

Samuel Barber's White Goddess

The Transition of Samuel Barber,
An in-depth analysis of *Despite and Still*, op. 41

Samuel Barber's global notoriety is unquestionable and easy to identify, his pieces being performed world-wide on a routine basis, France in 2017, the United Kingdom in 2010, China in 1999. Having stated that, understanding the cyclical nature of his personality and unusually honest musical voice proves a much more grueling task, given Barber's uncompromising sense of self, which for better or worse, withdrew him from sharing the intensity of his suffering. Barber's legacy is one straight with internal dissatisfaction. Still, arising from the unrelenting contest within himself, a well of music emerged if not to say I have suffered and therefore I compose. Without the tribulations faced by Barber, one could infer that we would not have been gifted with the vulnerability of which Barber gave to everyone his musical compositions. "To go wrong in one's way is better than to go right in someone else's," this quote by Fyodor Dostoevsky, author of, 'The Brothers Karamazov,' a tale epitomizing the potentiality of the human condition to experience redemption, not only from the divine but within one's mind. Comparisons can be drawn to the harrowing tale of Samuel Barber, a composer who avoided relinquishing his authenticity despite grievances accosting him from every front, both internally and externally. The self-awareness to define his projected future at eight and his awareness of his sensual irregularities couldn't have been far behind, early success around nine years of age with the genesis of his piano studies and subsequent collaborative efforts culminating in his entrance into Curtis at 13, conscription into the military in 1942, accompanying post-war contriteness and compounding issues of Capricorn and Menotti. By writing this paper, I attempt to make a delineation of Barber's religious connections to his work and the effects of his Presbyteriana-Quaker upbringing, and how even though the turmoil he held a resoluteness to the 'three basic truths: imagination, dialectic, and religious melancholy.' Although not entirely based in theology, Barber throughout his entire career sought for the truth, whether that be idealistic or rooted in the physical realm. This search for the truth could have been his attempt to seek a divinity as many pieces colligate the voice of one who's solitary goal is the acquiescing of a complex, mental compromise. This theme is explicitly visible in his post-Antony and Cleopatra period, but much more subdued in the previous chapters of his career. The White Goddess, a concept perpetuated by the 19-20th century poet, was the origin of the male personification of the divine spirit, which is regarded as a feminine goddess of many forms by Graves, examples ranging from the Cult of Cybele, the earth-goddess capable of curing disease and predicting the future, Cult of Isis whose image stood as a symbol of life and fertility, all the

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way to Ireland with the Irish Triple Goddess who's tri-fold existence is of an underworld deity, an earth mother, and the prehistoric goddess Danu, who's influence, according to Graves, has the ability to the antiquarian name of God, Jehovah, as well as farther back to the confederacy of tribes in ancient Ireland, known as The Tuatha de Danaan whose matriarchal society converted the female goddess Danu to the masculine alternate, Don.

Lineage aside, the Triple Goddess was known for duality in her personality and treatment of devotee's. Encapsulated within the nurturing, motherly affiliation is the aggressive, ominous aspect, and this combination of masculine and feminine demeanors transcends pure devotional connotations and impacted the voice of Grave's poetry and in a non-invocational way, through the poetry in which Barber chose and the mindset in which he composed. 1969's *Despite and Still*, although not his last vocal work, perhaps is the most honest among his late period vocal works, 3 Songs, *The Lovers*, and *Two Pieces*. Op.41, dedicated to his life-long comrade and dear friend Leontyne Price, epitomizes the upheaval of innocence, found only in remote corners of his earthly time. He directly calls out to the young lover, one can ascertain the 'young lover' is Menotti, when can I let go of your image, could you continue, without me, to prosper 'without hate, without grief,' was my devotion to you misplaced, has my resolve towards that shining future been for naught, must we choose between the needs of life and the enthralls of love, to love 'despite and still.' The key to understanding 'Despite and Still' lies not in what questions the text asks, but in the fundamental acknowledgment that Barber was intelligent enough to know the answer, well before the issue was spoken, do you still love me? Louise Homer, the Aunt to Samuel Barber, is noted to have reminded Barber on numerous occasions to venture within one's self and to extract sincerity and to let that be your guiding factor. Knowing this, it is not difficult to understand why Barber felt it unnegotiable, to be honest, to show complete emotional transparency, and to never musically lie. 'Despite and Still' is the truthful 'Sammy' Barber directly speaking to Gian Carlo explicitly stating how isolated he had felt without him. How exhausted he was of the meaningless effort, of hoping for a future so fervently to have it seized, never to have it rectified and brought back from the dead. I believe, within the measure of Bach's music, Samuel Barber found respite due to Bach's attainment of Barber's interpretation of "beau idéal." Perhaps this concept of the 'ideal beauty' was a driving factor for Barber, whose idea led him to self-imposed drilling to provide constant perfection, both physically within music and emotionally with those around him, most importantly Menotti.

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“One finds here three basic truths(:) imagination, dialectic, and religious melancholy. The truth he [Kierkegaard] sought after was a truth which was a truth for me.” Barber’s compositional identity juxtaposed, in a way, his fervently defended character, which was one of emotional conservation, finding solace in melancholy as a deterrent against lofty displays of sentiments, both joyous or otherwise. “Sea of faith was once too at the full--but now I only hear Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar--,” these lines from *Dover Beach*, published in 1931, concisely sheds rays on the origins of Barber’s melancholic status being that Barber at one time was too full of naivety. Still, through the movement of time, a concept discussed in Presbyterian circles, this vigor was converted to melancholy, and I speculate it was due to several factors, both internal and external.

1. Samuel Barber was masking his homosexual tendencies from social circles, the mental implication due to this long-term behavior, and subsequent emotional ‘support system’ collapsing.
2. His neo-conservative approach to the compositional process, his wistful pining for the naivety of youth, and ensuing critique from composer colleagues and critics alike.
3. His intense feelings of separatism that cultivated in mental-anguish, paired with an incapability to communicate his emotions coherently outwardly, yet having clarity in emotional deliverance within musical compositions.

Barber’s homosexual tendencies were not flagrantly addressed, nor were they flaunted by Barber, as he had grown up in conservative West-Chester, who’s religious percentages even now in 2020 give way to Catholic with 43.4%. One must consider then if so close to half the population of West Chester, the percentage must have been higher in 1910-20s, and because of West Chester’s sizeable Catholic population, the sentiments toward those of the homosexual lifestyle could have been of disdain. One story, who’s source is unconfirmed, recounts Barber evading Tallulah Bankhead, a 20th century outspoke, prolific bisexual actress, by escaping to the bathroom during parties held at his residence. It is evident that he did associate himself with gay culture, not only through actions taken to distance himself from the narrative that he was objectively homosexual but by through identifying with the label itself, as explained by a quote by Charles Turner, one of Samuel Barber’s sprinkling of students and one of his caretakers later

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in his life, “*He wouldn’t have liked even being called gay. But he was perfectly proud of his friends who were. He had one way of behaving, in what you might call society and then he had another way of behaving with, young male friends. I think he thought of himself and his private life as a gentleman and rather old fashion way people had of being gay. It’s gone out of style now, maybe. It never did with Sam. I remember him saying to me, not long before he died, well who would ever know I was homosexual?*” This quote divulges the secret that could have possibly been the cause of Barber’s internal anguish and as well the subsequent cause of his inability to truly emote that which he was capable of expressing only through music. A crippling sense of being wedged in two worlds, one of authenticity and one of facsimiled ‘correctness,’ and this world, no matter how real, cannot produce an intact personality for a whole lifetime. What is poignant is a convoluted troika that occurred twice at Capricorn, one until 1943, and another until around 1956. The first instance involved poet Robert Horan, who was homosexual. This relationship, akin to a parent-child involving Barber, Menotti, and Horan, could be thought of as proof of the reassembling of social norms which occurred at Capricorn, juxtaposed against the 1940-50’s ideal family construct, and the reliance of a type of atypical normalcy that Barber was craving, perhaps more so than Gian Carlo. The second trio was Barber, Menotti, and star-conductor, Thomas Schippers, who came to Capricorn during the conception of Barber’s 1958 opera, “*Vanessa*.” Thomas Schippers was an up-and-coming conductor at the Metropolitan and perchance more important here, 20 years younger than Menotti and Barber, a fact that becomes relevant when one considers that Menotti had a fascination with men of the younger disposition. Because of this fact, the ‘deep’ relationship between the two could not have sat well with Barber due to his one-sided perceptions of martial unification with Menotti. Schipper’s comments on the concise status of the relationship between the three men showcases the ambiguous nature of not just the three men’s relationship, but Menotti’s and Barber’s somewhat strenuous relationship throughout the conception of Capricorn, “the fact is none of the relationships are clear, and no one will be able to explain them to anyone.... You’ll never get to the bottom of our relationship because we haven’t.” Because of Barber’s insecurities, both with the public and private Barber, coupled with an interior war brought by a craving of normalcy, it demystifies why Capricorn could not last. During the summer of 1956, more specifically Sconset, Nantucket, Barber alone was working on the musical interlude to *Vanessa*’s Act 2, when he decided to compose a sorrowful, resignation to the once endless life envisioned at Capricorn, on

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the back of a piece of manuscript paper. “-He is happy exactly where he is and precisely with whom he is. That is the way he wishes it to be. It is as clear as that, and suddenly there was no more sound from the sea surf, no cries of gulls, and no light from the lighthouse.” This signaled the finality of endless bliss, and perhaps in a way, embodied the very essence of Barber’s incessant melancholy. That all good things must pass, that the youthful vigor of our naivety too does leave, and once gone, it remains gone. In 1953, Barber wrote *Hermit Songs*, in 1954 *Prayers of Kierkegaard*, and in 1962, *Andromache’s Farewell*. Barber’s support line, his one key to a sense of normalcy, was exhausted, but it wouldn’t be until the failure of *Antony and Cleopatra* that Barber would genuinely plunge into the far reaches of his sadness. Although the relationship faltered, his compositional voice did not, and *Vanessa*, the opera that conceivably ended his physical relationship, was met with glorious praise, a bitter and distressing ironic outcome of his time at Capricorn, “...a full-blown set-piece that packs an emotional charge and that would be a credit to any composer anywhere today.”

The second bullet point pertains to his neo-Romantic qualities and 19th-century musical aesthetics, albeit intertwined with 20th-century musical modernity, a world he stridently attempted to venture away from but ultimately moderately enveloped himself in. When describing Barber’s artistic aesthetic, the term that most often connected to him is neo-Romantic, why? His habitude towards emotionally driven content within the context of subjective moods gives a clear indication that music was his avenue of truthful expression, his consolation in response to the ever-encroaching barriers of modernity, i.e., full atonality, serialism, Cageism, aleatoricism. Mirroring the productive freedom of inhabiting and working at Capricorn, unabatted by social circles and collegial influences, he was able to produce his first instances of 20th-century dabblings, i.e., “*Capricorn Concerto*,” “*Excursions*,” and the many others during the period of 1943-1973. For Barber, Capricorn was artistic heaven and could have represented a liberated sanctuary from prying eyes, as the visitors were of one type, artists and artists of every kind, from Francis Poulenc, Pierre Bernac, Virgil Thomson, to Tallulah Bankhead, Martha Graham, and even Andy Warhol. The significance of the inundation of social and artistic influence in and around Capricorn on Barber affected not only what Barber wrote, but how. All these pieces share similar technical prowess of modernistic integration within the constraints of Barber’s 19th century musical disposition, segments of skewed tonality, adherence to form, serialistic passages without ever falling out of synch with post-romantic melodicism,

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and virtuosic, frequently remarkably grand, swatches of sonic storytelling, heard in his 1947 composition, "Knoxville: Summer of 1915." Knoxville, for the poet James Agee, was the place of his childhood, where simplistic, naive truthfulness permeated thought and action, from the domesticated swaying of rocking-chairs in the afterglow of the setting sun to the resonations of horse-drawn carts juxtaposed with the rumble of automobiles of different decibel. Germinating within Barber was an undetectable apprehension of self-character despite the fact he presented as self-assured, musically and socially, stating his obligation to compose in a letter, not wishing to find gratification in other avenues of leisure. This internal debate of character, perceivable only through his music as the emotion, "melancholy," is correlated with "nostalgia," not only for a childhood from a past no longer accessible but from an era, long since synthesized into a modernity foreign to James Agee, and even more alien to Samuel Barber. Among the poetic lines depicting the sounds and introspective slowness of domestic nightfall, there's an acknowledgment that one inevitable will hit a juncture of personal identification, "--but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am." In an interview in 1949 with James Fassett, Barber showed his affinity for Agee's poem due to the poem's ability to cause Barber to reminisce about his intricate upbringing, imbued with psychological ponderings of self, and the knowledge of an unknown, prospective future, therein his inability to perceive what was ahead perhaps was the cause of his conservative understanding of the world, and the basis of his emotional response to it, or lack thereof. Answering the question to what caused Barber to rapidly decline after Antony and Cleopatra's failure proves to be more ambiguous than clear, due to several factors, one of them being the critic's review and response. One critic's review of the opera's debut coincided the opera with Vanessa and its inability to outshine the latter, another critic recognized the disunification of Barber's traditional inclinations within contemporary dexterity and how, although skillfully created, the opera lacked 'ardor and eloquence.' One must imagine the disastrous consequences to a barrage of negative responses that befell onto Samuel Barber. Not only was Barber proud of the culmination of his musical work, but in the years leading up to the premiere, there was a palpable shift from the established, conventional Barber to a more modernized amalgamated Barber, infused with the language of the Neo-Romantics. Evidence for this mixture of styles is evidenced in the legacy of the compositional outpouring of Capricorn, where Barber's liberation from the stifling social circles and public eye allowed him to investigate and experiment with the tonal modernity he so fervently avoided. This

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experimentation thrust its hand into Barber's work, seen with 'Andromache's Farewell, Nuvoletta, Excursions, etc.' and, in my own opinion, could have matured in an authentic fashion post-Antony and Cleopatra, and in some respects it did, if he was awarded more critical leniency, due to the blatant directorial negligence of Zafarelli that night. Among the myriad of reviews written that night, a sentiment shared by Barber and critics alike was the displaced attentiveness to the relationship between the music and the sets, costumes, technology, and aesthetical surroundings. Indeed, listening to the opera now, one can assess that due to the Verdi-like grandeur of the orchestral component, perplexing tonal recitative and expansive aria's, there was no need to over-indulge the viewer with superfluous, as well as malfunctioning, visual demonstrations. "With the stage set of A&C, I was not happy. Great things going on the stage, you could hardly hear the music. Leoyntune Price told me she held onto her wig and decided it was either the opera or herself or the music; I forgot which, she was very gallant about that. I thought that was mistreated by the man who did the sets, who shall be nameless." Notably, however, Antony and Cleopatra was re-performed at Julliard in 1975 after being edited by Barber and put under the directorship of Menotti himself, with Roland Hedlund and Esther Hinds in the title roles of Antony and Cleopatra. Although this rendition was praised as the reinvigorated alternative of the helpless victim showcased in 1966, this turned out to not be enough to reinvigorate Barber's self-worth. In 1973 Capricorn, the once illustrious sanctuary, isolated from prying eyes where 'Sammy' Barber could effectually be himself, both musically and emotionally, a freedom not afforded to him in regular, day-to-day social mundanity, was sold due to a faltering and deterioration of Gian Carlo's and Barber's 'marriage' as well as the continually raising taxes, property upkeep, and repairs needing to be done. All of these complications aside, they will be further explained and discussed, Barber was profoundly affected by the discontinuation of his youth and this turmoil became unconquerable, ultimately leading him to move back to the place which, by his submission, stole his musical conception. "I think 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 . . . I just go on doing, as they say, my thing. I believe this takes a certain courage." From a young age, one could assume that Barber intrinsically experienced a sense of separateness and congenial longing, indicated by his letter at 8, his diary entries, and comments later in life. Imprinted onto Barber by Sydney Homer early in his life was the notions of authentic emotional portrayal, and indeed this concept stayed with

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Barber, through Curtis, and past the fall of Antony and Cleopatra. What is remarkable about Barber's body of works is his unwillingness to be inauthentic, and despite (and still) his encroaching sadness, he didn't compromise the intrinsic honesty taught to him so many years ago. In a review of *Despite and Still* from Donal Henahan, the first performance of Op. 41 was colored as emotionally distant, which made, 'a puzzle of the first performance.' Expressed in Barbara Heyman's book and shared by himself, was the sentiment that the songs of *Despite and Still* relegated themselves to a shelf in the musical closet, not of the current time, when composers like Berio, Stockhausen, and Cage were becoming the predominant revolutionary figures, "Why should every opera today have to sound like *Wozzeck*?" This unrelenting 'traditionalism' coupled with his notions of 'perfect' matrimonial bliss that Capricorn offered, provides us with the delapidated picture of what Barber had spent his entire life creating and striving to achieve, perfection itself. He had affixation to genuine emotion and the pursuit of 'the perfect companion' that could, in my opinion, gratify his longing for a sense of normalcy, "Oh Lord, as I look forward and see my life as it must be, what a tragic look it bears. God, I would rather be an ordinary person than an unusual genius, rather aunty than Beethoven." Whether this is a veracious assumption or not, many of Barber's pre-Antony and Cleopatra's ruminations and actions seem to indicate that he was in search of consistency, from letters to his parents in 1929, the move to Capricorn in 1943, and devastation at Menotti's tendencies for younger men and ultimate 'relationship' with Thomas Schippers. His divisiveness for Menotti's wandering eye, and his single marital devotion, "essentially a romantic personality," as someone "a bit more sentimental than I," only strengthened the case that Barber was searching for something externally. Safety or security in the companionship of another person on the same intellectual and musical aptitude as himself and this searching led him, not to a long-held relation perhaps which was the hopeful end, but to a place of reconciling and sincere withdrawal into his compositional works. Schoenberg himself provided his critique of Antony and Cleopatra, stating that the grandness of the compositional writing overshadowed the subject matter, and instead of writing to examine the love between fated lovers, he created music that lacked characteristical gestures. This sentiment is shared across a wide array of commentators and critiques alike. Still, conversely, there was also acknowledgment that once the music was emancipated from eccentricities, it gained in musical interest and this concept of concretizing the music's ability to stand on its own was taken into the future renovations of the opera, "No doubt another try

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hereabouts is indicated, perhaps in a revised smallerscale, more musically centered version.” Antony’s reworking of the two most prominent scenes in 1968, culminating in a concert in June, managed to sway the harsh criticisms of the critics and further editing, with the help of Menotti in 1973, solidified the final form of Barber’s compositional structure. This included new music, and updated as well as the libretto, “-part of the trouble was that Zafarelli...did not understand Sam’s character at all and he filled the libretto with fanfares and---. Sam’s always been a very intimate and introverted composer--” This rationalization that the escapade of the 1966 premiere was not due to the inadequacy of Barber’s compositional talent, rather the misunderstanding of the essence of Barber’s compositional predisposition perhaps gives us context to the receptivity of Barber’s unique looking back, looking forward approach to musical creation. Made known by Heymann, albeit in the 1992 printing, is the infrequency of which this opera is performed as well as Barber compositions in general, as the ear of modern listeners was being pulled to ‘modern’ composers, in 1992 it was the minimalist movement, Ligeti, Carter, Cage, and the experimentalists. His music was seen as ‘reactionary’ in the sense of purposeful rebellion against the contemporary agenda of musical innovation of the time. Concerning the previous point, the opera has seen the stage in the post-Barberian period, albeit in slim proportion to other more well-known works. Its post-Barber life was and is narrow, 1983 performance at Spoleto Festivals, 1992 performance at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, 2009 at New York City Opera, 2010 at Curtis and Opera Philly, and most recent was in 2019 with two scenes being produced by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. This state of ambivalence towards Barber’s opera is at best unfortunate, and at worst unfounded, as the loudest expression of his quietest declarations of emotional suffering is within the score of Antony and Cleopatra. His compositions hold the key to rationalizing Barber’s true motives throughout his life and indeed in his third period, 1966 onwards, his motives became about defending his feelings, his enthusiastic love for another, as seen by the subject matter of love and loss in, ‘Despite and Still,’ ‘The Lovers’, and ‘3 Songs.’ ‘3 Songs’ his final song cycle, but not final composition, was published in 1972, with text by James Joyce and dedicated to Fischer-Diskeau, the German singer whom he praised for his interpretation of *Dichterliebe* by Schumann. The role of German *Lieder*’s influence upon Barber cannot be stressed enough as the relationship of ‘instrumental and other’ is synonymous with the relationship cultivated by Schubert and Schumann, and in his comments, Schulz and Schmuegel. Barber’s image of the German presumption of tonal

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displacement could have been solidified into his writings as early as the winter of 1984, where he began to be exposed to collections of German Lieder at the Vienna Libraries as well as 'primitive' Italian works by Monteverdi, Cavalli, and others. This exact path of European exposure to early tonal toying within structural form was brought back to America and synthesized right into the fabric of Barber's identity, "-there is much which our too-complicated contemporary composers might learn." The contents of 3 Song's poetry, written by James Joyce and translated from German only after Joyce had heard a setting done by Shoeck, which was an abridged version of a poem found in Keller's song cycle, "Thoughts of one buried Alive."

The first song's text incorporates liturgical themes and allusions to Barber's musical revelations as a rose given to him in the dark, fitting when one considers perhaps the emotion encased within Barber's was intrinsic and simply not a choice by Barber to omit. The second song, whimsical in its text and characterized as 'funny' by Barber, could be the poetic representation of precisely what Barber had endured throughout his career, "-they are entranced by frogish, moonish spontaneity, -they cause scandals in a concert hall-suddenly they lie down like cows looking with indifference at the white flowers of the audience-." His eye for 'useable' poetry colored his reading of poetry, and his words, "-I have always have in the back of my mind the feeling that I may come across a usable song text. I tend to make things when I read a promising poem for the first time, and then go back and try to appreciate it simply as poetry." With this knowledge that even in the act of reading poetry, Barber's analytical mind was tinkering with the notions of musical setting, searching for the voice within the words, a foresight can be attained that this unrelenting search for pertinency in text, not confined to lofty expressions of Barber's lyrical antics, situated Barber, willing or unwillingly, in the camp of musical honesty and authenticity. As previously stated, Barber was not overtly religious. However, this is not to say his artistic means and poetic preferences were not permeated with divine aspects, as corroborated with his 1953 composition, "Hermit Songs." These poems dealt with Irish monks from the 8th-13th centuries and were found as footnotes within pages of illuminated manuscripts. Due to the celestial essence of the poems, they imbue the listener with divine visions of God's magnificence within the natural world. The educational inclinations of the Irish monks were of passionate learners and ardent teachers, never seizing their desire to learn and impart onto others. These early Irish monastic schools, of the 6-10th centuries, operated as an archaic form of a modern-day liberal arts University, complete with a varied

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educational path, law, poetry, or Gaelic learning, akin to our modern schools of a similar higher-educational way. These monks that taught and studied and who, as we can speculate, wrote these poems did so in an enlightened frame of mind, thereby channeling the divine realm into their writing with descriptions of a church steeple, authentic spiritual contribution, a happy relationship between a monk and his cat. These writings culminated in the most magnificent display of 'Barberism,' a poem dedicated to the desire to seclude oneself, fully present with the divine spirit, until one's passing from this physical plane to the next plane of religious experience. Alone, explained by the text, the chronicler came into the world, and alone shall that same chronicler depart, perhaps with the setting of this poem last in the cycle, he was ascertaining the desire for his retreat to seclusion. However, in Barber fashion, this claim is refuted within a letter to his Uncle Sidney Holmer around 1952, where the contents talk about the reasons in which he is not seeking hermitage. But he was, albeit not permanently and, like alluded to before, he was looking for stability within the constraints of human connection and this searching led him to self-imposed mental ostracization, a mindset of 'Capricorn is my only true home' which could only have been altered with brute force. His adherence to an authentic, humanistic, construction in all things was translated not only in his dealings with others, musical aesthetic and moral code but the way he viewed Capricorn as the apogee of the country/city synthesis, "-Like Messiaen, I like birds. And I need the absolute silence of the country. I need places to walk." The natural world and the spiritualistic insight it could provide was not lost on Barber, nor was the acknowledgment of higher power than himself. Scholarship on his religious tendencies is not readily available but what is known is that he was Presbyterian-Quaker in his upbringing, and therefore he would have been exposed to the notions of a divine presence within every person and that a divine presence could be found in every interaction, and for Barber perhaps it was most prominent in the natural world. In the middle of the '70s, it is recorded by Valetin Herranz, Barber's valet, companion, and helper had mentioned that in Barber's diary he had written quotes by Buddha on varied topics evidently to help him cope with his growing depression and health dilemma's, "It is a pride that inspires ill-feeling at another's success." Enclosed as well were recipes and yoga exercises, and one could not conclude that these entries showcased Barber's spiritualistic tendencies. But I believe this shows us that at some point in his process of post-A and C internalization, he had realized that perhaps there was an alternative route one could take rather than succumbing to a depressive

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status. This was coupled with his attempt at relief from his insobriety around 1975, congruent with his purchasing his final 'home,' a large apartment overlooking Central Park, but even this was a challenge for him, and ultimately he gave in to full treatment in his efforts to continue his compositional output. The most prominent example of Barber's spiritualism is with his choice of poets, particularly Robert Graves, "It sets very well, there's a real structure and taut quality that I find formally inviting." Graves and Barber shared a common trait, and that was the singular confidence in their lovers, even though the physical relationship was severed. This intrinsic notion of a spiritual connection in the configuration of a 'single mind' remained constant through Barber's life with Menotti and must-have for Graves and Beryl. Graves poetry, according to Barber, lent itself to the musical setting in which Barber envisioned and perhaps heard or felt while reading that first critical time. The reason for that could have been because of the universal theme of the White Goddess, interwoven throughout all of Graves poetry as his poetry served the purpose of praise to the 'White Goddess,' and perhaps when transmuted from White Goddess to 'the perpetual Other,' its attractiveness becomes evident.

Once again, if we transmute the teachings of the Quakers and Presbyterians from an adherence to the God within each person and instead replace God with 'goodness,' then we have come to the heart of Barber. He was born a gentle spirit, sensitive to the minute emotional details of life and undoubtedly observational, and through Capricorn, he attempted to find his 'corner of my (his) own, so to speak,' where he could be unabashed by others gazing eyes, with his love, his thoughts, his intellect, the company of his choosing. This cultivation of the perfect place for personal and professional liberation was at heart the epitome of his connection to the White Goddess, or transmuted again, to 'heavenly/earthly perfection.' Expanding on the White Goddess as a divine mother/entity, we can see throughout antiquity as far back as the 3rd millennium BCE the White Goddess taking on a conceptual identity of motherhood, being associated with maternity, childbirth, and successful harvests. In Mesopotamia, she was depicted as Inanna, meaning lady of the heavens, representing the fruition of universal life through the unification of water, earth, and air in the manifestation of a Goddess form. Modern scholars debate her Sumerian origins, but scholarship concurs that she was conflated with Ishtar, the Babylonian equivalent whose name was perhaps derived from the West Semitic God Attar, the male deity of the morning star, arts of war, and whose female companion symbolized the evening star, skills of love, and this name, Ishtar being in its male form yet taking on a

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female identity, provides context to her masculine depictions, represented as a lion and heavily armored during the Akkadian period, perhaps a predecessor to the Greek Goddess Athena, and associated with the Hindu Goddess Durga who, akin to Ishtar, is depicted accompanied by a lion and the ability, with her fierce temper, to kill demons. Inanna, the mother of Mesopotamia and fulfiller of many womanly roles, “sister, daughter, sweetheart, bride, and widow,” and her warrior equivalent Ishtar, goddess of warfare and hetero and homosexual rites, i.e., procreation and fertility, provides strong evidence of antiquital lineage for many warrior/fertility Goddesses and Deities found in later antiquity. For example. Aphrodite birthed from the earlier Phoenician Goddess Astoreth, Georgian Goddess Dali, and many elements of the Irannan-Ishtar cult which found their way into the Christian praising of the Virgin Mary, i.e., Mary weeping at the feet of Jesus connotated to Inanna’s weeping at the death of Tammuz, her husband, and the journey of their beloved from death to resurrection. The last question, “-Therefore, love have done?” in my reading of the issue, if formulated in different syntax reads, “Therefore, is love done?” This contextualization of the subject provides more context and a paradoxical answer to this inquiry on the future of this once-stable love. This question goes far beyond the poem; this question could be thought of as the reason for Barber’s melancholic state, he was continually tormented by the fear that the love, the happiness, the ‘positive’ emotion felt would inevitably disappear and to busy oneself with the thought of its permanence would be a naive choice. “My Lizard,” a text by Roethke with the subtitle, “Wish for a young wife,” which was changed by Barber, alludes to Roethke’s younger wife, seventeen years his junior Beatrice O’Connell, and stated within this poem is his death motif...

1. A carefully structured image pattern that balances the ideal with the real, stillness with motion, the temporal with the eternal.
2. an elaborate hierarchy of nature imagery;
3. abundant use of diction to develop the characteristics simultaneously of--and relations between--physical and metaphysical love

This death motif, identified by Roethke, is characterized as a death of the self for the acquirement of love, and that mortality, the finality of human existence, is the obligatory companion of love. Roethke had the desire to immortalize his wife in his poetry, and perhaps

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conversely, Barber had wanted to celebrate his romance with Menotti within the poetry and music he chose to unite, effectually suspending time and keeping Capricorn and his related experiences alive. However, perhaps he wanted to memorialize his experiences at Capricorn, thereby releasing himself from having to hold onto painful memories? Beatrice was, to Roethke, “eternally young, capable of oracular wisdom, absolutely beautiful, spiritually and physically,” Menotti, to Barber, was, “-quite perfect, at close range even the defects become delights,” and so it would be rational to deduce that accompanied with this deep cherishing of one’s spouse comes with the agitation of losing said spouse, and this trepidation at the possibility of loss plagued Barber and caused him to be sensitive to Menotti’s infatuations and relationship with younger men. My Lizard seeks to provide context to Barber’s dual-perspective on his relationship, not just to Menotti, but the concept of love, ‘lively writher’ describing Menotti as full of vitality but also love as an active, awoken force. Following every positive attribute within the poetic lines is an accompanying line denoting the bleak future of its writer, and this contrast of these two futures, one of hope and one of sadness, constituted Barber’s post-Antony mindset, he no longer had the will to defend his musical style nor the intention to counteract the melancholy perturbing his thoughts. Because of this relinquishing into an interior ‘castle crystal’ of his own, making the poetry that spoke to him changed. From sincere hope, “My Fairyland,” fervent passion, “The Shepherd to his Passionate Love,” shifting to questionable melancholy, “King David” bemused sadness, “Andromache’s Farwell” and finally, after his significant lifelong work ate into his confidence, sorrowfully hopeful recollection, “The Lovers,” this final transfiguration of his personality staying with him to the very end.

Number 3, whose poetry is by Robert Graves from his 1918 collected cycle, From Fairies and Fusiliers, is the most explicitly religious of the five songs depicting Jesus’s journey back to Galilee after 40 days and nights in the desert in sacred fasting after being baptized by John the Baptist. The Temptation of Christ, found in Matthew 4:1-11, seeks to teach the readers to search for God’s divine virtues rather than be tempted by the erroneous perversion of the human abilities, “to think, wish and feel which are inside the mind, soul and heart.” These teachings help the reader to follow the innate Godliness that, in turn, brings one closer to God’s divine qualities, Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. These qualities are similar to the Presbyterian-Quaker tradition, as previously stated, of relying on conscience as the basis of human morality and Divine connection. The poems religious background is embellished with lines recounting his

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communion with 'great bats-broken things,' 'she-pelican-basilisk-cockatrice' and describes these creatures with detail, but ultimately these are superfluous to the central tenant of their appearance in this poem, which is to show that Jesus's love extended to all no matter what their appearance or moral level. One analysis of the poem bears the suggestion that perhaps what was being described laid on the shoulders of the word, scapegoat, and that this 'scapegoat' personified the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. I don't agree as upon reading the entire poem and understanding the Temptation story we can deduce that the portrayal of the scapegoat is indeed Jesus but, more importantly, about the Devil, who tempts Jesus with three depravities but ultimately loses due to Jesus's dedication to the Lord. Thus the label of "guiltless young scapegoat" could be referencing his inevitable death as the scapegoat for the Romans. One could propagate the understanding, after thoroughly investigating the religious relevancy of the poem, that Jesus and his followers are personifications of a concept, Jesus being the embodiment of his time at Capricorn, and his followers being the representation of the time spent cultivating his relationship with Menotti. In this assessment of the poem, Barber's time at Capricorn could be equated to Jesus's time in the desert and the temptations by the Devil being the positive attributes, memories, artistic communions that occurred at Capricorn and these happy occurrences only served as distractions from Barber's intuition that the happiness and tranquility at Capricorn wasn't to last, and then true happiness was when he made his way back to Galilee, transmuted to mean his music and the sharing of his emotions through his music. Solitary Hotel by James Joyce from his Ithaca Episode which recounts the dialogue between Bloom, the hero of Ulysses, and Stephen, James Joyce's literary counterpart, is the 4th in this biographical work and unlike the rest of the poems we have been introduced thus far, this excerpt from Ulysses provides little context. It subsequently opens the door for more questions than answers, which are only satisfied by looking at the background and relevancy of the particular part that Barber chose to set. Leopold's Bloom's father, Rudolph, a convert from Judaism to Protestantism, kills himself in the Queen's Hotel due to grief felt after his wife's death, and it is this very hotel that we find this scenario taking place. So right from the beginning, the Queen's Hotel is a paradox, a hotel being a place of refuge during a trip, but because of the suicide, the hotel's image is changed from one of safety to one of pain and trauma. Before the vignette of 'Solitary Hotel,' two key sections are seen indicating the backdrop to the excerpt, "-What two temperaments did they individually represent? The scientific. The artistic-,"

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‘-What is home without Plumtree’s Potted Meat? Incomplete. With it an abode of bliss,-’. What follows is a commentary on the father’s suicide and other coincidental real-life actualities that disturbingly lined up with the stories told to him. Still, more important than this is what follows this, “-Which domestic problem as much as, if not more than, any other frequently engaged his mind?” This leads into a couple of pages dedicated to the pondering on what to do with a wife who suffers from “-deficient mental development,” which takes the form of incoherent comparisons and analyses. What is most important about these following ruminations of the displacement of intellect is that when applied to the stories told by Bloom to Stephen, it leads up to the ultimate question, applicable to Barber but also anyone, “-originality, though producing its own reward, does not invariably conduce to success?” Originality for originalities’ sake doesn’t equal success, and this notion perhaps was close to Barber’s heart as Antony and Cleopatra was considered to be criminally underappreciated by Barber. Despite Baber’s protests that night at the opera, Zeffirelli, and the management had made Barber, a victim, his music being superseded by elaborate staging and costumes which took away from the musical scoring, The paradox within the musical societal framework that Barber had found himself was palpable. However, originality itself doesn’t birth success, the cultivation of a new type of American music was gaining in momentum, i.e., 12-tone, experimental, serial, aleatoric music, and despite Barber’s profound resolve to his ‘American Tradition of individuality’ he did incorporate elements of twelve-tone and emphatic dissonances in his music. A prominent example being in his Piano Sonata in E minor, where Barber utilizes tone rows that accompany and help move along the harmonic progression instead of being used as an impediment to tonality. The study of Barber’s integration of Schoenberg’s concept of twelve-toneism will not be expanded upon here. Still, one minute example is a full twelve-tone set in measure 20, where the ascending 8th note passage compiles all 12 tones and outlines an octave, albeit in a fractured format. Pointed out by Babara Heyman is the role that Slonimsky’s Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns had upon Barber, pointed out the fact that Barber had a copy open on his piano while writing this very Sonata. All this culminated in Barber’s serial prowess showcased in *Despite and Still*, his dealing of this pivotal question, does raw originality lead to success showcased by the woman’s emphatic writing of the name, perhaps used as a symbolic allusion to Barber’s determination and drive for Antony and Cleopatra, which were met with disdain and confusion, not at him but at the lack of Barber shining through to which audiences became accustomed to.

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The fifth and final song in the cycle, “Despite and Still,” is the most intimate of the five, Barber now fully committed whether by an internal drive or unknown, imaginary outcome, to the continuation of his devotion to Menotti whether or not he is tangibly within reach, or only a colleague. However, Barber and genuine simplicity don’t readily coincide. Robert Graves’s depiction of two lovers, one prone to ‘rashness’ who we can assume is the speaker due to the first person usage, and the other inclined to ‘gentleness’ which we could infer is Barber. Thus this could be a depiction of Menotti’s appeal to Barber to continue to pursue their irrefutable fidelity for each other, or perhaps it could be the direct opposite; in Barber’s irrational despair, he is imaging himself and his two personalities. One of sincere tenderness and sensitivity, and the other Barber who is vulnerable to venial, humanistic ups and downs of emotion. Whomever the poem is directed to, the objective is clear, which is to disregard any other option other than love and to proceed down the path of love, no matter the situational grievances. With this reading, one comes to recognize just how significant this cycle was to him, both physically as a way to release concealed emotions, and spiritually in the vein that with the release from guilt, shame, sadness over Capricorn could come to the reunification of himself with Nature, in the form of the real Barber. This form of Barber was present well before Curtis, the Barber of his childhood when communion with Nature wasn’t a conscious choice, but rather a state of being. This poem, charged with anxiety over a hopeful outcome, is seen as a response to the growing criticisms of his antiquated musical style by some, and a tale of fated lovers by others, but in my contextualization of the song, it is merely not either-or. Graves had written this poetry in defense of a shared mind with his muse Laura Riding, who had fallen out of passion with him and moved to another with her patronage, and this desperate plea by Graves to uphold a love that was once so strong, couldn’t be more Barber in its deeply beseeching manner and hopeful trepidations. Touching upon the theoretical aspects of this particular piece, notable is the irregular rhythm set in motion by the piano’s entrance and the disjunct vocal line in comparison to the rests of the entrances. No longer is Barber strictly thinking about line, although the legato aspects of the poem remain. Instead, the vocal line takes on a improvisatory characteristic not seen in the first four songs through the use of the 8th note dotted, 16th note couplings, which serve as a hiccup in the line, perhaps comparable to when one is fervently showcasing emotion and stumbles upon their own words, not out of incoherency but out of passion. As per Barber’s musical style, adherence to form is clearly articulated here in the form of ABA’, where B could

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instead serve as a bridge of some kind instead of a separate section due to the length. Instead of a traditional B section where the musical environment is not explicitly touched upon the return of the A section, there is a commingling of traditional versus modern, which ultimately is indeed Barber. In this vein, the B section is two measures, and the entrance of “-to love despite and still,” is being used as a pre-ending cadential moment, symbolizing in one interpretation the ending of Capricorn wasn't an ending of Barber's love for Menotti and vice versa. Another prominent attribute about the cycle is Barber's use of the piano as an amalgamation of Schubertian storytelling and contemporary trends, i.e., serialism, displaced tonality, as here, the title doesn't indicate specificity, but the piano's introduction does. Right from the beginning you are introduced to two fundamentally different characters, in my reading, Barber and Menotti notated by the interchange of the triplet motif and five 32nd note run juxtaposed against the held whole note, thus giving a body to the text, “-you of your gentleness, I of my rashness.” This playing of the personalities continues, even to the very last two measures, the first 32nd/16th note upwards scale is f minor, the different downward scale is F Lydian, first being set over an FM P5+4, and then over an F#M P5 contrasting the F Lydian scalar motion. What comes to mind with these last two measures is the famous Dylan Thomas poetic quote, “-Do not go gentle into that good night. Rage, rage against the dying of the light,” and gently he did not go, not from Capricorn, not from Antony and Cleopatra, and not into death. Menotti was there by his side until the moment Barber's true essence left his physical body; their love didn't dissipate even for a moment. In the last quarter of Capricorn's existence, Barber often found himself alone, unbothered by outside stimuli, which typically would be immensely helpful for a composer. Still, in Barber's case, this involuntary isolation was neither useful or welcomed, and in 1972 he left for the Spoleto Festival where he had attended an ASCAP meeting. His correspondence during this time, notably with Manfred Ibel, his 'lover' who stayed at Capricorn for a while, take an objectively cynical standpoint. “-There is little to report, and nothing inside me!--but the idea of returning to New York in that apartment without Capricorn torments me, and Capricorn without a servant.....” But despite the encroaching reality of Capricorn's finite existence, Barber managed to keep musical compositions flowing, notably “3 Songs op. 45” his last song cycle, commissioned by Lincoln Center for Fischer-Dieskau and “Third Essay” written after a 30-year gap from its other two equivalents described as, “absolutely abstract music, which is essentially dramatic in character...” which we know Barber discerned as apathetic to his

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musical aesthetic. When Menotti had mentioned that Barber had written, “- very little after that (Antony and Cleopatra’s demise). He wasn’t happy after this, it wasn’t there,” perhaps he was referencing Barber’s now deep-seated indifference to corrections and self-editing, “-When he finished a piece, he could never bear to look at it. When he had to correct something, it was truly agony for him to go over a piece,” a foreign concept to Barber’s earlier adherence to the attainment of perfection, found in his usage of form and grand amount of unpublished earlier songs and works, including various song cycles, a piano duet, organ works, and a string concerto. This deviation from the pursuit of perfection could be associated with his departure from the ‘perfect’ future he was trying desperately to craft for himself, “-I should be perfectly happy to be a piano teacher for the rest of my life, and play tennis a little on the side.” This quote dictates why *Capricorn* was of tremendous importance and that the sale of *Capricorn* meant the echoed dilapidation of the relationship with his “perfect companion,” one of the few “real people” in Barber’s life.

Despite and Still, op. 41, not only gives us a clear linear trajectory of Barber’s spiritual mindset in the minute setting to the gross, but also underlines Barber’s self-imposed musical ‘therapy,’ a theme worthy of scholarship, as a way of exercising restrained sentiments, i.e., childhood, depression, confusion, guilt. John Wain, part of the 1950’s literary group *The Movement*, remarked about Robert Graves, “-he cares nothing for majority opinion-Graves has reached his own conclusions and never worried if no one agreed with him,” and concurrently Barber falls into this category. He answered the call of emotional sensitives in a conversational way, not by neglecting tradition but by circumventing ‘popular musical fancies’ of the time thereby transfiguring Schoenberg’s serialism, aleatoricism, and atonalism into embellishments upon a conventional background rather than a concertized aesthetic alternative. Barber had said that he wrote in lyrical mannerisms because he demanded a fully developed instrument, which is correct, but one would be remiss not to provide that this was not merely a personality choice. Still, a requirement as Barber’s music was his identity, his identity was tightly linked with his emotions, and his feelings were connected with the (sub)conscious knowledge of something higher than himself, something deep within himself than was not able to be spoken or conceived. Barber’s legacy lies in the acknowledgment that he didn’t develop new musical techniques, nor did he ostentatiously abide by modern conventions to appease the public. He composed truth to the very best he could, and this truth was either accepted or not. Ten years

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before his death he sent the following to his mother, a direct correlation to the letter addressed to his mother at 8, completing his melancholic manifesto without remorse or regret,

“I think 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 . . . I just go on doing, as they say, my thing. I believe this takes a certain courage.”

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