various small forms, and, finally, large works employing the sonata principles. Scalero did not regard harmony as a discipline to be studied separately. He treated it primarily as a result of the confluence of voices. [40]

Scalero combined this strict style of teaching with what Broder referred to as "Italian

flexibility." He taught without textbooks, and instead focused his attention to developing

a private teacher-pupil relationship. Rather than teaching rules, Scalero encouraged

students to use their eyes and ears so that they might discern the rules through their own

study of great music. In regards to composition, he taught on the premise that music must

---

[37] Broder, *Samuel Barber*, 14.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Howard Pollack, "Samuel Barber, Jean Sibelius, and the Making of an American Romantic," *Musical Quarterly* 84 (Summer 2000): 176.

[40] Broder, *Samuel Barber*, 16.

"breathe," with equal importance on both the arsis and thesis, or the breath in and the breath out.[41] As a result of Scalero's meticulous training, Barber gained what Heyman refers to as a "remarkable sense of form."[42]

In the summer of 1928, Barber made his first trip to Europe. There he found freedom from the social and intellectual conservatism of Philadelphia, and fell in love with European society. He marveled at the intelligence of youth abroad. In a letter home he remarked, "[T]hey know all the Wagner operas, Stravinsky, Debussy. Fancy talking like that to an ordinary American college student."[43] As it was custom for advanced Curtis students to continue their studies during the summer months, Barber made time to visit Scalero during his travels. With Scalero's guidance Barber purchased an autographed manuscript of Brahms and managed to visit the Imperial Library in Vienna, which was ordinarily closed during summer.[44] At Scalero's advice, he also made a trip to visit "old Doktor" Mandyczewski, whom Barber described as "Brahms himself."[45]

During his second trip to Europe in the summer of 1929, Barber was joined by fellow student Gian Carlo Menotti, whom Scalero had introduced to Barber during the previous school year. In a letter to his family, Barber expressed the pleasure which he found in Menotti's company:

> I suppose you can tell from the sincerity of my letters how much more Europe means to me this year. Every moment is a joy. Perhaps it is because one must go

---

[41] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 36.

[42] Ibid., 35.

[43] Barber to family, 22 June 1928, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 53.

[44] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 56.

[45] Broder, *Samuel Barber*, 19.

one time first to really enjoy the second. Or perhaps it is Gian Carlo. He is quite perfect; at close range, the defects become delights.[46]

This trip marked the beginning of a long personal and professional relationship with Menotti. Together, the young composers formed a two-man, antimodernist front and disparaged the music of their immediate elders as experimental and cerebral.[47] In 1943, they purchased a home together in Mount Kisco, New York.[48] Capricorn, named for the amount of sunshine it received in the winter, became the place to which Barber retreated when working on compositions. Although Barber and Menotti later grew apart due to both professional and personal differences, the two remained friends until Barber's death in 1981.

While in Europe, Barber found comfort in the company of young artists who shared his Romantic idealism. Although he was a composer, he preferred the company of non-musician intellectuals, and made few alliances with other composers, claiming that their narrow intellectual interests made him feel "ossified within the very limits of his techniques."[49] Barber held fast to this particular view of composers and remained highly critical of most of his contemporaries throughout his career. In a 1971 interview with the New York Times, Barber confessed, "Most composers bore me, because most composers are boring."[50]

Besides Menotti, Barber was close to very few of his contemporaries. One of the exceptions was Francis Poulenc, whom Barber met in 1946 while attending the

---

[46] Barber to family, 31 May 1929, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 69.

[47] Pollack, "Making of an American Romantic," 176.

[48] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 239.

[49] Ibid., 4.

[50] Gruen, "And Where Has Samuel Barber Been…?," 21.

International Music Festival in Prague. Like Barber, Poulenc had an affinity for art song and wrote in a conservative style which combined twentieth-century impressionistic devices with traditional harmonies of the classical and romantic eras.[51] Barber had a deep appreciation for Poulenc's work, most especially his songs. Although fluent in French, Barber relied on Poulenc to confirm the correctness of his prosody in his *Mélodies passagères* (1951), a song cycle on five French poems by Rainer Maria Rilke. Poulenc was so fond of the songs that he later premiered them with baritone Pierre Bernac in Paris and New York. During an interview in 1978, Barber said of Poulenc, "He was a good friend and he was one of my only composer friends … I've rarely been that close to another composer."[52]

Barber as a Composer

While many factors influenced Barber's predilection for the neo-romantic, it was the strength of his personal convictions which allowed him to continually pursue his own "conservative" style. Barber refused to follow modernist trends, and instead sought to compose music that focused on the expression of emotion. His perseverance was in part a result of Homer's encouragement to listen to his "inner voice." When Barber was sixteen, Homer wrote to the young composer:

> It takes some courage to go into an art which shows you as you are, and no doubt many wonderful souls have shrunk from the ordeal and refused to put their real emotions into art form for others to know.[53]

---

[51] Vivian Lee Poates Wood, *Poulenc's Songs: An Analysis of Style* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979), 5, 77.

[52] Interview, Robert Sherman, WQXR, 30 September 1978, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 326.

[53] Homer to Barber, 9 July 1926, Boston, New York, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 513.

Barber's mature musical language is derived not so much from the Romantic era, but rather from the post-romantic styles of the early twentieth century.[54] His adherence to the romantic style throughout his fifty-year career, however, did not prevent him from broadening and developing as a composer. Both Heyman and Broder cite a distinct change in style following the outbreak of World War II, after which Barber's music was marked by an increase in chromaticism, dissonance, tonal ambiguity, and limited serialism.[55] One of the most distinguishing aspects of Barber's mature language is his use of modality in combination with tertian and quartal harmonies. This modal-chromatic language can be seen throughout many of his works, including the *Hermit Songs*. Although he incorporated modernist elements into his works after 1940, Barber never felt compelled to stray far from traditional forms, tonality, and lyricism. His later works represent an expansion, rather than rejection of the romantic elements with which Barber was closely associated. He used modernist elements only if they did not interfere with his own lyrical style.

As first noted by Broder, Barber's sense of formal structure best demonstrates his interaction with Romantic and post-romantic styles.[56] An equally strong tie can be found in Barber's preference for art song. His consistent attraction towards the genre was no doubt fueled in part by Homer's influence, and his own love of literature. Unlike larger forms, songs came easily to Barber, and he often turned to song-writing during creative

---

[54] Howard Pollack, "Making of an American Romantic," 177.

[55] Broder, *Samuel Barber*, 35; Heyman, *The Composer and His Music* 197, 513.

[56] Broder, *Samuel Barber*, 56.

dry spells.[57] Excluding all large-scale vocal works such as operas, choruses, and orchestral settings, Barber wrote over one hundred solo songs, of which thirty-seven are published.[58] If one includes his unpublished works, Barber's songs account for more than half of his compositions.

In song composition Barber's foremost concern was textual clarity, and so he determined almost all musical aspects through considerations for the text. The excerpt below comes from an interview with American composer and writer Phillip Ramey:

> **Phillip Ramey:** I assume that you normally let the text dictate the form of a song.
>
> **Samuel Barber**: You pretty much have to if you don't want to distort the text, although sometimes I cut out a verse here and there. I try, by the way, not to distort the natural rhythms of a poem, because if this happens the words will be distorted and so will the public's understanding of them. I very much want the words to be comprehensible. My songs, like lieder [*sic*], tend to highlight the texts.[59]

Barber's compositions are so intimately tied to the text that it is practically impossible to discuss any musical aspect without making reference to its textual influences. Kreiling suggests that Barber's encounters with texts directed his compositional technique more than his exposure to the musical works and ideas of his contemporaries, or even the evolution of his own methods.[60] To provide textual clarity, Barber composed music that

---

[57] Although Barber denied being a self-conscious composer, many personal letters and individual testimonies shed light on the difficulty he often encountered when writing a large work. Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 5.

[58] The 37 published solo songs include the two large works for orchestral and soprano: *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, Op. 24, and *Adromache's Farewell*, Op. 39. The list does not however, include *Dover Beach*, Op. 3, which is set for baritone, contralto, and string quartet.

[59] Phillip Ramey, program notes to Songs of Samuel Barber and Ned Rorem (New York: New World Records 229, 1978), 2.

[60] Kreiling, "A Study in Literary Taste and Text Setting," 8.

emulated all possible aspects of the text. Musical analyses of his text settings reveal the composer's sensitivity to diction, phrase structure, tone and form.

Barber's fascination with song cycles further reinforces his ties with romanticism, as the genre is emblematic of the Romantic era. Of his published songs, most are found in cycles or collections. His three cycles, *Mélodies passagères* (1951), *Hermit Songs* (1953), and *Despite and Still* (1972) constitute almost two-thirds of his published songs. Another fifteen songs are published as small collections, organized by authors, or literary themes. The three remaining songs include *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* (1950), *Andromache's Farewell* (1962), and *Nuvoletta* (1947), the first two of which are scored for soprano and orchestra. Barber's unpublished songs are primarily single works, many of which were written during his childhood and student years (1917-1935).

Another aspect which demonstrates Barber's romantic predilections is his preoccupation with solitude. Throughout his career, Barber constantly felt pressured to fulfill commissions and deadlines, and often found it difficult to maintain focus while living in the city. He found solitude necessary to work, yet also felt the need for stimulating companionship.[61] If he wished to write without distraction, Barber often retreated to the countryside. His fixation with such settings began in his youth, when his family frequented an aunt's cottage at the Pocono Lake Preserve in Pennsylvania. Barber fell in love with the cottage, which was appropriately named "The Hermit," and at the age of 25 he resided there for an entire summer.[62] Later in life Barber sought seclusion in

---

[61] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 335.

[62] Broder, *Samuel Barber*, 29.

other country homes; first at Capricorn, and then much later at his villa in Santa Cristina, Italy.

Barber often used reclusion as a subject for his compositions. The *Hermit Songs* feature solitude as one of the main themes throughout the cycle. Barber's 1957 opera *Vanessa* (1956-7) also exhibits his preoccupation with solitude, as the plot deals with isolation from both love and the world in which love resides. In the late 1960s, following the disastrous opening of his opera, *Antony and Cleopatra* (1966), Barber found himself in a personal depression, and subsequently a compositional dry spell.[63] During this time, Barber declined several commissions and instead turned toward what Heyman called "self restoration," immersing himself in the composition of art song.[64] The song cycle *Despite and Still* was among these restorative works. Completed in 1968, the cycle mirrored the turmoil in his life; it is marked by themes of solitude, and an increased use of dissonance.

Perhaps his most well-known cycle, the *Hermit Songs* embody many features idiosyncratic of Barber's compositional style. They reveal his preference for Romantic genres, love of Irish literature, and preoccupation with solitude. Written in 1952-53, the ten songs also demonstrate his interaction with modernist elements during his later

---

[63] Barber was commissioned to write an opera for the opening of the new Metropolitan Opera House in the mid-1960s. Franco Zeffirelli was a large influence in the production of the opera: he wrote the libretto, directed the opera, and designed the set and costumes. The 1966 premier of *Antony and Cleopatra* was nothing short of a disaster; it was widely criticized for being overproduced by Zeffirelli, and Barber's music was condemned for lacking the beautifully lyric quality for which he was known. Barber later explained to John Gruen in a 1971 interview for *The New York Times* that "As far as I'm concerned, the production had absolutely nothing to do with what I had imagined. The Met overproduced it. The opera didn't call for it. … What I wrote and envisioned had nothing, but nothing, to do with what one saw on stage. Zeffirelli wanted horses and goats and 200 soldiers, which he got, and he wanted elephants, which he fortunately didn't get. The point is, I had very little control – practically none." Barber revised the opera in 1975. The revised version received much better reviews, but the damage to Barber's ego was already done.

[64] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 463.

career. The subsequent chapters will address the history and premiere of the cycle, the

harmonic language Barber uses in tandem with the medieval Irish texts, and finally the

cyclic structure in the *Hermit Songs* as demonstrated through poetic, motivic, tonal and

harmonic connections found throughout the songs.

CHAPTER 3

History and Premiere

History of the Texts

Barber first made reference to his work on the *Hermit Songs* in a letter to Homer

in November of 1952. Heyman includes a section of the letter in her introduction to the

song cycle:

> I have come across some poems of the 10th century, translated into modern
> English by various people, and am making a song cycle of them, to be called,
> perhaps, "Hermit Songs." These were extraordinary men, monks or hermits or
> what not, and they wrote these little poems on the corners of MSS they were
> illuminating or just copying. I find them very direct, unspoiled and often curiously
> contemporaneous in feeling. [Barber added a note: much like the Fioretti of St.
> Francis of Assisi] I am copying the texts of those already done to see if you like
> them.[65]

In the Schirmer publication of *Hermit Songs*, Barber expanded these thoughts in his

introduction to the cycle:

> They are settings of anonymous Irish texts of the eighth to thirteenth centuries
> written by monks and scholars, often on the margins of manuscripts they were
> copying or illuminating – perhaps not always meant to be seen by their Father
> Superiors. They are small poems, thoughts or observations, some very short, and
> speak in straightforward, droll, and often surprisingly modern terms of the simple
> life these men led, close to nature, to animals and to God.[66]

Written in a frank and forthright fashion, the ten texts provide a glimpse into the life of an

Irish monk. As Barber noted, the texts are strikingly candid, a feature which he seems to

suggest is not commonly associated with literature from such an early period. Kreiling

---

[65] Barber to Homer, 18 November 1952, from Capricorn, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 334.

[66] Samuel Barber, *Collected Songs for High Voice* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1980), 74.

notes, however, that the texts reflect the emergence of "personal poetry" in Ireland during a period of religious reform.[67]

In the summer of 1952, several months prior to beginning the *Hermit Songs*, Barber followed his love of Irish literature and culture straight to the source. He began his Irish sojourn in County Donegal and traveled down to Dublin to visit William Butler Yeats's grave. Barber wrote about his experience in a letter to Homer.

> We left after a week of candlelight … and peat and Gaelic twilight. I sank rather easily into the latter and began to read a lot of Yeats again…Driving down to Dublin we stopped at Yeats' grave….lo and behold, Yeats was surrounded, nay, he lay in the very bosom of a family—tombstones of uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters on every side of him—of Barbers.[68]

Heyman's research of Barber's visit to Ireland does not reveal whether or not the composer visited Lough Derg. Barber's reference in the score to County Donegal as the specific location of Saint Patrick's Purgatory implies that the composer had some knowledge of the pilgrimage site; whether or not he was aware of the specific traditions cannot be determined.[69]

Opening the *Hermit Songs*, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," expresses the thoughts of a pilgrim on his way to Loch Derg, the alleged site of an ancient sanctuary visited by Saint Patrick.[70] Loch (or Lough) Derg is located in County Donegal, not far from the area in which Barber stayed during his visit. Meaning "red lake," the name is derived from the

---

[67] Kreiling, "A Study in Literary Taste and Text Setting," 246.

[68] Barber to Homer, 4 July 1952, Cannes, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 336.

[69] The G. Schirmer edition contains an asterisk after the first line of the opening poem, with the following reference: "Loch Derg (Red Lake) in County Donegal has been a place of pilgrimage from very early times."

[70] Shane Leslie, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory: A Record from History and Literature* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1932), 166. The original Gaelic poem was a favorite among Irish bards, as demonstrated by the great number of manuscripts in which it can be found, most of which indicate that it was written by Donnchadh Mór O Dálaigh, a thirteenth-century Irish poet.

story of Saint Patrick, and refers to the color of the lake after he spilt the blood of the last

great serpent.[71] The cave in question is located on Station Island, which served as the

focal point of the pilgrimage to Saint Patrick's Purgatory until it was replaced by a chapel

in 1780.[72]

Historical descriptions of the pilgrimage to Loch Derg vary depending on the

century in which the account was written. Medieval histories are filled with tales of

heavenly and hellish apparitions which supposedly haunt the famous site. Detailed

accounts of pilgrimages during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries provide a glimpse

of the hardships endured by those brave enough to visit Saint Patrick's Purgatory. The

following account was recorded by the French poet and priest, Gautier de Metz in

L'Image du Monde:

> Another place there is in Ireland which burns like fire night and day which is
> called the Purgatory of St Patrick. It is so perilous that no folk go there who are
> not well confessed and repentant. Sometimes they are ravished and lost so that it
> is not known what becomes of them. And if he is confessed and repentant, he
> passes through many torments and purges himself of his sins; and the more sins
> he has committed, the more griefs and torments he has to pass. And when he has
> returned from this purgatory he will never take pleasure in the sights of the world
> and he will never laugh again. But he remains weeping and groaning for the sins
> which folk commit and for the evil he sees them do. In this Island there is a great
> mountain which burns day and night.[73]

Many early records include day-by-day details of the pilgrimages. Those from the

fourteenth century and earlier often describe the pilgrimage as taking an entire month to

complete. From the fifteenth century onward, accounts reveal a decline in length from

---

[71] John O'Donovan to Ordinance Survey Headquarters in Dublin, 1 November 1835, John O'Donovan
Letters in the R.I.A., British Museum, quoted in Leslie, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*, 132. More recent
authorities interpret "derg" as a form of the Gaelic "deirc," meaning "the lake of the cave."

[72] Leslie, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*, 127.

[73] Maître Gossouin (Gautier de Metz), *L'Image du Monde*, trans. and ed. O.H. Prior , 1245, MS. Fonds
Français 274, Paris National Library, quoted in Leslie, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*, 12.

thirty to ten days. By the early twentieth century most records show that the pilgrimage lasted only three days, with some exceptions made for those who wished to serve a longer penance.[74]

Little has changed since the early 1900s; a modern day pilgrimage still takes three days to complete. During the three-day journey, pilgrims fast from food and drink and break only once a day for the traditional "Loch Derg Meal," a simple repast which consists of a single piece of dry toast or oatcake and black tea or coffee.[75] Devotees perform prayer exercises while walking barefooted through the pilgrimage site for three days. The exercises consist of specific prayer sequences called "Stations," a Celtic form of prayer which involves physical movements accompanied by specific liturgies such as the Apostle's Creed, Our Father, and Hail Mary. The pilgrimage has nine Stations and begins with a twenty-four hour vigil, during which the pilgrims complete eight of the nine Stations. The last morning of the pilgrimage is marked by the tolling of bells to call the faithful to their final Loch Derg Mass. After the mass, the pilgrims perform the final Station and then depart from the island.[76]

Composition and Premiere

Barber composed the *Hermit Songs* in a relatively short period of time, from late 1952 to early 1953. He began working on the cycle in October 1952, and composed four of the songs in a period of three weeks. After a brief hiatus over the holiday season he

---

[74] Leslie, *Saint Patrick's Purgatory*, 129-130.

[75] Lough Derg, "Three Day Pilgrimage," www.loughderg.ie.

[76] Lough Derg, "Three Day Pilgrimage."

resumed composing in the first week of January 1953, and completed the remaining six

songs in a little over a month. The following table presents the songs in order of

completion according to the dates written on the autographed scores from the Elizabeth

Sprague Coolidge Collection at the Library of Congress.[77]

Table 3-1. Completion Dates of the *Hermit Songs*.

V. The Crucifixion	October 26, 1952
II. Church Bell at Night	November 3, 1952
IV. The Heavenly Banquet	November 13, 1952
I. At Saint Patrick's Purgatory	November 17, 1952
VI. Sea-Snatch	January 6, 1953
III. St. Ita's Vision	January 9, 1953
X. The Desire for Hermitage	January 15, 1953
VII. Promiscuity	January 15, 1953
IX. The Praises of God	January 26, 1953
VIII. The Monk and His Cat	February 16, 1953

Months after completing the *Hermit Songs*, Barber received a commission from

the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation to compose a work for the annual Founder's

Day Concert, which celebrated Coolidge's birthday.[78] Coolidge, one of the most notable

patrons in the history of American music, was particularly interested in renewing

American interest in chamber music. As a wealthy benefactor, Coolidge had the

monetary means to achieve such a lofty goal. In 1925 she made a generous contribution

to the Library of Congress for the construction of a concert auditorium and insisted that

the bulk of the programs be devoted to the works of contemporary composers.[79] Over the

years the Coolidge Foundation supported over two hundred contemporary composers

---

[77] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 337.

[78] Ibid., 339.

[79] Cyrilla Barr, *Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge: American Patron of Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998), 165.

through monetary awards and commissions. Barber's name is only one among a long list

of composers commissioned by the foundation.[80] Coolidge never actually witnessed the

performance of Barber's *Hermit Songs*, as she was too ill to attend the concert; she died

on November 4, 1953 in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The *Hermit Songs* were premiered by Samuel Barber and Leontyne Price at the

Coolidge Auditorium on October 30, 1953. At the time, Price was only twenty-six years

old and still in the fledgling stages of her career. She had received a positive reputation

from her portrayal of Bess in *Porgy and Bess*, but had not yet made her recital debut.[81]

The premiere of the *Hermit Songs* marked the beginning of a long professional

relationship and friendship between the composer and soprano. Barber later composed a

number of works with Price's voice in mind, such as the soprano solo in *Prayers of*

Kierkegaard, (1954) and the role of Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In 1969 Barber

dedicated his cycle *Despite and Still* "to my friend Leontyne Price."[82]

Ruth Hume, wife and co-writer of *Washington Post* music critic Paul Hume,

attended the premier in her husband's absence. Her review gave high praise to Barber's

new song cycle.

> [T]he poems encompass a wide variety of moods, they are, for the most part, characterized by the joyful serenity of their contemplative authors. With exquisite clarity, the music matches the texts at all points … This is a happy addition to the composer's distinguished catalogue of works and a signal contribution to the literature of contemporary song…. The audience not only was enthusiastic, but

---

[80] Other well-known composers include Béla Bartók, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Gian Carlo Menotti, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Ned Rorem, William Schuman, Roger Sessions, Virgil Thompson, and Heitor Villa-Lobos.

[81] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 340.

[82] Barber, *Collected Songs*, 103.

positively jubilant. Miss Price repeated "The daises" and "The Monk and His Cat," and added Poulenc's "[C'est] ainsi que tu es" as an encore.[83]

Not all critics were enamored with Barber's songs or Price's performance. *The New York Times* published a review following Price's recital debut at Town Hall in New York City on November 14, 1953. The critic offered reviews of both the singer and composer.

> Her voice is fresh, clear and agile, and she sings lighter music charmingly. But her range of expression is not yet wide enough, nor does it embrace a sufficient variety of styles for her work to make a deep impression. But she has sympathy, poise, good looks, accurate musicianship and a beautiful voice. … [Samuel Barber] was in the house and took over from David Stimer, the regular accompanist, to play the piano for his own cycle of "Hermit Songs." These are ten moderately imaginative settings of anonymous Irish texts of the eighth to twelfth centuries.[84]

Composer William Schuman wrote what Heyman referred to as a "fan letter" to Barber after hearing the song cycle during a rehearsal for the Coolidge premier:

> As far as the songs go, I feel that you have created in an absolutely unique manner and that in this sphere of composing you are alone. There is no-one else in America and, for that matter, perhaps nowhere else, who has the particular gift that you display in these new works.[85]

In the following year, Barber and Price performed the cycle at numerous events, the most prestigious of which was the International Conference of Twentieth Century Music in Rome (April, 1954). American song composer Ned Rorem attended the concert, and later remarked on the event in his diary:

> Leontyne Price, beautiful in a gown of blue sequins, sopranoing by heart and tonally (after hours of villainous bearded dodecaphonists) sang Sam Barber's *Hermit Songs* perfectly but with a trace of Southern accent, Lou Harrison's

---

[83] Ruth Hume, "Postlude: Barber-Price Concert Fine Birthday Gift," *Washington Post*, October 31, 1953, 15.

[84] R. P., "Song Recital Given by Leontyne Price," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1954, Books section, 30.

[85] William Schuman to Barber, 27 October 1953, Paper and Records of William Schuman, New York Public Library, Music Division, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 342.

Rapunzel aria gorgeously but with a suggestion of Southern drawl, Sauguet's *La Voyante* in elegant French but with a shadow of Southern croon. Her success was so great that she was permitted an encore, and performed an unaccompanied spiritual *with no accent at all*![86]

Fifty years after the premier, the *Hermit Songs* are considered a staple in vocal repertoire. In his bio-bibliography of Barber, Wayne Wentzel commented on the popularity of the *Hermit Songs*:

> Even if the world of musical scholarship has not focused on Barber's music, college campuses have a growing interest around the country in his works. Students are performing Barber's music …The most popular of his vocal works are the *Hermit Songs* and *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*.[87]

Heyman also remarked on this trend, and noted that during informal inquiries, young singers who were aware of Barber's works had a tendency to mention the *Hermit Songs*, "Sure on this shining night," and *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*.[88]

---

[86] Ned Rorem, *The Paris and New York Diaries of Ned Rorem, 1951-1961* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), 138.

[87] Wentzel, *A Guide to Research*, 1.

[88] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 341n.

CHAPTER 4

Musical Language in the *Hermit Songs*

There is no single, consistent harmonic language in the *Hermit Songs*. Instead,

Barber uses an amalgamation of sonorities to accompany the medieval Irish poetry.

Modal harmonies pervade most of the cycle; chant-like vocal lines and open fourths and

fifths in the accompaniment create a quasi-archaic sound suggestive of medieval church

music. Barber uses this antiquated aesthetic with both tonal and modernist techniques,

including a combination of triadic and quartal harmony, marked chromaticism, and

limited serialism. Together, the diverse techniques convey the simplistic nature of the

monastic poetry, while simultaneously maintaining a distinctively twentieth-century

sound.

Melody

Vocal settings in the *Hermit Songs* were likely influenced by Barber's own

fondness for Gregorian chant. In January 1951, a year prior to his conception of the cycle,

Barber wrote home after witnessing a mass in Rome:

> Christmas eve, after a dinner party for a hundred guests at the Robert's ... we went
> ... at midnight to ... a little church, St. Anselmo, on the Aventine, a plain, cold
> little church where a choir of 60 Benedictine monks sang a Gregorian Mass to a
> few onlookers. The simplicity and sincere style with which they sang this
> overwhelming music warmed all the corners of my heart left cold and untouched
> by the morning's magnificent pageantry.[89]

Barber also sent a letter to Homer about the moving experience, and received the

following response from his then ailing uncle:

---

[89] Barber to Family, 10 January 1951, from Hotel Sonne in Fextal, Engadin, Switzerland, quoted in
Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 348.

I am so glad you are at home with your thoughts and your ideals ... I know how you feel about Gregorian chant. I have been listening to the Catholic Hour Sunday mornings on the radio and have heard some wonderful unaccompanied Gregorian chants. They satisfy something in my soul and help me to believe that "all is right with the world" and that the truth is just as simple and straightforward as a Gregorian chant. There is no place for complexity and perplexity. Away with them! The creative mind and the composing spirit have no use for them.[90]

Chant-like vocal lines are one of the most distinctive characteristics of the *Hermit Songs*. Modal melodies and irregular phrase lengths imitate the sound of Gregorian chant. Most melodies are syllabic, with short melismatic sections reserved only for moments of intense expression. Consistent eighth notes and other simple rhythms convey the natural flow of chant. Many of the melodies are predominantly stepwise, which gives the vocal lines an almost speech-like effect, as seen in "The Heavenly Banquet" and "Sea-Snatch."

Example 4-1. Song IV, "The Heavenly Banquet," mm. 1-4.

I would like to have the men of Heav-en in my own house;

Example 4-2. Song VI, "Sea-Snatch," mm. 7-9.

O_____ King of the star-bright King-dom of Heav-en;

Fourths and fifths also occur frequently throughout the vocal lines, with wider intervals reserved for intensely dramatic moments. Phrases demonstrate a tendency to begin on the tonic or dominant and end on the tonic or supertonic. Oscillation around the tonic, free-flowing rhythms, and modal melodies give the vocal lines a meditative quality, an effect especially noticeable in the final song, "The Desire for Hermitage."

---

[90] Homer to Barber, 30 April 1953, quoted in Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 349.

Example 4-3. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage," mm. 3-5.

Ah!___ To be all a - lone in a lit-tle cell with no-bo-dy near me;

Meter and Rhythm

Barber's affinity for language and his dedication to textual clarity account for the governing factors in the cycle's rhythmic and metric organization. One of the most distinguishable features of the cycle is the lack of time signatures.[91] This omission allowed Barber the freedom to project the rhythmic irregularities of the poems effectively. Meters fluctuate freely throughout the cycle, and Barber places bar lines and beams according to the metric pulses of the texts.

Although the cycle lacks signatures, it has a clear metric organization. The eighth note serves as the standard beat unit throughout the cycle.[92] Using the eighth note as such, Barber often changes the number of beats in a measure, which results in alternate measures of duple, triple, compound, and complex meters.[93] Most of the songs have a predominating meter, such as the consistently-implied 6/8 in "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory." Other songs, such as "Sea-Snatch," demonstrate metric shifts in almost every measure. Rhythms are simple; constant eighth notes in the voice and accompaniment create a steady pulse and a sense of forward motion throughout the cycle.

---

[91] Because of the lack of time signatures, the measure numbers used in this study may differ from others. In most songs, the first measure is counted as no. 1. In Songs IV and VI, the opening measure is an anacrusis; therefore, the second measure is counted as the first numbered measure.

[92] Barber notes at the beginning of the first song that eighth notes should be treated equally throughout the cycle.

[93] J.E. Albertson, "A Study of Stylistic Elements of Samuel Barber's *Hermit Songs* and Franz Schubert's *Die Winterreise*" (DMA diss., U. of Missouri, Kansas City, 1969), 33.

Harmony

From the wandering ostinato figures in "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" to pointilistic sounds of "The Praises of God," each song has a distinct texture designed to emulate the poetic tone and maintain textual clarity. The majority of the songs contain Barber's characteristic modal-chromatic language, a combination of tertian, modal, and quartal harmonies. Two of the songs, "Church Bell at Night," and "Promiscuity" contain less tonally stable centers, and demonstrate Barber's interaction with modernist techniques.

While the songs contain a variety of sonorities, the musical language is still largely tonal. Barber establishes clear tonalities and key centers through functional bass progressions, melodic repetition, and functional, if modified cadences. At times, modernist harmonic devices obscure the tonality of a piece, but there remains a constant attraction to the tonic in all of the songs. The table on the following page shows the tonal and modal centers in all ten songs.

Table 4-1. Modal Centers in the *Hermit Songs*.

Song	Mode	Measures
I. At Saint Patrick's Purgatory	G♯ Aeolian	1-18
	Harmonic Sequence	19-30
	G♮ Dorian	27-30
	G♯ Aeolian	31-41
II. Church Bell at Night	Generally centered on A	
III. St. Ita's Vision	E Phrygian	1
	E♭ Dorian/Mixolydian	2-4
	F Dorian/Mixolydian	5-27
	F Ionian	28-30
	F Dorian/Mixolydian	32-44
IV. The Heavenly Banquet	F Ionian	1-13
	A♭ Ionian	14-17
	A♭ Lydian	18-21
	A♭ Ionian	22-33
	F Ionian	34-44
V. The Crucifixion	A Aeolian	1-28
VII. Sea-Snatch	C Aeolian	1-9
	C Dorian	10-16
	C Aeolian	17-31
VII. Promiscuity	Generally centered on C♯	
VIII. The Monk and His Cat	F Ionian	1-21
	E Ionian	22-23
	E Dorian	24-27
	F♯ Ionian	28-34
	G♯ Dorian	35-38
	F Ionian	39-52
IX. The Praises of God	C Ionian	1-12
	Unstable	13-20
	C Ionian	21-31
X. The Desire for Hermitage	G Phrygian	1-6
	G Dorian/Mixolydian,	7-18
	G♯ Phrygian	19-20
	G♯ Dorian/Mixolydian	21-24
	G♯ Phrygian	25-28
	G Phrygian	29-38

Charting the modal centers reveals a number of compositional tendencies. Eight of the ten songs have clearly established modal centers, with the two exceptions being "Church Bell at Night" and "Promiscuity." The table shows that Barber uses three principal modes: Aeolian, Ionian, and a mixture of Dorian and its parallel major, Mixolydian.[94] These particular modes can be found in eight of the songs, and are generally featured as the primary mode.

The different modal centers in the *Hermit Songs* assist in expressing the wide variety of poetic moods. Barber uses the modes in a flexible manner, and shifts freely from one mode to another in order to create a darker or brighter sound. Of the seven modern modes, Barber uses six. The figure below, devised by a contemporary of Barber's, Vincent Persichetti, demonstrates the order of modes according to their respective harmonic tension: the greatest number of flats that can be applied to a modal scale on a particular tone produces the "darkest" mode, the Locrian; subtracting flats (and then adding sharps) in diatonic signature order creates an arrangement of modes from "darkest" to "brightest."[95]

Figure 4-1. Order of Modes from Darkest to Brightest.

---
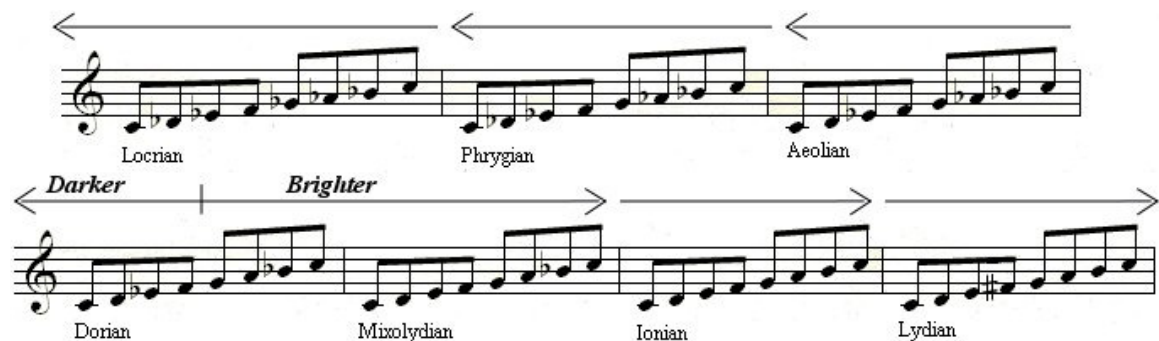
[94] When using the Dorian mode, Barber often alternates between the natural and raised third degree of the scale, which results in a mixture of Dorian and Mixolydian.

[95] Vincent Persichetti, *Twentieth-Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 35.

Songs in the cycle demonstrate a direct correspondence between the poetic mood and the respective mode: the more positive the poem, the brighter the mode, and vice versa. Barber uses Ionian and Lydian for cheerful and light poems, such as "The Heavenly Banquet," "The Monk and His Cat," and "The Praises of God." He sets more serious poems in Aeolian, Dorian, and Mixolydian, as seen in "Sea-Snatch," "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" and "The Crucifixion." The most somber poem, "The Desire for Hermitage," uses Phrygian, one of the darkest modes.

It should be noted that although the Ionian mode is identical to the major scale, Barber does not incorporate the same tonal harmonies that one would expect to encounter with this set of intervals. Rarely do the songs feature triadic chords in the accompaniment, although melodies in the piano and voice sometimes outline major or minor triads. Like most songs in the cycle, those in Ionian frequently feature open fourths and fifths in the bass line, whether in block chords, as seen in "The Heavenly Banquet," or the ostinato figures found in "Sea-Snatch" and "The Monk and His Cat." The open quality of the fourths and fifths give the songs a distinctly modal, rather than tonal, sound.

CHAPTER 5

Narrative Structure in the *Hermit Songs*

While the *Hermit Songs* exhibit commonality in character and poetic mood, they do not present a distinct, logically-necessary order. As a result, scholars generally classify the *Hermit Songs* as a thematic song cycle.[96] Remarks regarding unity and structure are usually limited to the brief identification of common poetic themes and comments about frequently occurring fourths and fifths, but rarely do they address any further examples of cyclic coherency.[97] Aside from these general observations, the cyclic structure of the *Hermit Songs* remains largely unexamined.

In the context of art song, the term "cycle" implies not only the relatedness of members of a set, but also the presence of order and interdependence within that set.[98] Non-narrative cycles, such as the *Hermit Songs*, lack obvious, time-determinate features, which assist in demonstrating order; however, scholarship has proven that cyclic structure does not depend on the existence of a narrative text. Articles by Barbara Turchin, Patrick McCreless, and Christopher Lewis demonstrate cyclic order in both narrative and non-narrative Romantic song cycles, and in doing so address a range of manners in which non-narrative cycles may exhibit coherency.[99]

---

[96] Kreiling, Carman, Coutts, and Davis all comment on the poetic themes which unify the texts.

[97] Carman remarks briefly on two factors which unify the cycle: the constant use of eighth notes, and the musical imagery of bells. Carman, 133; Davis mentions the presence of a 3-note motive, but does not specify how the motive contributes to the cyclic structure.

[98] Patrick McCreless, "Song Order in the Song Cycle: Schumann's *Liederkreis*, Op. 39," *Music Analysis* 5, no. 1 (March 1986), 5.

[99] Barbara Turchin, "Schumann's Song Cycles: The Cycle within the Song," *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 231-244; Christopher Lewis, "Text, Time, and Tonic: Aspects of Patterning in the Romantic Cycle," *Intégral* 2 (1988): 37-73.

McCreless's study on Schumann's *Liederkreis*, Op. 39, is particularly helpful

because he develops a clear methodology to classify features of cyclic coherency (inter-

movement relationships/connections) that are often extremely loose and unsystematic,

and for which music theorists have yet to establish a clear syntax.[100] In order to

categorize different types of inter-movement connections, McCreless defines two classes

of textual and/or musical events: unordered (cross-referential) and ordered (time-

determinate). He explains the classes as follows:

> Relationships of the first class [unordered] are simply those of cross-reference:
> instances in which we can indentify similarities between movements, but cannot
> necessarily specify why they occur where they do. Cross-references of this type
> include repetitions (in different movements) of melodic motives, keys, harmonic
> progressions, registers and referential chords; or in works with text, particular
> words, symbols or ideas.

> …Relationships of the second class [ordered] are simply those, of a wide variety
> of types, for which we can posit a sufficiently time-determinate system to show
> why events happen where they do.[101]

Because time-determinant connections are more complex than cross-referential,

McCreless further divides the second class into three categories. Below is a summation of

his divisions:

1) Parallel events between text and music which explain aspects of the inter-
   movement ordering of elements such as tonal scheme and harmony, in terms
   of the development of ideas (both narrative and non-narrative) in the text.
2) A clear tonal plan which can be explained through the quasi-narrative
   ordering of contents.
3) Abstract patterning (ordering of songs) which creates large-scale symmetry
   throughout the entire cycle, or individual groupings of songs, or other
   comprehensible designs in terms of elements such as key, motive, rhythm,
   tempo, texture, and affect.[102]

---

[100] McCreless, "Song Order in the Song Cycle," 9.

[101] Ibid., 6-7.

[102] Ibid., 6-8.

Abstract patterning, McCreless's final category of ordered connections, is particularly useful in identifying structural order and coherence in non-narrative cycles, which may not contain enough time-determinate events to reveal a clear textual or musical plan that embraces all songs in their given order.

McCreless later concedes that compositionally speaking, cross-references do exhibit a type of order: they occur in absolute locations within individual songs and in their relative locations to other cross-references.[103] He also notes that cross-references may become processive, and through accumulation become time-ordered, although non-linear, progressions.[104] Such cross-referential motives have the ability to articulate musical groupings of songs through repetition and can also have clear text-associative roles.[105] Unlike ordered events, the significance of a single cross-reference does not diminish without the presence of similar events. Ordered events, on the other hand, rely on the sense of narrative time and their positioning in accordance with one another.

McCreless's method of categorizing inter-movement connections, along with studies by Turchin and Lewis, provide the means to examine the inter-movement connections in *Hermit Songs*. The following discussions will aim to demonstrate how Barber's arrangement and musical treatment of the medieval Irish texts creates a discernable cyclic structure through the presence of cross-references and time-determinate events.

---

[103] McCreless, "Song Order in the Song Cycle," 6.

[104] Ibid., 9.

[105] Ibid., 14.

Cross-references in the *Hermit Songs*

Textual and motivic cross-references abound throughout the *Hermit Songs*. In addition to their common mood, the ten texts exhibit a number of recurring images and ideas. Barber's musical treatment of the texts results in several motives which contribute to the inter-movement connections, whether in a purely musical fashion, or as a symbiotic reflection of the text in music.

Textual Cross-references

Although poetic moods fluctuate from one song to the next—from the austere in "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" and "The Crucifixion," to the light-hearted and even jovial moments in "The Heavenly Banquet" and "The Monk and His Cat"—most scholars indicate that the *Hermit Songs* are united through a central concept. Davis states that the texts are "bound together by their expression of various thoughts and desires," and Coutts remarks that they are "linked by authors who led somewhat "hermit-like" lifestyles."[106]

In an effort to identify a unifying cyclic device, Carman directs our attention to a quotation featured in the introduction of the Schirmer score.

> It was not only that these scribes and anchorites lived by the destiny of their dedication in an environment of wood and sea; it was because they brought into that environment an eye washed miraculously clear by a continual spiritual exercise that they, first in Europe, had that strange vision of natural things in an almost unnatural purity.[107]

The quotation comes from Robin Flower's *The Irish Tradition*, a 1947 collection of lectures and essays about medieval and modern Gaelic-speaking culture. Carman points

---

[106] Davis, "Opus 29: An Analytical Study," 8; Coutts, "Solo-Song Compositions of Samuel Barber," 139.

[107] Barber, *Collected Songs*, 74.

to the concept of "unnatural purity" as the device which gives the songs poetic unity.[108]

Kreiling takes a similar approach by drawing upon a historical view of Irish poetry:

> Many of the *Hermit Songs* texts reflect the emergence of "personal poetry" in Ireland during a period of religious reform. Even the most pious of these poems concern primarily the individual worshipper and his own idiosyncratic relationship to God.[109]

Observations by both Carman and Kreiling echo Hume's *Washington Post* review of the premier. Hume's description best summarizes the central concept by stating that despite the variety of moods, the poems are characterized by "the joyful serenity of their contemplative authors."[110]

Aside from serene contemplation, two prominent themes act as cross-references throughout the cycle: solitude and piety. The ten poems present the concepts in ways which demonstrate their distinct dualities: solitude is contrasted by the desire for companionship, and religious piety by moments of human faithlessness and promiscuity. The following paragraphs address specifically how the poetic themes manifest throughout the cycle.[111]

The poet's struggle between solitude and community occurs throughout the *Hermit Songs*. The contrasting themes are first seen in the second poem, "Church Bell at Night," where the poet weighs monastic solitude over the companionship of a woman.

---

[108] Carman, "A Study in Circle Imagery," 132-33.

[109] Kreiling, "A Study in Literary Taste and Text Setting," 246.

[110] Hume, "Postlude: Barber-Price Concert Fine Birthday Gift," 15.

[111] Because the poems do not establish a specific narrator, this study will refer to different genders depending on the specific poem. In the score, Barber makes note of known (or at least suspected) authors, such as attributing "St. Ita's Vision" to Saint Ita, or "The Heavenly Banquet" to Saint Brigid, both of whom are clearly female. Other poems, such as "Church Bell at Night," appear to be written from a decidedly male point of view.

"The Heavenly Banquet," the fourth poem, also centers on fellowship and community,

yet the poet is not necessarily included in the gathering, as emphasized in the last stanza.

> I would like to be watching Heaven's family
> Drinking it through all eternity.[112]

The word "watching" implies a sense of detachment from the event. Earlier stanzas also

hint to this distance between the narrator and the heavenly congregation. While the poet

willingly opens her house to the men and women of heaven, she does not include herself

in the crowd, and instead always refers to the group as "them."

"The Monk and His Cat" focuses on the balance between solitude and

companionship. In the poem the narrator describes a relationship with a white cat named

Pangur. For this well-known Irish poem Barber uses a translation by W. H. Auden.

Auden shortens the cat's full name from the traditional Pangur Bán. The Gaelic word

"Bán" means "fair" or "white."

> Pangur, white Pangur,
> How happy we are
> Alone together,
> Scholar and cat.

Kreiling's description of this song brings to light the complex, yet simple relationship

between scholar and cat.

> In the deceptively playful text of "The Monk and His Cat," good company and
> solitary devotion converge in a picture of utter contentment. The separate but
> parallel lives of the monk and his cat, as they pursue analogous chores and
> pleasures without "hindering" each other, epitomize the happy paradox of being
> "alone together."[113]

---

[112] All poems quoted in this study are taken from the Schirmer score. Barber, *Collected Songs*, 75-6.

[113] Kreiling, "A Study in Literary Taste and Text Setting," 248.

In this poem the incongruous themes are united by the oxymoron, "alone together." The peculiar phrasing, which describes the relationship between the monk and Pangur, is unique to the cycle, and found only in W. H. Auden's translation of the poem.

The last song, "The Desire for Hermitage" brings the struggle between solitude and community to a final culmination. With the opening stanza, the narrator makes clear his desire to live the remainder of his days alone.

> Ah! To be all alone in a little cell with nobody near me;
> Beloved that pilgrimage before the last pilgrimage to Death.

Here the concept of solitude takes on a different meaning. Prior texts referred to solitude as a result of removal from community. In the final poem, the type of solitude that the narrator seeks can only be found through death.

> That will be an end to evil when I am alone
> in a lovely little corner among tombs
> far from the houses of the great.

While this statement might be considered somewhat macabre, Kreiling interprets it in another manner. She views the comparison of hermitage to "the last pilgrimage to Death" as an analogy which celebrates not anonymity, but individual integrity.[114] In other words, hermitage and death do not serve merely as an escape from the world, but rather as an escape from sin: "an end to evil."

Like the concept of solitude, the poems present piety in a manner which demonstrates both ends of the spectrum: the faithful, and the faithless. Of the ten poems, eight include observations of piety or thoughts on the individual relationship with God. Conversely, only two poems do not contain any reference to faith: "Promiscuity" and "The Monk and His Cat." In truth, the discussion of faith or piety occurs so frequently

---

[114] Kreiling, "A Study in Literary Taste and Text Setting," 247.

that to address each individual instance seems an arduous, and most unenlightening task. Instead the interest here lies at the other end of the spectrum, with the irreverent rather than the pious.

Whereas most of the poems center on faith and piety, "Church Bell at Night" and "Promiscuity" address what Kreiling refers to as human faithlessness.[115] In addition to the common theme, the two poems are alike in structure and tone. Written in a short and concise style, the texts use irony and wit to articulate their messages.

The first example of human faithlessness occurs in "Church Bell at Night," the second song in the cycle.

> Sweet little bell, struck on a windy night,
> I would liefer keep tryst with thee
> Than be
> With a light and foolish woman.

Following the description of a devout pilgrimage, "Church Bell at Night" presents an unusual side of faith. In this short epigram, the narrator measures his piety through his resistance of temptation. Rather than meet a "light and foolish woman," he chooses to remain cloistered within the walls of the church.

As the title suggests, the seventh song, "Promiscuity" also deals with the concept of human faithlessness.

> I do not know with whom Edan will sleep,
> But I do know that fair Edan will not sleep alone.

The playful and suggestive tone provides a stark contrast to the reverent mood found in many of the other poems. Despite its brevity, the poem implies a great deal, and the clever turn of thought in the second line leaves the facts seemingly exposed and yet still

---

[115] Kreiling, "A Study in Literary Taste and Text Setting," 247.

tantalizingly open to the imagination. The narrator offers no clues to Edan's identity, whether he is a fellow monk or someone outside of the monastery. One fact remains clear, however: Edan's bed will not be cold tonight.

That Barber includes "Church Bell at Night" and "Promiscuity" as part of the *Hermit Songs* seems a curious decision. Indeed, these two texts may be the very ones which Barber felt were "perhaps not always meant to be seen by their Father Superiors."[116] Juxtaposing the two brusque epigrams among poems such as "The Praises of God" or "St. Ita's Vision" only emphasizes their disparate character. By depicting the frailties of mankind, Songs II and VII contribute a sense of humanness to the cycle, and provide balance to the more pious texts.

Motivic Cross-references

Perfect fourths and fifths permeate the entire cycle. They are frequently seen throughout the vocal lines, most often at the beginning and ends of phrases. The piano accompaniment also demonstrates a heavy presence of fourths and fifths; the two intervals serve as the foundation for many ostinato patterns and chordal figures. Further examination of this frequency reveals the presence of two motives based on the interval of a perfect fourth. Both motives are introduced within the first three measures of "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory." Established in the opening song, the two motives occur numerous times throughout the cycle, and in turn create inter-movement cross-references throughout almost every song.

---

[116] Barber, *Collected Songs*, 74.

The first motive, found in an ostinato figure in the treble clef of mm. 1-2, consists of two descending perfect fourths joined by an ascending perfect fifth

Example 5-1. Song I, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," m. 2.

Cross-references to the ostinato motive begin immediately. Many of the cross-references occur as exact transpositions of the motive. Others feature modifications, such as the reordering of the fourths shown in example 5-3. This alteration, shown below, maintains the contour of the motive, but changes the ascending interval that connects the descending fourths.

In the middle section of the song, Barber features two transposed versions of the motive in the vocal line. The second statement, seen in mm. 29-30, begins with the last half of the motive, which reorders the perfect fourths and results in an ascending minor third as the connecting interval.

Example 5-2. Song I, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," mm. 26-27.

Example 5-3. Song I, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," mm. 29-30.
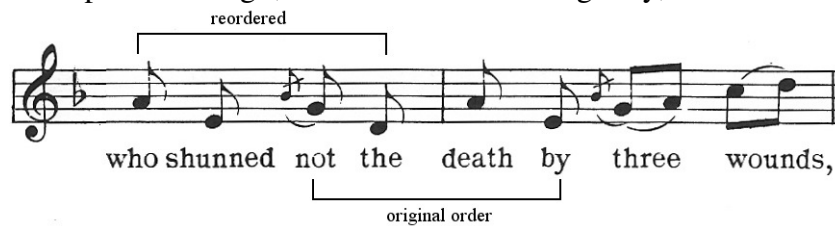
Five songs include cross-references to the ostinato motive: II, III, IV, V and IX. The first reference takes place in the final vocal statement at the end of Song II. This particular version of the motive makes reference to the second vocal statement in mm. 29-30 of Song I. Barber connect the two descending fourths with an ascending major third.

Example 5-4. Song II, "Church Bell at Night," m. 5.

fool - ish   wo - man.___

Almost all cross-references in Songs III and V are exact repetitions of the original motive. Song III contains seven statements, all of which occur at the ends of vocal lines. In the final phrase of Song III (mm. 42-43) Barber inverts the second and fourth notes to create two ascending fifths connected by a descending fourth.

Example 5-5. Song III, "St. Ita's Vision," mm. 5-6, mm. 42-43.

"In - fant Je - sus,   at   my__ breast,

at   my____   breast."____

Two cross-references occur in Song V. The first statement, shown below, is found at the opening of the cycle. The same pattern (G—D—A—E) is repeated as the final melodic material at the end of the song.

Example 5-6. Song V, "The Crucifixion," mm. 6-9.

They be - gan to cru - ci - fy Thee, O Swan!

Cross-references in Songs IV and IX differ from the original ostinato motive. In these two songs, Barber uses ascending fourths rather than descending fourths, and connects the two pairs with a descending major second. This alternative motive occurs first in Song IV, and then later serves as the principal melodic material for the vocal line in Song IX.

Example 5-7. Song IV, "The Heavenly Banquet," mm. 14-15.

I would like them to be cheer - ful in their drink - ing

Example 5-8. Song IX, "The Praises of God," mm. 6-7, mm. 21-22.

His voice and praise With joy - ful words,

Lau - - - da - tion sing,

Prior cross-references to the original ostinato figure coincide with serious texts in Songs II, III, and V. In contrast, Songs IV and IX demonstrate joyful and happy moods. By using ascending fourths in Songs IV and IX, Barber transforms the character of the original motive while still creating a clear cross-reference to the pairs of fourths from the opening song.

Whereas the piano introduced the first motive, the second motive is stated by the opening vocal line. The three-note motive, first pointed out by Davis, consists of a descending whole tone followed by a descending fourth, and can be found in retrograde and retrograde-inversion.[117] Six of the ten songs contain clear articulations of the motive in the vocal line, normally located at either the beginning or end of a phrase. The most prominent examples of this cross-reference occur in the opening vocal lines of Songs I, IV, and V.

Example 5-9. Song I, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," mm. 3-5.

Pi - ty   me__   on   my   pil - grim-age to   Loch   Derg!**_____

Example 5-10. Song IV, "The Heavenly Banquet," mm. 2-5.

I would like to have the men of   Heav- en   in   my   own   house;

Example 5-11. Song V, "The Crucifixion," mm. 4-6.

At_   the   cry   of the first bird

Because Songs I, IV, and V have tripartite forms, the motive can be found in numerous locations throughout all three songs. In the case of Song IV, the three-note motive not only provides the opening material for the vocal line, but also the closing material as well.

---

[117] Davis, "Opus 29: An Analytical Study," 89.

Example 5-12. Song IV, "The Heavenly Banquet," mm. 34-35.

Drink-ing it through all e - ter - ni - ty._____

Besides occurring in the opening melodies of three songs, the second motive can also be found in three other songs: III, VI, and VII. The following excerpts from Songs III and VI differ from those listed in Davis's study. Her examples from Songs III and IV, while they appear to contain the motive, occur in awkward moments of the text: on the second half of a word, and between two phrases.[118] Examples listed here demonstrate clearly articulated motives.

Example 5-13. Song III, "St. Ita's Vision," m. 1.

"un - less He gives me His Son from Heav - en

Example 5-14. Song VI, "Sea-Snatch," mm. 14-15.

the wind has con- sumed us,   swal-lowed us,

Example 5-15. Song VIII, "The Monk and His Cat," mm. 8-9.

Each_ has his_ own   work to do dai-ly; _____

Davis also lists another example in m. 19 of Song X, but again the motive is textually awkward, and is further weakened by repetition of the second note. In reference to

---

[118] For Song III, Davis cites an example from mm. 5-6, beginning with the last syllable of "Jesus." For Song VI, she uses an example from m. 6, beginning on the word "us." Davis, "Opus 29: An Analytical Study," 89.

Davis's study, Heyman remarks that the motive "is found in at least eight of the ten songs;" however, this study finds that the three-note motive is not present in Songs II, VII, or X.[119]

Symbiotic Cross-references

In his article "Text, Time, and Tonic: Aspects of Patterning in the Romantic Cycle," Christopher Lewis takes care to differentiate between different types of cyclic connections. He addresses the fact that although art song unites text and music, the two mediums may still exhibit coherency apart from one another. In other words, the poetry of a song has an independent meaning prior to being set to music; likewise, the music in a song cycle may contain cross-referential patterning unique only to the music. Especially interesting, however, are those works whose artistry turns upon a symbiotic reflection of text in music and vice versa.[120]

As demonstrated thus far, the *Hermit Songs* contain a number of poetic and musical connections. Aside from the change of mood reflected by the variations of the first motive in Songs IV and IX, most of the textual and motivic events discussed only occur within their respective mediums. Poetic references to solitude or piety are not represented through music, and the motivic cross-references do not carry any specific associations with the text.

Two inherently musical symbols also occur repeatedly throughout the text: birds and bells. Barber expresses their presence through musical representation. Bird calls are

---

[119] Heyman, *The Composer and His Music*, 339.

[120] Lewis, "Text, Time, and Tonic," 39.

present in "The Crucifixion" and "The Praises of God," and tolling bells can be heard throughout "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," "The Church Bell at Night," and "The Desire for Hermitage." The unordered cross-references create both textual and musical connections among the songs.

"The Crucifixion," quite literally, presents the first bird. This small portion of text mentions not one, but two birds. The first reference mentions a physical bird whose cry marks the beginning of the crucifixion, and the second occurs as reference to Christ as a swan:[121]

> At the cry of the first bird
> They began to crucify Thee, O Swan!

Barber expresses the mournful cry of the first bird with a descending tritone in the piano accompaniment.

Example 5-16. Song V, "The Crucifixion" mm. 1-2.

The bird motive occurs twenty-three times throughout the brief song, and only five of the twenty-six measures do not contain a statement of the motive. Most of the appearances occur on the original pitch level, but some are altered. Of the twenty-three statements, the bird call appears eighteen times as a tritone from B to F, four times as a perfect fifth at

---

[121] In Celtic mythology, the swan symbolizes the soul; the image of two swans linked through a silver chain represents divine beings in metamorphosis. Beryl Foster, *The Songs of Edvard Grieg* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2007), 102.

various pitches, and once as a descending minor second. Ever present, the cry of the first bird permeates the entire song, and gives the music a haunting quality.

Unlike the mournful bird cries of "The Crucifixion," the birds within "The Praises of God" sing with a joyful tone. In this poem, the narrator comments on the foolishness of the man who does not raise his voice in laudation to God, and remarks that even the soulless birds know well to sing praises to their Creator. The birds are mentioned in the second half of the ten line poem:

> To Whom the light birds
> With no soul but air,
> All day, everywhere
> Laudation sing.

Once again, Barber uses a descending grace note to suggest the bird song. Here, the motive is comprised of descending major and minor seconds, which give the bird calls a more cheerful quality than the tritone motive from "The Crucifixion." The bird calls, shown below, begin shortly before the textual reference.

Example 5-17. Song IX, "The Praises of God" mm. 13-16.

The motive stops in m. 17 as the accompaniment shifts into a series of scale fragments leading to the first vocal statement of "laudation sing." During the second statement, the

bird motive returns underneath a melismatic vocal line, and then disappears as the voice concludes.

Example 5-18. Song IX, "The Praises of God" mm. 21-26.

Two of the poems make clear references to church bells: "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," and "Church Bell at Night." A less direct cross-reference to bells occurs in the final song, "The Desire for Hermitage." Barber signifies the bells with a variety of musical motives and techniques. Carman mentions the bells as one of two recurrent cyclic devices; she further states that the bells may perhaps signify the passing of hours in the life of a monastery.[122]
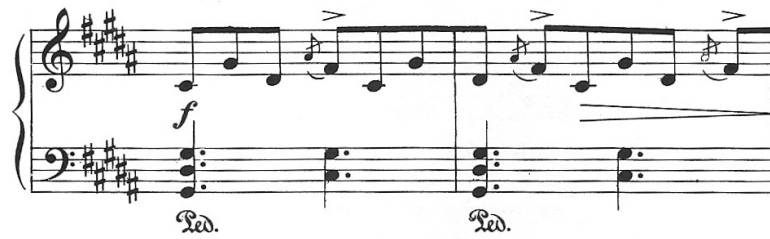
The opening stanza of "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" contains the first bell reference. As the narrator pleas for pity, he describes Christ's dominion over the churches and bells:

> Pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg!
> Oh King of the churches and the bells

Barber uses an accented grace note in the ostinato, and open fourths and fifths in the bass line to imitate the tolling church bells.

---

[122] Carman, "A Study in Circle Imagery," 133.

Example 5-19. Song I, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" mm. 1-2.

The bell-like ostinato dominates the piano accompaniment throughout most of the opening song. Barber emphasizes the bells in the final measure with three successive grace notes.

Example 5-20. Song I, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" mm. 40-41.

In contrast to the clanging bells of "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory," the bells in "Church Bell at Night" resound with a much sweeter and softer tone:

> Sweet little bell, struck on a windy night
> I would liefer keep tryst with thee
> Than be
> With a light a foolish woman.

Barber represents the bells in a number of manners. The most obvious depiction occurs in the opening piano accompaniment: a softly arpeggiated bell-like chord imitates a "sweet little bell" in the wind.

Example 5-21. Song II, "Church Bell at Night" m. 1.

The seven note chord functions as a dominant E major chord in the key of A, with additional quartal color tones. Although the notes do not constitute an overtone series, the quality and dynamic of the chord bring to mind the strike and decay of chiming bells.

The structure of the song imitates the oscillating motion of bells. In mm.1-2, the accompaniment alternates between the E major bell chord and an A minor chord with an added sixth (F); the repetitive movement establishes a dominant and tonic relationship between the two chords. Pedal tones swing back and forth underneath the oscillating chords. This pattern continues in mm. 3-4 between the tonic A minor chord and neighbor tones.

Example 5-22. Song II – "Church Bell at Night" mm. 3-4.

The final bell reference occurs in the last song of the cycle, "A Desire for Hermitage." Unlike the loud clanging bells of Song I, or the sweetly ringing bells of Song

II, the final song begins with a solitary church bell. The poem indirectly refers to the bell in the second stanza:

> Ah! To be all alone in a little cell with nobody near me;
> beloved that pilgrimage before the last pilgrimage to Death.
> Singing the passing hours to cloudy Heaven;
> feeding upon dry bread and water from the cold spring.

The phrase "singing the passing hours" refers not to the passing of time, but of canonical hours. Medieval monasteries commonly used bells to indicate the canonical hours and call the monks to prayer.[123] In this song Barber uses slow, repetitive quarter notes to signify the tolling bells. The bells begin tolling after the accompaniment opens with the primary motive of the song.[124]

Example 5-23. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage" mm. 1-3.
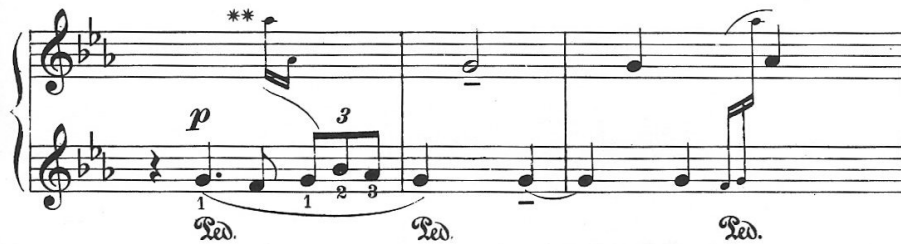
Accompanied by ascending grace notes, the bell figure tolls primarily on G, and occasionally shifts up to A.[125] The solitary bell continues tolling for eleven measures before it disappears into a pattern of oscillating dyads. After a tumultuous piano interlude, the bell returns, this time situated a semitone higher on G#, after which the voice enters precariously on G natural.

---

[123] H. B. Walters, *Church Bells of England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), 116-117.

[124] Barber uses three motives throughout the song, two of which occur in both the piano and voice, and the final of which only occurs in the piano. These motives will be discussed below.

[125] Barber indicates that all grace notes are "somewhat longer, rubato," which enhances the quiet tone of the poetic text.

Example 5-24. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage" m. 28.

Barber's passionate piano interlude expresses the turmoil of the sinful world. The re-entrance of the tolling bell marks the return to solitude, and the narrator's resolve to "be all alone."
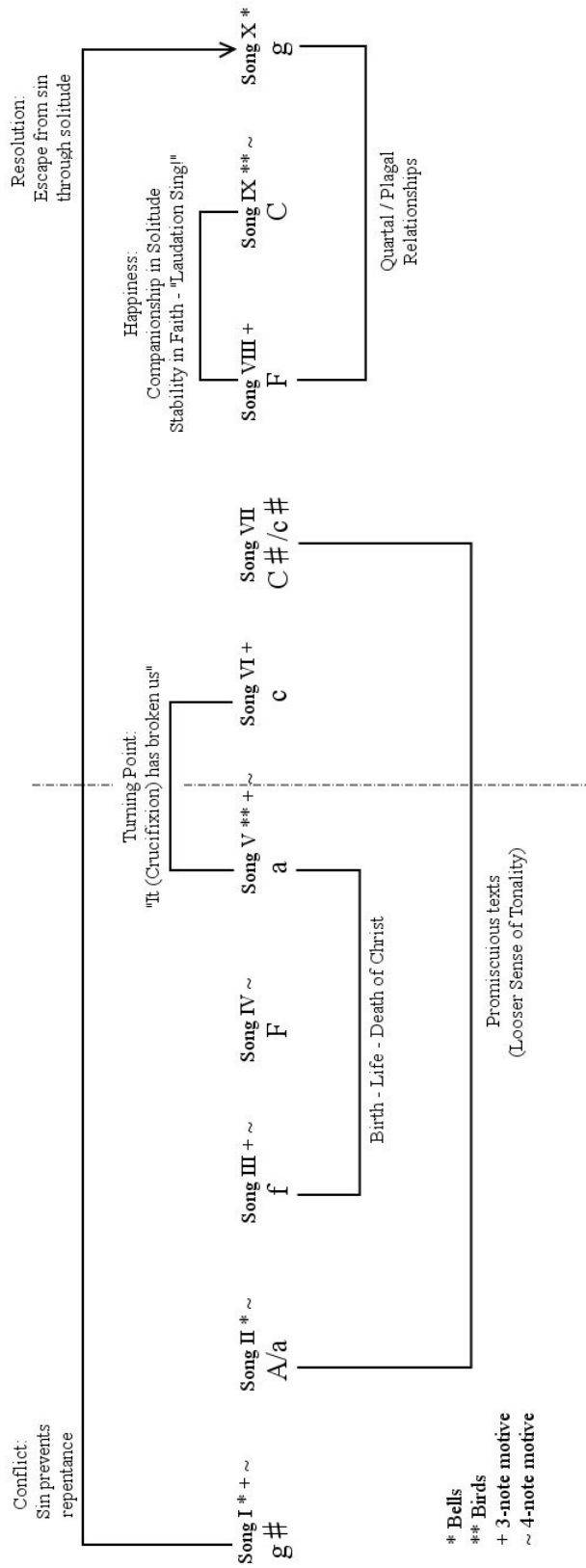
Time-determinate Connections

Although the ten poems do not constitute a traditional narrative, Barber's arrangement of the texts creates a definite sense of development and change throughout the *Hermit Songs*. From a poetic standpoint, the cycle ends in a mood far removed from the beginning. It begins with a pilgrim's plea for cathartic release from sin, and concludes with the realization that sin can only be escaped through hermitage and solitude. Consequently, the poetic movement of the cycle is that of resolution. "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" opens the cycle with a conflict, and "The Desire for Hermitage" ends it with a resolution to said conflict. Another narrative thread is found in the first half of the cycle. Barber's sequential arrangement of "St. Ita's Vision," "The Heavenly Banquet," and "The Crucifixion" creates an inner-narrative about the birth, life, and death of Christ. The poetic connections between Songs I and X, and among Songs III, IV, and V result in narrative threads that are expressly time-determinate: in other words, the relationships are irreversible, and can only work within chronological time.

The subsequent discussion will focus on how the implied-narrative structures interrelate with the music by examining the cycle for parallel realizations of text and music and discernable abstract patterning created by the poetic and musical structure. A chart on the following page will facilitate the discussion of such patterning.

Chart 5-1. Musical and Poetic Structure in Barber's *Hermit Songs*.

Musical and Poetic Relationships
in Samuel Barber's
Hermit Songs

Conflict:
Sin prevents
repentance

Resolution:
Escape from sin
through solitude

Happiness:
Companionship in Solitude
Stability in Faith - "Laudation Sing!"

Turning Point:
"It (Crucifixion) has broken us"

Song I * + ~
g#

Song II * ~
A/a

Song III + ~
f

Song IV ~
F

Song V ** + ~
a

Song VI +
c

Song VII
C#/c#

Song VIII +
F

Song IX ** ~
C

Song X *
g

Birth - Life - Death of Christ

Promiscuous texts
(Looser Sense of Tonality)

Quartal / Plagal
Relationships

* Bells
** Birds
+ 3-note motive
~ 4-note motive

A Beginning and an End

As demonstrated in the chart, there is a distinct poetic and tonal relationship

between Songs I and X. Translations of the two poems come from *The Silver Branch: A*

Collection of the Best Old Irish Lyrics.[126] The original text of "At Saint Patrick's

Purgatory" is considerably longer than the version below. In the *Hermit Songs* Barber

uses only three of the original nine stanzas from *The Silver Branch*, all of which feature

the pilgrim's plea for release.[127]

At Saint Patrick's Purgatory

Pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg!*[128]
O King of the churches and the bells
bewailing your sores and your wounds,

But not a tear can I squeeze from my eyes!
Not moisten an eye after so much sin!
Pity me, O King! What shall I do
with a heart that seeks only its own ease?
O only begotten Son by whom all men were made,
who shunned not the death by three wounds,

pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg
and I with a heart not softer than a stone!

As the narrator embarks on a religious journey, he experiences an uncomfortable

realization: even while on a sacred pilgrimage he cannot shake free of humanly desires.

Knowing not what to do with a "heart that seeks only its own ease," the pilgrim prays for

Christ's compassion as he travels from one prayer station to the next.

---

[126] The two poems are found in close proximity: "The Desire for Hermitage" is located on page 34, and "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" is located on pages 35-36.

[127] By using the three stanzas which include the word "pity," Barber creates a stronger sense of textual repetition.

[128] The G. Schirmer edition contains the following reference for the asterisk: "Loch Derg (Red Lake) in County Donegal has been a place of pilgrimage from very early times."

Whereas the cycle begins with a pilgrimage, it ends with a search for solitude and hermitage. Of the original six stanzas, Barber uses the first, fifth, and sixth. Changes include the insertion of two lines between the first and the fifth stanzas (marked here by an asterisk), and the substitution of one word in the final line, which alters the phrase "and as I shall go from it," to "alone I shall go from it."[129]

The Desire for Hermitage

> Ah! To be all alone in a little cell with nobody near me;
> beloved that pilgrimage before the last pilgrimage to Death.
>
> *Singing the passing hours to cloudy Heaven;
> feeding upon dry bread and water from the cold spring.
> That will be an end to evil when I am alone
> in a lovely little corner among tombs
> far from the houses of the great.
>
> Ah! To be all alone in a little cell,
> to be alone, all alone,
> Alone I came into the world –
> alone I shall go from it.

The tone of the concluding poem is that of resolution: the pilgrim finds refuge in the thought of solitude, and realizes that the cure for his ailment (presumably sin) can only be found through living the life of a hermit.

There are strong textual cross-references between first and last poems. "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" opens with a pilgrimage; "The Desire for Hermitage" returns to the theme of pilgrimage in the opening stanza by mentioning a beloved pilgrimage "before the last pilgrimage to death." Other similarities include the desire for escape from sin, and the singing of prayers.[130] Although there are several similarities in the poems, there is

---

[129] The two inserted lines were inspired by the original poem, which mentioned the portioning of dry bread.

[130] Barber's additional text in the last song also creates a subtle link to the prayer stations and the dry bread at the Loch Derg meal.

also a distinct change in character from one to the next. The tone in the opening poem is that of desperation, whereas the mood of concluding poem is centered and calm.

Poetic similarities and differences between the outer songs are further reinforced by harmonic centers. The cycle begins in G♯, and concludes in G♮. This tonal resolution is reinforced by the similarities found between the harmonic structures of the two outer songs, as shown in the table below.

Table 5-1. Comparison of Tonal Centers in Songs I and X.

| Song I: "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory"		Song X: "The Desire for Hermitage"	
G♯	mm. 1-26	G	mm. 1-18
G[131]	mm. 27-30	G♯	mm. 19-28
G♯	mm. 31-41	G	mm. 29-38

The two songs essentially mirror one another in harmonic and poetic construction. The outer sections of "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" focus on the concept of sin, whereas the inner section contains a prayer to Christ. Conversely, the two outer sections of "The Desire for Hermitage" describe the peaceful and sinless nature of solitude, and the inner section recalls the evil of the outside world. Changes in harmonic structures correspond to the changes in poetic mood. Sections which use a center of G♯ reflect the sinful world, while those in G♮ represent the release from sin.

Barber reiterates the harmonic and poetic resolution during the transition to and from the middle section of "The Desire for Hermitage." The first section of the song (mm. 1-10) establishes the center of G♮, with both the voice and piano consistently

---

[131] Previous studies have interpreted this section as D Aeolian, but an equally strong case may be made for G Dorian. The addition of the B♭ grace note in the second vocal ostinato in m. 29 outlines a G minor triad. The cadence in the following measure does not sound like a plagal cadence in D Dorian, but rather a half cadence to the dominant of G Dorian.

returning to the single pitch. The texture of the accompaniment is scant, and consists

mainly of a repeated G♮ in the treble clef, as shown in the following example.

Example 5-25. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage" mm. 1-3.[132]
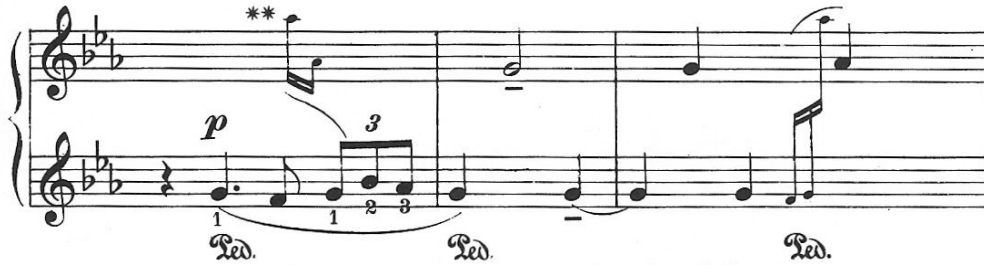
Much of the harmonic and melodic material in "The Desire for Hermitage" can be

traced to three motives. Motives one and two occur in both the voice and

accompaniment; the third motive is found only in the piano.

Example 5-26. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage" Motives 1, 2 and 3.

The harmonic texture in the accompaniment thickens in the measures leading up

to the modulation (mm. 11-18). Oscillating eighth-note dyads replace the repetitive

quarter note figure from the first eleven measures. In m. 19, the harmonic center suddenly

shifts from G♮ to G♯.

---

[132] The asterisks have the following reference at the bottom of the score: "All grace-notes somewhat longer, rubato."

Example 5-27. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage" mm. 18-20.

The modulation to G♯ occurs directly on the word "evil;" reinforcing the musicopoetic

relationship between G♯ and "sin."

In the measures that follow, the poet describes a "lovely little corner" in which he

may escape from sin, located "far from the houses of the great." After the conclusion of

the vocal phrase, the piano begins an interlude which combines all three motives in

canonic imitation. The texture of the piano increases as the narrator recalls the

overwhelming passion of the sinful outside world. Finally, the cadenza-like section

breaks as the accompaniment recalls the solitary quarter notes from the opening

measures.

Example 5-28. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage" mm. 26-31.

Whereas the song opened with repeated quarter notes on G♮, the return of the opening

material at the end of the interlude comes to rest on G♯. In the following measure the

voice and piano make an abrupt shift down a half-step, and return to the original tonal

center of G♮. At this point, the cycle resolves both poetically and musically. The narrator

resists the sinful, outside world by choosing to live a life of solitude. Barber expresses the

narrator's resolve by forcing the voice to enter on G♮ directly after a repeated G♯. The

song ends softly with the voice cadencing on G♮.

Example 5-29. Song X, "The Desire for Hermitage" mm. 36-38.

The harmonic material at the end of "The Desire for Hermitage" is remarkably

similar to that of the opening song. Although there is a slight difference in the final vocal

approach to the tonic, both phrases essentially end with a descent from B♭/♮ to G♮/♯.

Endings in the accompaniment are also harmonically identical. Both songs end in a

higher register of the piano, and come to rest on a final chord consisting fourths and fifths

(C—G—D and C♯—G♯—D♯).

Example 5-30. Song I, "At Saint Patrick's Purgatory" mm. 38-41.

Upon comparing the poetic and harmonic material of the two outer songs, it becomes evident that the pitches G♮ and G♯ serve a symbolic purpose. The tonal center of G♯ expresses the sinful, whereas G♮ represents piety through solitude.[133] Barber's reiteration of the cyclic decent from G♯ to G♮ in "The Desire for Hermitage" strengthens the relationship between the tonal centers and their respective themes.

Abstract Patterning and Symmetry

As shown by the chart on p. 66, the last song in the inner-narrative (Songs III, IV, and V) articulates a break in the poetic structure. Christ's death in "The Crucifixion" signifies the conclusion of the inner-narrative. The poetry in the following song, "Sea-Snatch," reiterates the turning point in the narrative:
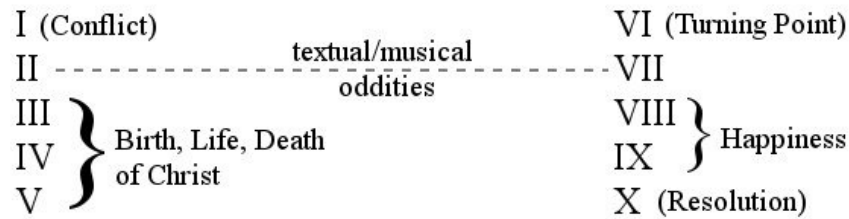
> It has broken us, it has crushed us, it has drowned us,
> O King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven;
> the wind has consumed us, swallowed us
> as timber is devoured by crimson fire from Heaven.
> It has broken us, it has crushed us, it has drowned us,
> O King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven!

Strong action verbs such as "broken," "crushed," and "drowned" convey an intense mood throughout the poem. While the narrator never explicitly states the source of his distress, verb tense suggests that the event occurred in the past. Whatever the source, whether grief caused by the crucifixion, or an unknown event, the lingering emotional impact can be clearly observed in the mood of Song VI.

---

[133] Other occurrences in the cycle reiterate the symbolism of G♯ as "sin." The "light and foolish woman" in "Church Bell at Night," and the mysterious lover in "Promiscuity" both make their presence known through the pitch G♯. Likewise, the mention of "envy" in "The Monk and His Cat" (mm. 35-36) is accompanied by a shift to G♯ Dorian.

The poetic turning point between Songs V and VI essentially splits the cycle in half, a division which is reinforced by abstract patterning found in the poetic moods in the cycle. The figure below summarizes the narrative structure:

Figure 5-2. Narrative Structure in the *Hermit Songs*.

I (Conflict)
II -------------------- textual/musical -------------------- VII
                            oddities
III ⎫
IV ⎬ Birth, Life, Death
V ⎭ of Christ

VI (Turning Point)
VII
VIII ⎫
IX   ⎬ Happiness
X (Resolution)

As shown by the figure, the moods and narrative features in the cycle can be divided into two halves. The first half of the cycle contains the conflict of Song I and the inner-narrative of Songs III, IV, and V. The second half begins with the turning point found in Song VI, features two contented songs (VIII and IX), and then concludes with a resolution in Song X.

Another aspect which supports the division is the placement of Songs II and VII. Textual and musical oddities, both songs occur in the second position of their respective halves. Tonally, their placement create an ascending half-step at the beginning of each half of the cycle: G♯ (Song I) to A (Song II), and C (Song VI) to C♯ (Song VII). From a narrative standpoint, the two texts are anomalous. Rather than furthering the development of ideas, Songs II and VII disrupt the narrative flow. Although their specific narrative function is unclear, the ironic texts contribute to the overall character of the cycle by highlighting the distractible nature of the human mind.

Narrative Structure Conclusion

As demonstrated throughout the chapter, numerous ordered and unordered events occur in the *Hermit Songs*. Cross-references provide unity by means of recurring poetic and motivic themes, and time-determined events articulate groupings of songs through developments in the text and music. While these events cannot account for every aspect of ordering among the songs, they nonetheless display a strong presence of patterning throughout the cycle. Examination of such patterning reveals an implied-narrative structure created by textual and musical cross-references, time-determined events, and abstract patterning and symmetry.

SUMMARY

A Romantic Pilgrimage

The implied-narrative in the *Hermit Songs* demonstrates striking similarities to narratives commonly found in Romantic song cycles. Retracing the steps of his Romantic forebears, the wandering pilgrim and his search for solitude highlight the fundamental predicament in the plots of many nineteenth-century *Wanderlieder* cycles. Turchin describes the Romantic quest as follows:

> [T]he travels of the wanderer symbolize mankind's quest to recover, through a circuitous journey, the lost primal state of unity. … [It] begins with man's fall from unity into self-division, self-conflict, and self-contradiction. The dynamic of this process is to move towards a balance, an integration, a closure of these divisions and contraries. The goal of the inner quest is to achieve a higher state of unity, a greater wholeness through increased self-awareness.[134]

While the narrative in the *Hermit Songs* contains obvious differences from well-known *Wanderlieder* cycles such as Schubert's *Winterreise* and *Die schöne Müllerin* or Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, the core of the narrative remains the same. Instead of searching for or bemoaning a lost love, the wandering pilgrim longs for release from the sinful human condition. Also like many Romantic cycles, the *Hermit Songs* conclude with a withdrawal from society. Rather than escaping through suicide, like the heart-broken youth in Schubert's *Die schöne Mullerin*, the pilgrim ends his quest by choosing to live the remainder of his life as a hermit.

Although the pilgrimage in the *Hermit Songs* is similar to the wandering journeys found in Romantic cycles, the cycle's expression of man's search for self-awareness is distinctly modern. Nineteenth-century *Wanderlieder* depict this search through an

---

[134] Barbara Turchin , "The Nineteenth-Century *Wanderlieder* Cycle," *The Journal of Musicology* 5, no. 4 (Autumn, 1987): 499.

outward act of wandering; the physical journey symbolizes the wanderer's emotional

pursuit for wholeness. In contrast, the twentieth-century journey for self-awareness leads

inward.[135] The narrative in the *Hermit Songs* demonstrates this conceptual shift. The

cycle begins with an outward journey—a pilgrimage to Loch Derg—yet the pilgrim's

quest for solitude leads him inward, and his search for self-awareness concludes with the

understanding that unity and wholeness come from within. With his renouncement of the

outside world, the pilgrim turns to live an eremitic existence, and the cycle ends with the

ultimate expression of the inner search for self.

The *Hermit Songs* embody many of Barber's compositional and personal

predilections. Medieval Irish texts represent a fondness for Celtic literature and interest in

the past. Chant-like vocal lines not only exhibit Barber's attention to literary detail, but

also his lifelong interest in Gregorian chant. Musical language in the *Hermit Songs*

demonstrates Barber's educational and personal influences, interest in Romantic and

post-romantic styles, and his interaction with modernist techniques. Correspondences and

interviews verify that Barber related to the cycle on a personal level as well. Themes of

religious solitude parallel the composer's tendency toward isolation and the narrative

quest for self-awareness resonates with his own search for truth. Later compositions, such

as *Prayers of Kierkegaard* (1954) and *Despite and Still* (1969) express Barber's

continued interest in such subjects.

As a composer, Barber did not concern himself with modernist trends, nor did he

endeavor to sound modern or conservative. Instead he wrote music that he felt was

---

[135] Carman, "A Study in Circular Imagery," 54-57.

authentic in its emotional content. In a 1971 interview with the *New York Times*, Barber explained:

> I think that what's been holding composers back a great deal is that they feel they must have a new style every year. This, in my case, would be hopeless. In fact, it has been said that I have no style at all but that doesn't matter. I just go on doing, as they say, my thing. I believe this takes a certain courage.[136]

Barber extended the Romantic and post-romantic styles into the twentieth century, not as a reaction against modernism or as a revival of the past, but as what he believed to be a natural evolution in a practice still very much alive.

---

[136] Gruen, "And Where Has Samuel Barber Been…?," 21.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albertson, J. E. "A Study of Stylistic Elements of Samuel Barber's *Hermit Songs* and Franz Schubert's *Die Winterreise*. D.M.A. diss., University of Missouri-Kansas City, 1969.

Baily, Dee. "Homer, Sidney," In *Grove Music Online*. http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13283 (accessed June 5, 2009).

Barber, Samuel. *Collected Songs for High Voice*. Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer, 1980.

Barr, Cyrilla. *Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge: American Patron of Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1998.

Bingham, Ruth O. "The Early Nineteenth-Century Song Cycle," *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Broder, Nathan. "The Music of Samuel Barber." *The Musical Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (July 1948): 325.

_____. *Samuel Barber*. New York: G. Schirmer, 1954.

Brooks, William. "The Americans, 1945-70." In *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present*, edited Robert P. Morgan, 309-48. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1993.

Carman, Judith Elaine. **"**Twentieth-Century American Song Cycles: A Study in Circle Imagery." D.M.A. diss., University of Iowa, 1973.

Davis, Alycia Kathleann. "Samuel Barber's *Hermit songs*, Opus 29: An Analytical Study." M.M. thesis, Webster College, 1983.

Foster, Beryl. *The Songs of Edvard Grieg*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2007.

Friedewald, Russel Edward. "A Formal and Stylistic Analysis of the Published Music of Samuel Barber" Ph.D. diss., Iowa State University, 1957.

Gruen, John. "And Where Has Samuel Barber Been…?" *New York Times*, October 3, 1971, Arts and Leisure Section.

Hennessee, Don A. *Samuel Barber: a Bio-bibliography*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985.

Heyman, Barbara B. *Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Hume, Ruth. "Postlude: Barber-Price Concert Fine Birthday Gift." *Washington Post*, October 31, 1953, 15.

Kreiling, J. L. "The Songs of Samuel Barber: a Study in Literary Taste and Text-Setting." PhD. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1986.

Jackson, Kenneth H., trans. *A Celtic Miscellany: Translations from the Celtic Literatures*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951.

Lewis, Christopher. "Text, Time, and Tonic: Aspects of Patterning in the Romantic Cycle." *Intégral* 2 (1988): 37-73.

Lough Derg, "Three Day Pilgrimage." http://www.loughderg.ie (accessed June 2009).

McCreless, Patrick. "Song Order in the Song Cycle: Schumann's *Liederkreis*, Op. 39." *Music Analysis* 5, no. 1 (March 1986): 5-28.

Morgan, Robert P. *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1991.

O'Faoláin, Seán. *The Silver Branch; A Collection of the Best Old Irish Lyrics, Variously Translated*. 2nd ed. Freeport, N.Y: Books for Libraries Press, 1968.

Oja, Carol J. "The USA, 1918-46." In *Modern Times: From World War I to the Present*, edited by Robert P. Morgan, 206-230. New Jersey: Prentice Hall,1993.

P., R. "Song Recital Given by Leontyne Price." *The New York Times*, November 15, 1954, Books section, 30.

Persichetti, Vincent. *Twentieth-Century Harmony: Creative Aspects and Practice*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1961.

Pollack, Howard. "Samuel Barber, Jean Sibelius, and the Making of an American Romantic." *Musical Quarterly* 84 (Summer 2000): 175-205.

Rorem, Ned. *The Paris and New York Diaries of Ned Rorem, 1951-1961*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983.

Taruskin, Richard. *Oxford History of Western Music*. 6 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Turchin, Barbara. "The Nineteenth-Century *Wanderlieder* Cycle." *The Journal of Musicology* 5, no. 4 (Autumn 1987): 498-525

_____. "Schumann's Song Cycle: The Cycle within the Song." *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 231-44.

Walters, H. B. *Church Bells of England*. London: Oxford University Press, 1912.

Wentzel, Wayne C. *Samuel Barber: A Guide to Research*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Wood, Vivian Lee Poates. *Poulenc's Songs: An Analysis of Style*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1979.