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SEYMOUR BARAB'S

SONGS OF PERFECT PROPRIETY VOLUMES I AND II:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BARAB'S MUSIC

AND WORDS BY DOROTHY PARKER

A Document

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor Of Musical Arts

By

SANDRA J. GALL
Norman, Oklahoma
2000

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SEYMOUR BARAB'S
SONGS OF PERFECT PROPRIETY VOLUMES I AND II:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BARAB'S MUSIC
AND DOROTHY PARKER'S WORDS

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To Elizabeth, Katherine and Victoria, my beautiful daughters, for all the love and devotion you give I to dedicate this document with my love as encouragement in all your endeavors.

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ABSTRACT

Seymour Barab's *Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volumes I and II*, hold the position of being the first published song cycle which sets various light verses by Dorothy Parker from *The Portable Dorothy Parker*. Because it was uncustomary for feministic literature to be set to music by male or female composers in the first half of the twentieth century, including the 1950s, *Songs of Perfect Propriety*, composed in the 1950s, is a significant work for singers of the modern art song repertoire. Barab's decision to set Parker's verse to music was almost unprecedented. He unwittingly set an example by choosing words written by a woman who had been courageously outspoken about many aspects of the female experience, including her own, which were not commonly addressed in public. In doing so, Barab also set an example for composers of the modern age, an example of how to create a balance between music and words. Seymour Barab appreciated the humor with which Parker was able to convey the truth, followed by brilliant punch lines. Barab therefore paralleled this creative method of Parker's by using humor, rather than drama, in his settings, through music parodies, cabaret timbres and burlesque imitations. The poetic verses of the eight songs selected for the musical study in this document are not full of complaints about men as much as they are complaining about women: women's vulnerability and the fact that all their life some women wait around for "some damn man".

With *Songs of Perfect Propriety*, Seymour Barab has offered singers, especially female ones, a chance to express themselves more personally

through his music and the words of Dorothy Parker, an opportunity not often given in modern American art song.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the research for this document was to find twentieth-century American art songs associated with women and specifically, within this association, to find texts that were interesting and appealing and not overwhelmed by technical demands, either in the vocal line or the accompaniment. Several obstacles quickly appeared. The majority of published modern American art songs had been composed by men, to words written by men. Many of these song texts did not relate solely to the female experience or psyche, and if they did so, were not personally inspiring. In some cases words by female writers had been chosen, but the technical demands of the music often took precedence over the understanding or intelligibility of the text. Even some published art songs by female composers contain conservative messages, perhaps out of deference to their male dominated publishers.

This author then discovered in *Musical Settings of American Poetry: a Bibliography*, compiled by Michael Hovland, that twenty-four of Dorothy Parker's verses had been set to music by Seymour Barab.¹ I became acquainted with and attracted to Parker's verse as a teenager, and attended several of Barab's children's operas in recent years. It was the combination I was searching for: Parker's witty, satirical and sometimes self-deprecatory verse about women's experiences, if not her own, set to Barab's music, complementing or supporting

¹Michael A. Hovland, compiler, *Musical Settings of American Poetry: a Bibliography*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 294-97.

rather than dominating it. Finally, this author had found words to relate to and a composer who had set them to music for women to sing.

Barab chose Parker's verse, because as he has said, "To me, they were some of the best light verse I had ever read and thought they would lend themselves marvelously to song. . . . I think her lyrics suited my style of writing perfectly because even though some are slow and sad, they are not tragic and they are not dramatic."² Barab was not deterred by its feminist content. "I think I have always been a feminist. . . . I didn't think there would be anything unusual about it. . . . I liked her poems. . . . long before feminism became a controversial subject."³

Seymour Barab, experimenting with composing songs, also recognized that Dorothy Parker was already well known as a wit and her verse was commercially successful. He had recently been given the opportunity to produce a recording and ultimately, the brevity and diversity of Parker's verse were conducive to a long-playing record-producing project. When Barab's offering was accepted, the Urania label recorded all twenty-four songs in 1960. Barbara Cook, a renowned and successful Broadway musical singer, whom Barab had also seen and heard as Cunegonde in Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*, was the soprano. Abba Bogin was the conductor and Seymour Barab supervised the recording. The subsequent benefit was the publication, by Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., of *Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volume One* in 1959 and

²Seymour Barab, interview by author, December, 1997, Norman, Oklahoma, cassette tape recording of telephone conversation, Appendix I, 80.

³Ibid, 90.

Volume Two in 1984.⁴ The original score, no longer available for rental but in manuscript form, was arranged for medium voice and a small instrumental ensemble.⁵ It was revised by the composer in 1991 due to a request from a New York chamber performing group, which wanted to perform *Songs of Perfect Propriety* with a woodwind quintet.⁶ Barab hopes, someday there will be a new recording with that instrumentation.⁷

Because it was uncustomary for feministic literature to be set to music by male or female composers in the first half of the twentieth century, including the 1950s, *Songs of Perfect Propriety*, composed in the 1950's, is a significant work for singers of the modern art song repertoire. Barab's decision to set Parker's verse was almost unprecedented. He unwittingly set an example by choosing words written by a woman who had been courageously outspoken about many aspects of the female experience, including her own, which were not widely or publicly addressed at that time. In doing so, he also set a example for composers of the modern age, an example of how to create a balance between music and words.

⁴Seymour Barab, *Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volume I*, words by Dorothy Parker, for Medium Voice and Piano, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1959); *Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volume II*, words by Dorothy Parker, for Medium Voice and Piano, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1984).

⁵Seymour Barab, *Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volumes I and II*, words by Dorothy Parker, arrangement for medium voice, flute, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet and piano, Manuscript, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1959).

⁶Seymour Barab, *Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volumes I and II*, words by Dorothy Parker, rev. arrangement for medium voice, woodwind quintet and piano, Manuscript, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1991).

⁷Barab, Interview, Appendix I, 77.

Barab first received recognition as a composer with a Counterpoint Records recording by Russell Oberlin, tenor, of an earlier cycle of songs: *A Child's Garden of Verses*, words by Robert Louis Stevenson, composed in 1957.⁸ Barab's reputation grew substantially because of the success of one of his children's operas, *Little Red Riding Hood*.⁹ This one-act opera has received over seven hundred and forty performances, both in the United States and abroad.¹⁰ According to Barab, this number of performances has surpassed that of Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.¹¹

With *Little Red Riding Hood*, Barab began to write his own text and verse, realizing, "there's not much in it for librettists; the composer receives most of the profit. . .so librettists have all but disappeared."¹² Barab explained in a telephone interview with Jan Trammell-Savin in 1991 that he is interested in comedy and believes poetry, rather than prose, to be cleverer and more humorous.¹³

Seymour Barab, the art song composer, receives "special mention" by Hans Nathan in *A History Of Song*:

⁸Seymour Barab, *A Child's Garden of Verses, Volumes I and II*, words by Robert Louis Stevenson, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1985); Victoria Etnier Villamil, *A Singer's Guide to the American Art Song 1870-1980*, Foreword by Thomas Hampson, (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1993), 21-22.

⁹ Seymour Barab, *Little Red Riding Hood: a children's opera in one act*, words by composer, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1965).

¹⁰ Barab, Interview, Appendix I, 73.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid, 83.

¹³ Jan Trammell-Savin, "Seymour Barab's Songs as a Pedagogical Tool," *NATS Journal*, (March/April 1995), 29.

The songs of Seymour Barab . . . deserve special mention and perhaps most fittingly at this point. Tuneful and of whimsical humour, they might be taken for encore pieces. But it would be fairer to consider them equivalents of 'light verse' or of the sophisticated illustrations of the *New Yorker* magazine. In such collections as *'Four Songs' . . . 'A Child's Garden of Verse' . . . and 'Songs of Perfect Propriety'* . . . the composer successfully blends the familiar with the esoteric. On the one hand he draws on 'second-hand' and borrowed material: overworked formulae of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the nondescript children's song of the dime stores, musical comedy, and hit-tunes. . . . On the other hand he makes these elements appear fresh and meaningful by placing them into a musical context which is informed by a knowledge of contemporary devices and animated by a sure feeling for the genre itself. Of this alone the structural interest and the appropriateness of the accompaniments both to the vocal line and the text are clear evidence.¹⁴

By equating Barab's songs to "light verse" and sophisticated illustrations of the *New Yorker* magazine, Hans Nathan seems to refer to Dorothy Parker, who contributed light verse, poetry and drama reviews to the *New Yorker* in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁵ Some of Parker's light verse was contained in Barab's second published vocal work, *Songs of Perfect Propriety*.

Barab learned during the course of the 1997 interview with this author, that Parker was quoted as saying, "I'm a feminist. . . ." in a *Paris Review* interview conducted by Marion Capron in 1956.¹⁶ According to Lynne Hahn, however, neither in her lifetime nor in her *New York Times* obituary, was Parker

¹⁴ Hans Nathan, "The Modern Period: United States of America," in *A History of Song*, ed. Denis Stevens, rev. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970), 456-7.

¹⁵ Marion Meade, *Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is this?*, (New York: Villard, 1988), 145, 149.

¹⁶ Marion Capron, "Dorothy Parker," in *Writers at Work: The "Paris Review" Interviews*, ed. Malcom Cowley, (New York: Viking Press, 1955-59), 77.

ever credited for having been a feminist," . . .but a significant part of her *oeuvre*, including poetry and prose, addressed the politics of gender inequality."¹⁷

Marion Meade points out that Parker's poetry in 1925 addressed, ". . .the tragedies that would be recognized by twentieth-century women as peculiarly their own. . . .Her verse began to acknowledge the timeless subject of female rage."¹⁸

Emily Toth's essay credits Parker for a spirit of emancipating:

Women writers from the need to be nice, to hide their anger. . . .Though her wit was often at her own expense, she nevertheless said what she thought. . . .In fact, she paved the way for a new openness in humor—for housewives, for feminists, and for women who are both.¹⁹

Nancy Walker's essay on women's humor asserts:

The fact that American women's humor often carries a serious message is exemplified in the work of the best-known female humorist of the twentieth century: Dorothy Parker. Parker deplored the faithlessness of men and the dependence of women on their favor. . . .Although Parker's writing ended long before her death in 1967, the witty, pointed laments of her sad ladies continue to be widely anthologized.²⁰

The "Publisher's Note" in the 1976 revised and enlarged edition of the 1944 original edition of *The Portable Dorothy Parker* states, "Of the first ten Portables. . .only Shakespeare, the *World Bible*, and Dorothy Parker have

¹⁷ Lynne B. Hahn, "I'm a Feminist: Gender Issues in Selected Short Stories by Dorothy Parker," (M.A. dissertation, Atlantic University, Florida, 1992), 1.

¹⁸ Marion Meade, *Dorothy Parker*, 109.

¹⁹ Emily Toth, "A Laughter of Their Own: Women's Humor in the United States," in *Critical Essays on American Humor*, eds. Williams Bedford Clark and W.C. Turner, (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984), 207.

²⁰ Nancy Walker, "Twentieth Century American Women: Humor", in *Redressing the balance: American women's literary humor from colonial times to the 1980s*, eds. Nancy Walker and Zita Dresner, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 404-07.

remained continuously in print and selling steadily through time and change."²¹ Parker's prose appears in such international collections as *The Oxford Book of American Light Verse*,²² and *The Oxford Book of Comic Verse*.²³ Her legacy continues with yet another collection by Modern Library of *The Poetry and Short Stories of Dorothy Parker*.²⁴ In 1996, Stuart Silverstein compiled *The Lost Poems of Dorothy Parker* for Scribner, New York.²⁵

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to promote greater interest among teachers and singers in Seymour Barab's *Songs of Perfect Propriety Volume I and II*, with words by Dorothy Parker from *The Portable Dorothy Parker*. There are twelve songs in each volume, and all twenty-four are of medium range and technically accessible. Because of the character and subject matter of the light verse by Dorothy Parker, most of the songs are directed toward the female performer who possesses mature interpretive ability.

²¹ Dorothy Parker, *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, with an introduction by Brendon Gill, (New York: Penguin Books USA Incorporated, 1976); revised and enlarged reprint of the original edition of 1944, v.

²² William Harmon, ed. *The Oxford Book of American Light Verse*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 372-73.

²³ John Gross, ed. *The Oxford Book of Comic Verse*, (New York: Oxford University Press 1994), 287-88.

²⁴ Dorothy Parker, *The Poetry and Short Stories of Dorothy Parker*, (New York: Modern Library, 1994).

Procedures

Chapter two will give a brief sketch of Barab's life, musical education and career. In chapter three, the relevant Parker verse will be listed, with the sources of their original publications. There will be a brief discussion of significant events in Dorothy Parker's life at the time she was writing the selected verse.

The majority of this document is a study of the music in relation to the text of selected songs from Seymour Barab's *Songs of Perfect Propriety Volume I and II* for voice and piano. In Chapter four, some comparison will be made between the 1991 revised chamber music score and the voice-piano scores, volumes I and II. Mr. Barab has supplied this author with an audio cassette of the original sound recording, interpreted by Barbara Cook, soprano, and directed by the composer. Because Parker used the word: *song*, or some musical term, in many of her titles, the decision was made to choose a group of songs with this theme. Eight of the twenty-four songs were chosen and the first selection is also the title song. The next six pieces include the word *song* or a type of song, such as *lullaby* and *chant*. *Coda*, the eighth and final choice, is a musical term for a concluding section. It is also the last song of Barab's cycle and the last verse in the poem collection from which it appears in *The Portable Dorothy Parker*.

²⁵ Stuart Y. Silverstein, compiler, *Not Much Fun: The Lost Poems of Dorothy Parker*, (New York: Scribner, 1996).

The musical study will include the following:

1. A numbered listing of the verse as they appear in the 1976 Penguin Books edition.
2. A musical table of the general structure of each of the selected songs.
3. A discussion of the music-text study, highlighting unique features of special interest in each song.
4. Performance practice will be mentioned when it is deemed informative to interpretation, as indicated in the score, as defined by the original recording or as interpreted by this author.

Chapter five will summarize points of interest for teachers and singers, in *Songs of Perfect Propriety* and the text. Some performance suggestions, including alternative methods of presenting the material, will be offered.

Related Literature

Published research about Seymour Barab's life and work is limited. Basic biographical information regarding his musical career may be found in several music dictionaries.²⁶ Most information in the dictionaries is repetitive, regardless of whether or not the edition is recent.

A *National Association of Teachers of Singing Journal* article by Jan Trammell-Savin stresses the use of Barab's songs as a pedagogical tool. She discovered:

²⁶ Ruth E. Anderson, compiler, *Contemporary American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary*, (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1976), s.v. "Barab, Seymour," 22; David M. Cummings, ed., *International Who's Who in Music and Musician's Dictionary: in the classical and light classical fields*, 15th ed., Vol 1, (Cambridge, England: International Biographical Centre, 1996/67), s.v. "Barab, Seymour," 48; H.W. Hitchcock and S. Sadie, eds., *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, (London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1986), s.v. "Barab, Seymour," by Kathleen Haefliger, 142; Jaques C. Press, compiler, *ASCAP biographical dictionary for American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers*, 4th ed., (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1980), s.v. "Barab, Seymour," 24; Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, (London: MacMillan Press, Ltd., 1992), s.v. "Barab, Seymour," 304-305.

Many of his songs are short, of a limited vocal range, and tend to emphasize one particular motive, which can be useful for reinforcing theoretical ideas that often receive little attention due to time constraints in a private lesson. . . . The songs involve varied instrumental ensembles. This allows young singers to accomplish the more accessible pieces accompanied by piano, and then to progress through various ensemble work.²⁷

Trammell-Savin emphasizes that, in his compositions:

Barab pays close attention to the rhythm of the words and the portrayal of the shape of the published poetry within the vocal line; and he makes generous use of word and mood painting. All of these conventions can help young musicians begin to understand how poetry can fit music and vice versa, along with aiding interpretation through a more concrete presentation of the meaning. The poetry itself, staying on the lighter, more descriptive side, is more accessible to younger singers than abstract ideas.²⁸

Trammell-Savin then presents a catalogue of what she believes to be Barab's most appropriate songs for pedagogical purposes, including vocal ranges and primary theoretical concerns for each group of songs. Barab's *Songs of Perfect Propriety*²⁹ are considered appropriate, "Pedagogical value lies mainly in the interpretation and expression of the songs;" and most importantly "Because of Dorothy Parker's own expressions of her views, these are the only songs appropriate specifically for female singers."²⁹

²⁷ Trammell-Savin, "Seymour Barab's Songs as a Pedagogical Tool," *The Nats Journal* (March/April 1995), 29.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 32.

³⁰ Hovland, *Musical Settings of American Poetry: a Bibliography*, 294-97.

Two different books give interesting details about the cycle. Michael Hovland's *Musical Settings of American Poetry*³⁰ lists all twenty-four songs of Barab's *Songs of Perfect Propriety*, and includes dates of publication of the collections of poetry in which the verses were originally compiled.³¹ *A Singer's Guide to the American Art Song*³² suggests performance timings for three of Barab's cycles, including *Songs of Perfect Propriety*. Interpretive suggestions are made, with the added comment, that "Barab has perfectly matched the dry, caustic humor of Parker's verse; accessible, sophisticated, clever, witty; good fun; warmly recommended."³³

Two theses give somewhat different perspectives on Barab's sensitivity to the text in his children's operas. The authors also contribute to the understanding of Barab's treatment of the vocal line.

Martha Malone makes an observation about the libretto of *The Toy Shop*,³⁴ "Although this libretto contains no overt political statements, Barab handles the gender roles and familial relationships of his characters with perception and sensitivity."³⁵ Malone continues to explain how male and female stereotypes are challenged in this work, a children's opera containing humor and

³¹ Dorothy Parker, *Enough Rope*, (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926); Dorothy Parker, *Sunset Gun*, (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1928); Dorothy Parker, *Death and Taxes*, (New York: Viking, 1931).

³² Villamil, *A Singer's Guide*, 22-23.

³³ *Ibid*, 23.

³⁴ Seymour Barab, *The Toy Shop*, libretto by composer, (New York: G. Schirmer, 1978).

³⁵ Martha Louise Malone, "Opera for American Youth: A Practical and Analytical Study," (D.M.A. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1994), 63,67.

a gentle, moral lesson.³⁶ Regarding Barab's treatment of the vocal line, Malone writes, "Barab's writing for the voice is idiomatic and lyrical. . . .The tessituras of the vocal lines lie in the medium range for each voice category. . . .Medium tessitura writing is important in insuring the intelligibility of the text."³⁷

Heather Parr makes general observations about Barab's operatic writing:

Barab's choice of subject matter and libretto always has a light and witty view of human frailties and situations. His intention remains entertainment even though he is a bit didactic at times. . . .The text is set in such a manner as to facilitate communication with the audience. In other words, much of the drama is written into the music and does not need extra interpretation from the singer."³⁸

Parr goes on to write:

Barab chooses to write melodies that rhythmically support speech. . . .Technically, the demands on singers are as follows: utterly clear and natural enunciation of English—as close to speech production as possible, secure breath connection and freedom to act, and good high notes.³⁹

There are many sources of information, written after her death, about the life and career of Dorothy Parker. Several of the biographies are extensive and provide interesting and entertaining facts about Parker, from her early life to the time of her death. An article appearing in *Time* magazine one week after Parker's death on June 7, 1967 reminds the reader:

Her chief reputation was as a quipster, the Guinevere of the Algonquin Round table. Hers was the tongue heard round the world. . . .During the

³⁶ Malone, "Opera for American Youth" 63, 67.

³⁷ Ibid, 71.

³⁸ Heather Joy Parr, "Descriptive Analysis of Three one-Act Operas by Seymour Barab," (D.M.A. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1982), 56.

³⁹ Ibid, 54, 56.

long Victorian era, wit had hardly been considered a feminine attribute. Dorothy Parker proved again that bitchiness could be the soul of wit. . . Her creative output was meager. . . She published only seven trim collections of poetry and short stories. . . She said. . . "My verses are no damned good". . . In fact, her verse was carefully shod, precise, often dazzling. . . Her frequent approach was to make herself the fall girl in the battle of the sexes, and her favorite method was the abrupt change of pace. She might gush sentimentally and then suddenly clamp on her cynic's mask. . . Dorothy Parker accepted whole the two-faced myth of her time: at her most maudlin, she always tried to speak through her head rather than directly from her heart. That accounts for both her limitation and her fascination.⁴⁰

In *Women of the Twenties*,⁴¹ George Douglas lists Dorothy Parker among five other women of "heroic stature", naming Aimee S. McPherson, the evangelist; Edna St. Vincent Millay, a fellow poet; Amelia Earhart, pioneer among female pilots; Martha Graham, the dance artist/choreographer, and Anita Loos, screenwriter and novelist. Douglas describes these women and Parker as memorable, surviving and taking extravagant risks, often in the face of strong opposition. They were surely not feminists, as:

"defined by membership in an organized program. . . Such feminism was only beginning. . . when our heroines were climbing. . . with not much of a safety net except their own talents. . . they were among the first American women to become well known because of their talents and accomplishments, rather than because of the men they married."⁴²

Two modern female writers testify to Parker's influence on their lives. Nora Ephron, screenwriter, claims, "All I wanted in the world was to come to New York and be Dorothy Parker."⁴³ Gloria Steinem, feminist leader, journalist

⁴⁰ *Time Magazine* (New York), "Guinevere of the Round Table," (June 16, 1967), 94.

⁴¹ George H. Douglas, *Women of the Twenties*, (Dallas: Saybrook Publishers, 1986).

⁴² *Ibid*, 16,30.

⁴³ Nora Ephron, *Crazy Salad: Some Things About Women*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), 139.

and creator of *Ms Magazine*, heard her mother quote Parker since childhood. Steinem relates that as a writer for the *New York Journal* in 1965, she was, "Clearly trying to learn from other writers by choosing them as subjects for profiles."⁴⁴ She chose Parker, "One of the few female writers about whom women's magazines cared enough to publish a profile."⁴⁵

Many of Parker's famous quotes are found in three anthologies of humorous poetry. William Cole comments in the introduction to *The Fireside Book of Humorous Poetry*, "Parker has written that she tried to define what humor meant to her. . . however, 'Every time I tried to, I had to go and lie down with a cold wet cloth on my head.'"⁴⁶ Parker is one of few female poets listed in *The Oxford Book of American Light Verse*. In the introduction, William Harmon, editor, notes two Parker epigrams⁴⁷ and describes them as, "the animated jingles that come out of a collected custom of facing facts, telling the truth, and saying what's what":

Men seldom make passes
At girls who wear glasses.

Candy is dandy
But liquor is quicker.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Gloria Steinem, *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston), 13.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ William Cole, ed. *The Fireside Book of Humorous Poetry*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), xiii.

⁴⁷ Kathleen Morner, Ralph Rausch, *From Absurd to Zeitgeist: The Compact Guide To Literary Terms*, (Chicago: NTC Publishing Group), 67.

⁴⁸ William Harmon, ed. *The Oxford Book of American Light Verse*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), xxii.

In *Wicked*, where women's wit since Elizabeth I is discussed and represented, Parker's one liners appear with more entries than any other female.⁴⁹

Three books give extensive biographical information about Parker's early life, education, the beginning of her writing career, her many famous friends and lovers, her carefree lifestyle which brought her pleasure and pain, the political activities in which she became involved, her Hollywood years and her overall contribution to the world of literature.⁵⁰ Marion Meade's book is a biography for which she claims to have interviewed all surviving members of Parker's family and those of Parker's literary era.⁵¹ Under a Freedom of Information Act request, she also obtained from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, over a four year period, some nine-hundred pages of material on Dorothy Parker and Alan Campbell. These files were gathered during the [House Un-American Activities Committee] investigations of the 1950s.

In *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*, Dianne Chamber's essay summarizes Dorothy Parker's writing style:

Parker's sparse style, extensive use of dialogue, and pervasive irony reveal the pretensions and hypocrisies of society, and attack the constraining gender roles to which both sexes are subjected. Legendary for her difficulty in meeting deadlines, Parker found writing hard work. She told Capron, 'I can't write five words but I change seven.' Although Parker was dissatisfied with much of her work, her writing reveals a

⁴⁹ Fidelis Morgan, ed., *Wicked: Woman's Wit and Humour from Elizabeth I to Ruby Wax*, (London: Virago, 1995), 15,19,53,64,75,82,122,125,130,157,238,239,305.

⁵⁰ John Keats, *You Might As Well Live: The Life and Times of Dorothy Parker*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970); Arthur F. Kinney, *Dorothy Parker*, Twayne's United States Authors Series No. 315, (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., div. of Twayne Publishers, 1978); Marion Meade, *Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This?*

⁵¹ Marion Meade, *Dorothy Parker*, ix-x.

commitment to her craft and a belief in the power of language to address social inequity.⁵²

Two dissertations examining Parker's short stories and fiction are further evidence of recent interest in her work.⁵³ Since 1976 at least four composers in addition to Barab have set Dorothy Parker's verse to music.⁵⁴

⁵² Dorothy Parker, interview by Marion Capron, 75; Dianne Chambers, "Parker, Dorothy," in *The Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1995), 652.

⁵³ Andrea Jean Ivanov, "Sexual Parody in American Comedic Film and Literature 1925-1948: Mae West, James Thurber, Dorothy Parker, Preston Sturges," (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1996); Ellen Rachel Lansky, "Something for the Lady: Women Alcoholics and Their Partners in American Modern Fiction," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1996).

⁵⁴ Alan Douglas Campbell, "The Portable Dorothy Parker: A Song Cycle," (Ph.D. diss.: City University of New York, 1990); Charles Fussell, *Resume: cycle for soprano, clarinet, string bass and piano, after poems by Dorothy Parker*, (Sands Point, New York: Rochester Music Phot, 1977); Mervyn Horder, *Black Diamonds (I), Three Dorothy Parker Songs for medium voice and piano*, (Cleveland: Bardic Edition; Ludwig Music, 1989); Jurg Wythenbach, *On Cheating the Fiddler: five little poems by Dorothy Parker for a singing violinist*, (Karlsruhe: Tre Media; Tm 313E, 1998).

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- 2. General Listing of Vocal Solo Compositions by
Seymour Barab

Chapter Two

SEYMOUR BARAB BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Seymour Barab was born in Chicago, Illinois on January 9, 1921. The Barab family immigrated to the United States from Poland. The name Barab is taken from the Hebrew language.⁵⁵

Seymour Barab does not claim to have a musical heritage, but there was an aunt, a good amateur singer, who became his piano teacher.⁵⁶ At age thirteen he performed as a church organist in Chicago. Barab began to play the cello in his high school orchestra, later studying with Gregor Piatigorsky and Edmund Kurtz.⁵⁷ He has performed as a recitalist and has appeared as a soloist with many major symphony orchestras. Between 1940 and 1960 he played with the Indianapolis, Cleveland, Portland, San Francisco, Philadelphia and Brooklyn orchestras, as well as both the ABC and CBS broadcasting symphony orchestras.⁵⁸ He taught composition in the 1960s at Rutgers University and Black Mountain College in North Carolina and was a member of the Composers' in Residence String Quartet at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston between 1968 and 1970.⁵⁹ After settling in New York City in the 1970s, Barab helped organize the Composers String Quartet and the New

⁵⁵Barab, Interview, Appendix I, 87.

⁵⁶Ibid, 89.

⁵⁷Cummings, ed, *International Who's Who*, 50; Hitchcock and Sadie, eds, *New Grove American Music*, 142.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹ Hitchcock and Sadie, eds, *New Grove American Music*, 142; Sadie, ed, *New Grove Opera*, 304.

York Pro Musica, playing viola da gamba for the latter chamber group.⁶⁰ He has also performed with the New York Trio and the Galimir String Quartet.⁶¹

Barab began experimenting with composing after becoming frustrated in trying to interest others in composing for the cello.⁶² He began experimenting with writing songs during a one-year sojourn in Paris, in 1952. He had financed the trip with his allotment from the G. I. Bill. In a phone call in November, 1997, previous to the telephone interview taped on December 5, 1997, Barab informed this author that he had served in the U.S. Navy. While in Paris he supported himself by working for the record producing companies, Vanguard and Esoteric.⁶³ Although Barab studied with composers Lou Harrison, Edgard Varèse and Stefan Volpe, he considers himself to be self-taught.⁶⁴ He has composed approximately 200 songs, of which only a portion have been published.⁶⁵ One of his first vocal compositions was *Four Songs*, published in 1955.⁶⁶ A review in *Musical Courier* that year states, "The first published work by Mr. Barab initiated the new American Composer Series to be published by

⁶⁰ Anderson, compiler, *Contemporary American Composers*, 22; Hitchcock and Sadie, eds, *New Grove American Music*, 142; Sadie, ed, *New Grove Opera*, 304.

⁶¹ Press, *ASCAP*, 24.

⁶² Villamil, *A Singer's Guide*, 21.

⁶³ Barab, Interview, Appendix I, 81.

⁶⁴ Press, compiler, *ASCAP*, 24; Villamil, *A Singer's Guide*, 21.

⁶⁵ Barab, Interview, Appendix I, 72; Hitchcock and Sadie, eds, *New Grove American Music*, 142.

⁶⁶ Seymour Barab, *Four Songs*, words by Edmund Waller, Richard LeGallienner, Thomas Chatterton and Esther Mathews, (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1955).

Boosey and Hawkes. . . .The collection of the four, which are published together, is an achievement of clarity and effective combination of words and music.⁶⁷ Barab's first opera, *Chanticleer*, a one-act comic opera based on a tale by Chaucer with a libretto by M. C. Richards was composed in 1954 and premiered in Aspen in August, 1956.⁶⁸ Reviews of Barab's vocal compositions have appeared in *Musical Courier*, *Music Journal* and the *Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing*.

Little Red Riding Hood, composed in 1962, was Barab's first attempt at authoring his own text.⁶⁹ He has since written the words for the majority of his operas. Most of the forty-one operas are comic one-acts with small casts and are on the average about one hour in length.

Publishing companies which have produced his vocal works are Boosey and Hawkes, Inc., E.C. Schirmer Music Company, Galaxy Music Corporation (now EMC of Boston) and Seesaw Music Corporation of New York City. Although Barab composes when he is inspired to do so, some opera commissions have come from companies and associations such as Cimmaron Circuit Opera Company in Norman, Oklahoma, Detroit Opera, the Manhattan School of Music, New York, the New York City Opera and Virginia Opera.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Kenneth J. Wilson, "Four Songs by Seymour Barab," *Musical Courier*, Vol. 152, (July 1955), 45.

⁶⁸ Hitchcock and Sadie, eds, *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 142.

⁶⁹ Barab, Interview, Appendix I, 83.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 89.

Barab has also composed numerous other small ensemble works, including those for narrator and chamber orchestra, ballet and choral music.

Seymour Barab was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the National Opera Association's national convention in 1998 along with fellow opera composers Jack Beeson, Carlisle Floyd, Kirke Metchum, Thea Musgrave and Robert Ward.⁷¹ Mr. Barab is still active as a cellist, composer and author and will celebrate his eightieth birthday in January 2001.

⁷¹ Convention Schedule [database-on-line] (Opera Music Theater International, 1998-2000, accessed 30 July 2000); available from <http://www.omti.org/17jan.html>; Internet, 2.

Chapter Three

THE PORTABLE DOROTHY PARKER

The Parker verses selected by Seymour Barab for *Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volumes I and II*, were originally published separately in New York magazines, journals, or some of the 1920s New York newspapers, before being collected into three volumes of poetry.⁷² Barab chose twenty-four verses from *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, which contains all three original volumes in Part One. Nineteen of the twenty-four selections appear in *Enough Rope*. Four selections appear in *Sunset Gun*: "Wisdom", "Bric-a-brac", "The Trusting Heart" and "Coda". The poem "Ultimatum" appears in *Death and Taxes*.

Enough Rope, the first volume of poetry, went through eleven printings, an unprecedented bestseller. The second volume, *Sunset Gun*, also received high commendations. In London, Leon Whipple noted in *The Survey*, "She [Parker] takes refuge, as moderns will, in irony and satire, but for the first time since Suckling or Heine we have self-satire, not social satire. . . . The verse creates a valid mood of pathos or wistful reminiscence."⁷³ Parker's last set of verses for Viking, *Death and Taxes*, also received fine reviews. All three

⁷² Dorothy Parker, *Death and Taxes*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1931); *Enough Rope*, (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1926); *Sunset Gun*, (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1928); *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, 295-318, 74-118, 211-240.

⁷³ Kinney, *Parker*, 48.

volumes were combined in *Not So Deep as a Well*⁷⁴ in 1937 and referred to as separate volumes in *The Portable Dorothy Parker*.⁷⁵

The Viking Portable Library Series, published by Viking Penguin Inc. U.S.A., began as a wartime project for servicemen overseas. Alexander Woolcott, journalist, drama critic and member of the famous Algonquin "Round Table" to which Dorothy Parker belonged, launched the series which began as ten Portables and expanded to seventy-five.⁷⁶ The preface to the "Publishers' Note" states, "Each volume in *The Viking Portable Library* either presents a representative selection from the works of a single outstanding writer or offers a comprehensive anthology on a special subject."⁷⁷ The original *Portable Dorothy Parker* appeared in 1944 as the fourth volume of the series.⁷⁸ It contains some of Parker's writing first copyrighted by The Conde Nast Publications, Inc. in 1918 and later copyrighted by Dorothy Parker herself, beginning in 1954. Conde Nast, for whom Dorothy Parker worked as a writer, was the wealthy publisher of *Vanity Fair* and *Vogue* in 1915.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Dorothy Parker, *Not So Deep as a Well: Collected Poems of Dorothy Parker*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1937).

⁷⁵ Parker, *Portable Dorothy Parker*, 74-118, 211-240, 295-318.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, v.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Arthur F. Kinney, *Dorothy Parker*, Twayne's United States Authors Series No. 315, (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., division of Twayne Publishers, 1978), 28-29.

The publication of *The Portable Dorothy Parker* in 1944 received mixed reviews but eventually had a large number of printings. Parker dedicated the collection to her second husband, Alan Campbell, and wrote a new poem for him, "War Song", one of her last.⁸⁰ The current revised and enlarged 1976 edition of *The Portable Dorothy Parker* retains in Part One the original Portable as arranged by Dorothy Parker in 1944, and contains only stories and poems, including Parker's autobiographical short story *Big Blonde*, for which she won the O. Henry prize in 1929 as the year's best short story.⁸¹ Part Two contains later stories, reviews and articles.

Parker's verse seem to have been borne out of her personal experiences, about which she could only be sarcastic or mocking. Some approach melancholy, including those she used to point out her personal sense of injustice or inequality, especially in the battle of the sexes. The subject matter might be serious, but Parker presented her verse in a simple, straightforward style that was always mannered and acceptable, so that the point was made and the punch line delivered.

The events leading up to Dorothy Parker's most productive years as a writer of poetry and light verse, between 1915 and 1934 and leading up to the publication of *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, are interesting to note because they help to explain Parker's attitude and approach towards her work.

⁸⁰Kinney, *Parker*, 68-69.

⁸¹Meade, *Parker*, 195-96.

Dorothy was born August 22, 1893 in New Jersey to J. Henry Rothschild, no relation to the wealthy banking family, and Eliza Rothschild. Dorothy Rothschild was the fourth child of a prosperous Jewish father and Scottish Catholic mother.⁸² Later in life Parker would refer to herself as a mongrel.⁸³ Her mother, age forty-two, died when Dorothy was four. According to Parker's biographers, this had a lasting effect on a girl who hated her stepmother and was terrified of her father.⁸⁴ Dorothy also hated her name, which was a stand-out in the Catholic school she was sent to by her Catholic stepmother, who asked her the same question each day after school: "Did you love Jesus today?"⁸⁵ Dorothy is said to have been a troublemaker at the private school, Blessed Sacrament Academy, once referring to the Immaculate Conception as "spontaneous combustion".⁸⁶ After being "fired" from parochial school, Parker's parents sent her to the exclusive Miss Dana's School in New Jersey at age fourteen.⁸⁷ Her father wrote on Dorothy's admission records that her parents were Episcopalians.⁸⁸ She did receive highly trained personal attention; however, and an excellent education, studying Latin, Greek and French, along

⁸² Meade, *Parker*, 3, 8.

⁸³ Kinney, *Parker*, 25; Meade, *Parker*, 3, 387.

⁸⁴ John Keats, *You Might As Well Live: The Life and Times of Dorothy Parker*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 18-19; Meade, *Parker*, 10-12.

⁸⁵ Kinney, *Parker*, 26.

⁸⁶ Kinney, *Parker*, 26; Meade, *Parker*, 14.

⁸⁷ Meade, *Parker*, 27.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

with English literature, history, algebra and geometry.⁸⁹ It was in this atmosphere that she also became aware of current events and began her social awareness. She continued writing the poetry in which she became interested as a child. Kinney and Meade disagree on the amount of schooling and whether or not she graduated from Miss Dana's.⁹⁰

Parker's childhood was lonely. There is no mention of childhood friends in any biographies read by this author. Her brother and sisters were much older and too remote in age for any communication.⁹¹ Dorothy read extensively and was encouraged to write verses as early as 1905.⁹² Her father himself loved to compose verses and the two exchanged letters containing verses.⁹³ When her stepmother died Dorothy remained with her father, until his death in 1913.⁹⁴

Parker told Marion Capron in an interview in the 1950s that after her father died "there wasn't any money."⁹⁵ She worked briefly as a piano player at a dance school, continuing to write verses and "especially light verses that were immensely popular before the war."⁹⁶ She moved to New York City, lived in a boarding house and contributed light verse to a newspaper, the *New York*

⁸⁹ Kinney, *Parker*, 26.

⁹⁰ Kinney, *Parker*, 27; Meade, *Parker*, 27-28.

⁹¹ Kinney, *Parker*, 26.

⁹² Meade, *Parker*, 20.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹⁵ Capron, *Parker*, 72.

⁹⁶ Meade, *Parker*, 31

World. Dorothy received her first paycheck for her poem "Any Porch" from Frank Crowninshield, editor at *Vanity Fair* in 1915⁹⁷ and asked him for a job a few months later.⁹⁸ She was hired as an advertising captionist at *Vogue*, also contributing her verse for publication. She did not succeed in having it printed until she tried free verse and began the first line with "I hate Women. They get on my nerves."⁹⁹ She wrote other 'hate' verses, all under the pseudonym, *Henriette Rousseau*. She became drama critic for *Vanity Fair* in 1917 but was fired in 1920 after several 'abusive' comments in her reviews which offended those with power and money. Before being fired she was pinpointed as a wit and was beginning to attract an audience.¹⁰⁰

Dorothy had married in 1917. Edwin Pond Parker II was lean, handsome and of distinguished ancestry.¹⁰¹ When Eddie Parker remained overseas after enlisting in the Infantry and the Ambulance Corps, Mrs. Parker began a busy social life, meeting with the Algonquin "Round Table" members, for the first time in 1919.¹⁰² The Algonquin Hotel, on West Forty-fourth Street in New York City, was located on the same street as the offices of *Vanity Fair*. Parker's wit became public when remarks from the group were quoted by one of its members, Franklin P. Adams (F.P.A.) in his newspaper column, "The Conning

⁹⁷ Kinney, *Parker*, 28-29.

⁹⁸ Meade, *Parker*, 32.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 36.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁰¹ Kinney, *Parker*, 30.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 29-30.

Tower" of the *New York World*.¹⁰³ The "Round Table" was a mutually supportive society for high standards of language.¹⁰⁴ Charter members included many literary figures as well as those from the entertainment community, including Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley (Parker's best friend), Robert E. Sherwood, Harold Ross, Alexander Woolcott, Beatrice Kaufman, Deems Taylor, Edna Ferber, Herman Mankiewicz and Harpo Marx, among others.¹⁰⁵ They critically reviewed current plays and writing; made jokes about each other and those not present.¹⁰⁶ Dorothy Parker learned from this association. It taught her the value of a punch line, which by 1921 characterized all her light verse.¹⁰⁷

Arthur Kinney writes that between 1920-1922, in addition to other writings, Dorothy Parker wrote sixty-three poems for *Life* and supplied reviews, essays, prose and verse for *Ainslee's*, *Saturday Evening Post* and *Ladies' Home Journal*. "Her work appeared so frequently that her name became a household word. . . She was having the time of her life."¹⁰⁸ George H. Douglas

¹⁰³ Kinney, *Parker*, 32.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Kinney, *Parker*, 32; Meade, *Parker*, 75.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 32.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*. 35.

writes in *Women of the Twenties*, "[Parker] was the most sought-after weekend house guest of the 1920s, along with Fanny Brice."¹⁰⁹

Douglas continues:

Despite her social life, Mrs. Parker produced a substantial amount of work between 1920 and 1934. Her poetry and epigrams began appearing in magazines in 1920 and her first book of poetry *Enough Rope* appeared in December, 1926. . . Parker never went more than twenty-two months without a new collection of poems or prose appearing until 1933. She also contributed stories and book reviews.¹¹⁰

Arthur Kinney writes, "She established a pattern that would last her life; with mixed success: she used the bad times as material for writing during the good times."¹¹¹ One example: when Parker's first collection of poems *Enough Rope* was published in 1926, she was considered the wittiest woman in America and sailed to Paris with Robert Benchley and Ernest Hemingway where they met F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.¹¹² Before the good times, however, she had an abortion in 1923 and had attempted suicide. The second attempt was in 1925, before the trip to Paris.

The attention and fame eventually took its own toll. In 1919 the taste of liquor made her sick and she had never smoked a cigarette; by 1929 she

¹⁰⁹ Douglas, *Women of the Twenties*, 11.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 13.

¹¹¹ Kinney, *Parker*, 40.

¹¹² Ibid, 43.

smoked and drank in public.¹¹³ During this time of Prohibition, having fun meant getting very drunk.¹¹⁴

George Douglas concludes:

[Though] her "verse" (she declined to call it poetry) is probably as widely quoted as Shakespeare's. . . Dorothy Parker was never quite committed to her identity as a writer or at least never willing to make it her highest priority. Her love affairs, and the abundant night life, first in New York, then in Hollywood, drew much of her energy away from writing. Alcoholism. . . made matters even worse. "I'm betraying my talent" she wrote a confidante in 1931, "I'm drinking, I'm not working. I have the most horrendous guilt."¹¹⁵

The confidante was Beatrice Ames who also said in Parker's defense "She respected her talent. . . . She had an absolute, solid gratitude for her talent."¹¹⁶

Vincent Sheean, another friend testifies: "I think she drank because of her perception. She wanted to dull her perceptions. Her vision of life was almost more than she could bear."¹¹⁷

Parker was able to bear it, after all. She divorced Mr. Parker in 1928, survived many suicide attempts, and married Alan Campbell in 1933. Together, Campbell and Parker wrote film scripts for Hollywood, continued to socialize with the rich and famous and became politically active, Parker declaring she was a communist in 1934.¹¹⁸ Parker had lost all those she had loved by 1963,

¹¹³ Meade, *Parker*, xvi.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.

¹¹⁵ Douglas, *Women of the Twenties*, 150-51.

¹¹⁶ Kinney, *Parker*, 45.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

including Benchley, Woolcott, Hemingway and Alan Campbell.¹¹⁹ *Esquire* magazine published her last work in November, 1964, an essay about John Koch's paintings in which she also reflected on New York nightlife, ending the piece with a nostalgic look at her own life,

I am always a little sad when I see a John Koch painting. . . .It is the sort of nostalgia that is only a dreamy longing for some places where you never were. And I never will be there. There is no such hour on the present clock as 6:30, New York time. Yet, as only New Yorkers know, if you can get through the twilight, you'll live through the night.¹²⁰

Dorothy Parker was found dead of a heart attack in the New York hotel in which she had lived alone, except for a dog, on June 7, 1967. Arthur Kinney writes, "The New York Times' obituary appeared on page 1 and then, inside, covered a full page."¹²¹ *Time* magazine on June 16, 1967 devoted a full page and quoted several of her verses.¹²² The magazine article quotes from Somerset Maugham's introduction to the 1944 edition of *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, a piece which is also included in the 1976 edition.¹²³ Maugham sums up Parker's talent, "Perhaps what gives her writing its peculiar tang is her gift for seeing something to laugh at in the bitterest tragedies of the human animal."¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Kinney, *Parker*, 73.

¹²⁰ Dorothy Parker, "New York at 6:30 P.M.," *Esquire*, (November 1963), 98-100.

¹²¹ Kinney, *Parker*, 74.

¹²² Time, "Guinevere of the Round Table", 94.

¹²³ Parker, *Portable Dorothy Parker*, 599-603.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 601.

Chapter Four

A STUDY OF SELECT SONGS FROM *SONGS OF PERFECT PROPRIETY* VOLUMES I AND II

The following study of eight songs begins with Dorothy Parker's verses as they appear in the 1976 reprint of *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, published by Penguin Books USA Inc. The lines are numbered for clarification, in discussion of the material. A brief analysis of each verse follows. A table of the musical structure of each composition gives an outline of the study. The following explanation addresses various areas of the music-text relationship which are unique or interesting to each song. Performance suggestions, as interpreted by the author and/or as determined by study of the original recording, are offered when appropriate or informative.

Song of Perfect Propriety

1. Oh, I should like to ride the seas,
2. A roaring buccaneer;
3. A cutlass banging at my knees,
4. A dirk behind my ear.
5. And when my captives' chains would clank
6. I'd howl with glee and drink,
7. And then fling out the quivering plank
8. And watch the beggars sink.

9. I'd like to straddle gory decks,
10. And dig in laden sands,
11. And know the feel of throbbing necks
12. Between my knotted hands.
13. Oh, I should like to strut and curse
14. Among my blackguard crew....
15. But I am writing little verse,
16. As little ladies do.

17. Oh, I should like to dance and laugh
18. And pose and preen and sway,
19. And rip the hearts of men in half,
20. And toss the bits away.
21. I'd like to view the reeling years
22. Through unastonished eyes,
23. And dip my finger-tips in tears,
24. And give my smiles for sighs.

25. I'd stroll beyond the ancient bounds,
26. And tap at fastened gates,
27. And hear the prettiest of sound—
28. The clink of shattered fates,
29. My slaves I'd like to bind with thongs
30. That cut and burn and chill . . .
31. But I am writing little songs,
32. As little ladies will.

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Dorothy Parker's verse is set in ballad form, which consists of alternating lines of tetrameter and trimeter. But Parker has produced a variation of this form by combining the traditional ballad stanza of four lines rhyming *abab* into four octets. The syllable stress of this verse is iambic.

Dorothy Parker's verse relates metaphorically, what she would like to be doing, if she weren't "writing (singing) little songs (verse) as little ladies do." (Poetic lines 15-16 and 31-32). Barab changed one word from Parker's verse: *writing* (poetic line 31), to a more timely word: *singing* (m.37). Barab chose to set only sixteen lines of Parker's verse. Verse one (A&B) consists of lines one through eight; verse two (A&B') consists of lines nine through twelve and lines twenty-nine through thirty-two. The postlude begins with the last two lines of Parker's verse (m.37-40).

Table No. 1 Musical Structure *Song of Perfect Propriety*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
Intro	1 - 3	——	F Major Key Signature F
A (2 phrases) B (2 phrases)	4 -12 12-20	1 - 4 5 - 8	F-g accidentals/ ambiguous key
Intro II	21-22	——	C
A (2 phrases) B' (1 phrase)	23-31 31-35	9 -12 29-32	F-g accidentals/ ambiguous key
G.P. (Great Pause)	36	——	——
Postlude (1 phrase)	37-42	15-16	D \flat

Barab divided the poetic lines into couplets for each musical phrase, thus completing a thought before a musical rest. Barab almost always maintains the iambic syllable stress of Parker's verse, placing the strong stress of the text on the downbeat of the measure (Fig. 1, m.4-11). The only exceptions are measures four and twenty-three on the word 'Oh' which Barab uses in his word-painting, discussed on page thirty-six of this chapter. Barab's setting evokes aural images characteristic of a pirate song or sea shanty. The introduction (m. 1-4) in the instrumental ensemble sets up a strong repeating rhythmic pattern which ends with a high oboe and flute glissando, imitating a whistle (Fig. 1, m.1-3,8. Instrumental ensemble whistle effect). This pattern is repeated in different chords at the end of most musical phrases (m. 8,12,16,20,27 and 31). The whistle imitation and ostinato rhythmic pattern is an effective word-painting device associated with a sea shanty or pirate song text, especially when heard

in the ensemble version. The voice/piano score excludes the whistle effect.

The piano accompaniment stays in the bass clef and sets up a strong rhythmic ostinato pattern in the introduction which aurally distorts the meter as it extends across the bar lines (Fig. 1, m. 1-11. Ostinato pattern).

i. SONG OF PERFECT PROPRIETY

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled "i. SONG OF PERFECT PROPRIETY". The score is divided into two main systems. The first system includes staves for Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Bassoon, Voice, and Piano. The Flute part is marked "whistle effect." and the Clarinet part is marked "over barline". The Bassoon part is marked "ostinato pattern" and the Voice part is marked "iambic stress setting". The Piano part is marked "Allegro barbara (♩ = 96)". The second system includes staves for Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Bassoon, Voice, and Piano. The Voice part has lyrics: "Ch, I should like to ride the seas, I", "mor-ing has-cum-mer; I out-lies hang-ing at my knees, I dirt be-hind my". The Piano part continues the ostinato pattern.

Figure 1. m.1-11. Instrumental ensemble whistle effect/Ostinato pattern
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The tempo is *Allegro barbaro*, until the postlude, and is a humorous touch by Barab. The postlude reflects an abrupt change in the mood of the song, by use of a slower tempo and softer dynamics, sung in the lowest range of the piece. Until this moment the dynamics are always fortissimo throughout the piece. The vocal line is in the medium range beginning with an unaccompanied vocal glissando on middle C up to F² (m.4-5, 23-24), another complement to the pirate song effect. The medium range is conducive to good diction, when properly applied. Tempo I returns in the final two measures of the song with the boldest, loudest statement of all (fff).

The recording of *Song of Perfect Propriety*, sung by Barbara Cook, is directed towards a theatrical style. The quality of Ms. Cook's voice is childlike or 'tom-boyish'; that is, a straighter tone and thinner timbre than her previous sound. This quality continues until the postlude when her voice becomes soft, the timbre almost delicate, to match the quaintness of the poetic lines (31-32).

A Very Short Song

1. Once, when I was young and true,
2. Someone left me sad –
3. Broke my brittle heart in two;
4. And that is very bad.

5. Love is for unlucky folk,
6. Love is but a curse.
7. Once there was a heart I broke;
8. And that, I think, is worse.

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Dorothy Parker's verse is set in two quatrains (four lines each) and is a variation of the ballad form (see poetic scansion of *Song of Perfect Propriety*, above). The stanzas are four lines each rhyming *abab*. The tetrameter lines (1&3) contain seven syllables but the lines of trimeter (2&4) vary in length. Line two is five syllables long, while line four is six syllables long. The first three lines of each stanza are trochaic syllable stress and the fourth line of each stanza is iambic stress. This variation produces an asymmetrical rhythmic effect. Section A of Barab's setting contains the first four lines of Parker's verse while the text of Section B is a couplet from the second quatrain (lines 5&6). Section A' contains the last two lines of the same quatrain (lines 7&8).

Table No. 2 Musical Structure *A Very Short Song*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
Intro	1 -2	—	No Key Signature f (g#)
A (2 phrases B (1 phrase)	3 -10 11-14	1 -4 5 -6	f-F accidentals/ ambiguous key
Transition	15-17	—	ambiguous key
A' (1 phrase)	18-22	7 -8	f(g#)- F
Coda	23-24	—	F arpeggio

Barab extends the meter of some of Parker's lines by longer note values but the syllable stress remains the same. Barab maintains the syllable stress by placing the trochaic stresses on down-beats, whereas each line of iambic syllable stress begins on an up-beat. (Fig. 2, m.3-8, Voice-Piano/Musical

extensions and syllable-stress emphasis). The ABA' Coda, when divided into measures [Table No. 2] is asymmetrical as in Parker's verse, but Barab's musical extensions give the entire piece an even twenty-four measures.

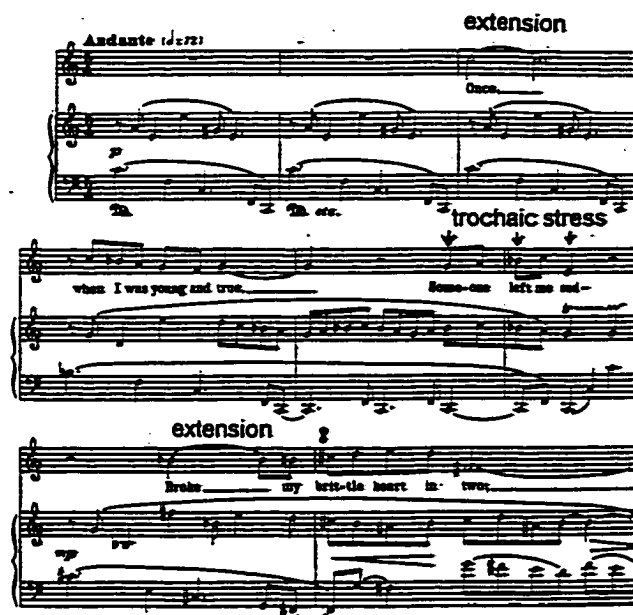


Figure 2. m. 1-8. Musical extensions/Syllable-stress emphasis
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Barab's setting of a tonal melodic line above an ever-changing harmonic accompaniment full of accidentals and ambiguous key centers gives word-painting to Parker's text in a musical atmosphere of controlled emotion: stable on the surface and completely chaotic underneath. The meter of Barab's three-part song is five quarter-note beats to the measure (5/4). It is an uneven meter for a verse that is asymmetrical. With an introduction, transition and coda and the addition of expanding note values and extended notes across the bar line, Barab has produced a longer song than the title suggests.

Lullaby

1. Sleep, pretty lady, the night is enfolding you;
2. Drift, and so lightly, on crystalline streams.
3. Wrapped in its perfumes, the darkness is holding you;
4. Starlight bespangles the way of your dreams.
5. Chorus the nightingales, wistfully amorous;
6. Blessedly quiet, the blare of the day.
7. All the sweet hours may your visions be glamorous—
8. Sleep, pretty lady, as long as you may.

9. Sleep, pretty lady, the night shall be still for you;
10. Silvered and silent, it watches your rest.
11. Each little breeze, in its eagerness, will for you
12. Murmur the melodies ancient and blest.
13. So in the midnight does happiness capture us;
14. Morning is dim with another day's tears.
15. Give yourself sweetly to images rapturous—
16. Sleep, pretty lady, a couple of years.

17. Sleep, pretty lady, the world awaits day with you;
18. Girlish and golden, the slender young moon.
19. Grant the fond darkness its mystical way with you;
20. Morning returns to us ever too soon.
21. Roses unfold, in their loveliness, all for you;
22. Blossom the lilies for hope of your glance.
23. When you're awake, all the men go and fall for you—
24. Sleep, pretty lady, and give me a chance.

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Parker's verse consists of three octets: one and two, rhyming *ababdcdd* and the third octet rhyming *ababacac*. The words: 'Sleep, pretty lady' unify the verse by being a part of the beginning and ending line of each octet (poetic lines 1,8,9,16,17 and 24). The meter of each line is dactylic (three syllable) tetrameter but again Parker varies the line length producing rhythmic asymmetry (see poetic scansion of *A Very Short Song*). The odd-numbered lines have twelve syllables, while the even-numbered lines have ten.

Table No. 3 Musical Structure *Lullaby*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
Intro	1 -2	———	E \flat (cm) Key Signature c
A (2 sections)	3 -21	1 -8	c-e \flat accidentals/
Interlude	22-23	———	ambiguous key
A (2 sections)	24-42	9-16	repeat m.3- 21
Interlude	43-44	———	repeat m.22-23
A' (2 sections)	45-63	17-24	repeat sec. 1/m.3-21 sec. 2/G Major key sig.
Postlude	64-66	———	ambiguous – G arpeggio

As in the two preceding examples, Barab maintains Parker's syllable stress pattern in the melodic line by placing the stressed syllable on the downbeat of the measure but he disrupts the poetic asymmetry by adding extra note values to even-numbered lines that contain only ten syllables (Fig. 3. m.11 and 15-16). Barab successfully sets the dactylic syllable stress in a duple meter setting by the use of triplets and a rhythmic pattern of eighth note, quarter note, eighth note, etc. (Fig. 3., m. 9-16, Voice-Piano musical setting of three-syllable stress pattern).



Figure 3. m.9-16. Musical setting of poetic three-syllable stress pattern
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There is a poetic-music connection when the third verse changes direction in the second half (m.54-63/G Major key signature). It is the second indication that this is not a typical lullaby. (The first indication is poetic line 16, when the "pretty lady" is told to sleep "a couple of years".) At the point of the interludes (m.21-24, 42-45), Barab has transcribed the full ensemble part for the voice/piano score; whereas the piano is at rest in the orchestral score (Fig. 4. m.42-45. Instrumental ensemble interlude transcribed for piano). The accompaniment adds variety to the repeated melody. The arpeggiated chords, beginning in the introduction, produce a rocking movement, indicative of the style of a lullaby, under a vocal line that creates a compound duple rhythm.

The musical score is for measures 42-45 of an instrumental ensemble interlude, transcribed for piano. It features seven staves: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hrn.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Voice, and Piano. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano). The Voice part has lyrics: "Sleep, pret-ty la-dy, the we". The Piano part has a section marked "45" and "and. come sara".

Figure 4. m.42-45 Instrumental ensemble interlude transcribed for piano
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Parker's verse is satirical. Barab's lovely melody contrasts with the sarcastic wishes in the text. Barbara Cook's interpretation suggests no sarcasm in her tone quality; however, leaving the message in the text.

Love Song

1. My own dear love, he is strong and bold
2. And he cares not what comes after,
3. His words ring sweet as a chime of gold,
4. And his eyes are lit with laughter.
5. He is jubilant as a flag unfurled—
6. Oh a girl, she'd not forget him.
7. My own dear love, he is all my world—
8. And I wish I'd never met him.

9. My love, he's mad, and my love, he's fleet,
10. And a wild young wood-thing bore him!
11. The ways are fair to his roaming feet,
12. And the skies are sunlit for him.
13. As sharply sweet to my heart he seems
14. As the fragrance of acacia.
15. My own dear love, he is all my dreams—
16. And I wish he were in Asia.

17. My love runs by like a day in June,
18. And he makes no friends of sorrows.
19. He'll tread his galloping rigadoon
20. In the pathway of the morrows,
21. He'll live his days where the sunbeams start,
22. Nor could storm or wind uproot him.
23. My own dear love, he is all my heart—
24. And I wish somebody'd shoot him.

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Dorothy Parker's verse consists of three octets, each rhyming *abab cdcd*.

The meter of each line is tetrameter and has a mixed iambic-anapestic syllable-stress pattern. Parker varies the line lengths: odd-numbered lines have nine syllables while even-numbered lines have eight.

Table No. 4 Musical Structure *Love Song*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
A (3 phrases)	1 -18	1 -8	No Key Signature F- accidentals/ambiguous
A' (3 phrases)	19-37	9-16	F-pattern continues
A''(3 phrases)	38-56	17-24	F cont.- E Major Chord

Barab maintains the iambic-anapestic stress and achieves symmetry by adding beats to a measure. One of many devices is the quarter-note rest in the first musical phrase (m.4), and another is increasing note values as well as tied notes across the bar line (m.8-10). The tempo marking, "molto rubato" and many fermatas also expand the rhythm (Figure 5. m.1-13. Expanding the poetic rhythm). Eight fermatas, one ritard, two rubato markings, added to the beginning tempo: *molto rubato*, *allegro*, give the performer of this song freedom to interpret with many varying tempi. This allows the singer enough freedom to accentuate the ironic words in the verse, emphasizing humor in the text.

Molto rubato, allegro (♩=108) extension

My own dear love, he is strong and bold - And he cares not what comes of - tar. His

iambic-anapestic extension

words ring sweet as a chime of gold, And his eyes see it with light - tar.

across the barline extension

He's ju - ly - lant as a flag un-furled. Oh, a girl, she'd not for -

Figure 5. m.1-13. Expanding the poetic rhythm
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The harmony continues to change, with almost every measure, to the end of each section. This harmonic instability helps illustrate a portrait of insincerety in the poetic verse. Certain measures outline a diminished triad; for example, m.12-13: "forget him"; m.32-33: "[fragrance of] acacia": m.51-52: "uproot him". This word painting also contributes to a sarcastic representation of Parker's verse. Barab contributes to the poetic punch line of each verse (poetic lines 7-8, 15-16 and 23-24) by placing the succeeding cadence in a different key. (Figure 6. m.16-18, 35-37 and 54-56. Final cadences word-paint punch lines). Verse three ends with a strong accented low E, sounding like a "thump", just after the author's wish that: "somebody'd shoot him" (m.56).

The image displays three staves of musical notation, each representing a different section of a song. Each staff consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first staff is marked with a box containing the number 36. The second staff is marked with a box containing the number 35. The third staff is marked with a box containing the number 54. Below each staff, the word "cadence" is written. At the end of the third staff, the word "thump" is written.

Staff 1 (m. 16-18):
 all my world. And I wish I'd never met him.
 cadence

Staff 2 (m. 35-37):
 all my dreams - And I wish he were in A - sh.
 cadence

Staff 3 (m. 54-56):
 all my heart - And I wish some - body'd shoot him.
 cadence thump

Figure 6. m.16-18, 35-37, 54-56. Final cadences word-painted punch lines
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Barbara Cook's interpretation is conservative with respect to the "molto rubato" marking. She chooses an appealing *sprechstimme* vocal quality in delivering the final vocal line of each verse.

Somebody's Song

1. This is what I vow:
2. He shall have my heart to keep;
3. Sweetly will we stir and sleep,
4. All the years, as now.
5. Swift the measured sands may run;
6. Love like this is never done;
7. He and I are welded one:
8. This is what I vow.

9. This is what I pray:
10. Keep him by me tenderly;
11. Keep him sweet in pride of me,
12. Ever and a day;
13. Keep me from the old distress;
14. Let me, for our happiness,
15. Be the one to love the less:
16. This is what I pray.

17. This is what I know:
18. Lovers' oaths are thin as rain;
19. Love's a harbinger of pain—
20. Would I were not so!
21. Ever is my heart a-thirst,
22. Ever is my love accurst;
23. He is neither last nor first:
24. This is what I know.

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In "Somebody's Song", Dorothy Parker has produced another variant of the ballad form in two ways: first by combining six quatrains into octets rhyming, alternately, *abba* and *ccca*, and secondly, by alternating the meter of the form. Instead of alternating tetrameter/trimeter (ballad form), Parker's verse consists of trimeter, then two lines of tetrameter, a line of trimeter, three lines of tetrameter followed by a concluding trimeter line. This pattern is found in each stanza. The syllable stress is trochaic.

Table No. 5 Musical Structure *Somebody's Song*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
Intro	1 -4	1	No Key Signature e ¹ pedal point/accomp. ped. pt./accidentals/ ambiguous/C-e ¹ ped. pt.
A (2 sections) <u>Interlude/</u> Intro II	5-22 23-26	1 -8 9	pattern cont. - d ¹ ped.pt. pattern cont. - section 2/ Bb key sig/Bb-d ¹ ped.pt.
A' (2 sections) <u>Interlude/</u> Intro III	27-44 45-48	9-16 17	pattern cont. - c ¹ ped.pt. pattern cont. - section 2/ Ab key sig/Ab-c ¹ ped.pt.
A''(2 sections)	49-66 (67)	17-24	
Postlude	68-70	24	b ⁴ pedal pt.- E Major

Barab's use of rests, increased note values and tied notes over the bar line produces the same meter in each line. He diverges somewhat from his usual literal copy of the verse by repeating the first line of each octet (lines 1,9,and 17). Barab repeats the first line of each section as if to say: 'This is serious!'. The instrumental introduction is a steady repeated quarter note on e¹ over changing inverted chords, to the seventh, which continues throughout the first section of verse one. The steady pulse continuing as a pedal point on one tone is like a clock, ticking seconds, telling us that time is passing as an oath is taken: "This is what I vow." The second section receives one measure of a dance motive before the voice begins. The dance motive undergoes a variation in this section (Fig. 7. m.16-18. Word-painting dance rhythm) beginning in measure sixteen with a sixteenth-note pattern moving in various directions. The

dancing accompaniment continues under words assuring us that though "swift the measured sands may run; love like this is never done".

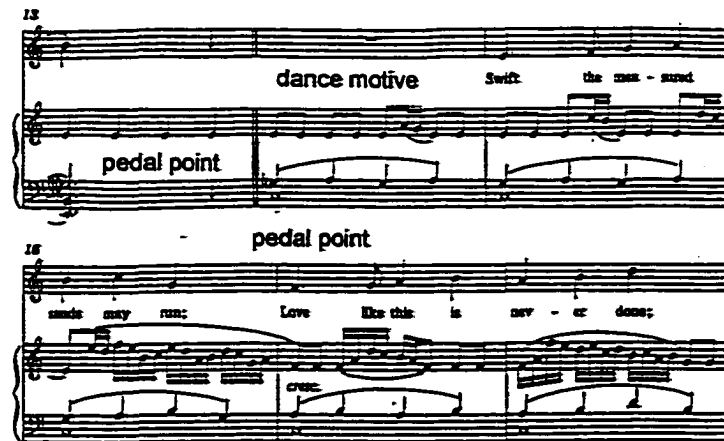


Figure 7. m.14-18. Word-painting dance rhythm
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The second strophe is modified with a similar variation of the dance motive and the line: "This is what I pray.", the voice beginning one whole step down on *d*¹ (m.25-26). "This is what I know:" begins on middle *c* (m.47-48). These notes act as pedal points throughout each section in the right hand of the piano. After the testimony to timeless love, we are presented with the truth in verse three (poetic line 23). Barab lets us know that it is indeed a somber song: the last line is repeated in the postlude a rare occurrence for Barab with a *ritardando* on *b* natural, the lowest note of the vocal line. The concluding pedal point and the *ritardando* act as more word-painting related to the clock, referred to in verse one, slowing down and coming to a complete stop. There is a mock seriousness about Barab's setting of this song, but the melancholic meaning of Parker's words remains.

Song of One of the Girls

1. Here in my heart I am Helen;
2. I'm Aspasia and Hero, at least.
3. I'm Judith, and Jael, and Madame de Staël;
4. I'm Salome, moon of the East.

5. Here in my soul I am Sappho;
6. Lady Hamilton am I, as well.
7. In me Récamier vies with Kitty O'Shea,
8. With Dido, and Eve, and poor Neil.

9. I'm one of the glamorous ladies
10. At whose beckoning history shook.
11. But you are a man, and see only my pan,
12. So I stay at home with a book.

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Dorothy Parker's verse consists of three quatrains rhyming *abcb*.

Lines one, five and nine are dactylic tetrameter. All other lines are anapestic tetrameter. The third line of each quatrain contains extra syllables that draw out the line, slowing it down, contrasting with the regularity of the other lines' rhythm. All these lines also contain internal rhymes (Jael/Staël, Récamier/Shea, man/pan) that highlight their parallel internal structures. Some of the *Girls* mentioned are ancient Greek or Roman heroines, of which some are associated with an important hero: Helen of Troy, Aspasia, mistress of Pericles, Hero, Greek priestess, Dido, ruler of Carthage, and Sappho, Greek poetess. Judith, Jael, Salome and Eve are all biblical characters. Madame de Staël, Lady Hamilton, Récamier, Kitty O'Shea and poor Nell, are historical

characters, also associated with famous men, but each having earned a reputation by her own deeds, in her own time, infamous or not.

Table No. 6 Musical Structure *Song Of One Of The Girls*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
Intro	1 -2	——	No Key Signature b minor
A (4 phrases)	2 -11	1 -4	b-e accidentals/ ambiguous key/ E chord
Transition	11-13	——	b outline
A' (4 phrases)	13-25	5 -8	b-e accidentals/ ambiguous/Bb octave
Transition	25-27	——	Bb accidentals
B (4 phrases)	28-41	9 -12	Bb accidentals/ ambiguous key/ Eb
Codetta (B section trans)	41-21	——	Eb

Barab's setting begins with a dramatic fortissimo b minor arpeggiated chord. The verse (A) begins as a fanfare, an announcement that she is as grand as all the famous ladies being named (m.1-4). Section A', also referring to the *Girls*, is modified after the first phrase, by rearranging notes and placing phrases briefly in new key areas. Word-painting occurs in measures nine through eleven regarding Salome. Poetic line four is set in a chromatic, suddenly slower musical phrase, inferring a sultry interpretation of the biblical character, who in the first century A.D., danced for Herod in return for the beheading of John the Baptist. Measures twenty-two through twenty-five, also slower, end with a drop in pitch, emphasizing poor Nell (line 8)

illiterate mistress of Charles II in 17th century England, who was impoverished for a time after Charles' death (Fig. 8. M.9-11, 22-25 Voice-piano setting of word-painting).

The image shows a musical score for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 9-11) has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "Ma - dame de Staff: I'm Se - lo - use, none of the". The second system (measures 22-25) also has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are "For", "With the - de, and", and "And poor: No. Nell.". The score is marked "word-painting" and "Allegretto".

Figure 8. m. 9-11, 22-25. Word-painting
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An instrumental passage in the last vocal section word-paints the poetic phrase "At whose beckoning history shook" (Poetic line 10), by its association with a British naval song or similar music. This is particularly convincing with the orchestral version where the entire ensemble plays the theme in unison (Fig. 9. m.31-32. Instrumental ensemble word-painting). Barab uses more word painting by bringing back the fanfare passage of measures two and three later in measures thirty-three through thirty-seven to satirize the announcement: "But

you are a man, and see only my pan," (the word *pan* being a slang expression for face, sometimes meaning *all*). If the listener is to assume that the singer's face, or look, is not special, then the last poetic line (m. 42) slows down, becomes softer, and suggests passiveness in a steady E-flat major harmony to reflect the words: "she stays at home with a book" because the man does not see that she is otherwise, 'quite a woman'.

The image shows a musical score for measures 31-32. The staves are arranged vertically: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hrn.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Voice, and Piano. The Voice staff has the lyrics "shook." and "loco". The Piano staff is marked "Presto". Above the Flute staff, there is a bracketed annotation "word-painting" and "loco". The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The music features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *sf* (sforzando).

Figure 9. m.31-32. Instrumental ensemble word painting
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Chant for Dark Hours

1. Some men, some men
2. Cannot pass a
3. Book shop.
4. (Lady, make your mind up, and wait your life away.)
5. Some men, some men
6. Cannot pass a
7. Crap game.
8. (He said he'd come at moonrise, and here's another day!)
9. Some men, some men
10. Cannot pass a
11. Bar-room.
12. (Wait about, and hang about, and that's the way it goes.)
13. Some men, some men
14. Cannot pass a
15. Woman.
16. (Heaven never send me another one of those!)
17. Some men, some men
18. Cannot pass a
19. Golf course.
20. (Read a book, and sew a seam, and slumber if you can.)
21. Some men, some men
22. Cannot pass a
23. Haberdasher's
24. (All your life you wait around for some damn man!)

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Dorothy Parker's verse utilizes two voices. The first voice is the first three lines of each quatrain. The second voice is the last line of each quatrain, in parentheses. Only poetic lines in parentheses rhyme (4 & 8, 12 & 16, 20 & 24). There are six quatrains. The first three lines of each quatrain are actually formed by the cutting up of a single trochaic pentameter line into three lines (the exception is the last quatrain, which is in trochaic hexameter). The second

voice (line 4 of each quatrain) is made up of a mixed syllable-stress of hexameter (six feet). The fourth line of each quatrain also contains varying numbers of syllables.

Table No. 7 Musical Structure *Chant for Dark Hours*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
Intro	1 -2	———	No Key Signature b octave pedal point
A (3 sections)	3 -20	1 -12	continues on b octave pedal points – ends on d octaves/ambiguous key
A' (3 sections)	21-28	13-24	continues d octave pedal points – f octave/ accidentals/ambig.- F M

Barab's setting is modified strophic. He combines three quatrains into one strophe and each strophe is in a different key. Section A' moves up to the top of the treble staff to a final F^\sharp for a climatic statement (m.33-35), then drops to middle c (lowest melodic note).

The slow tempo and repeating octaves in the accompaniment produce an exaggerated serious quality reminiscent of a funeral dirge. Voice 1 is set in the form of an accompanied recitative (poetic lines not in parentheses). Voice 2, on one pitch, is set in a mock psalm tone, following the poetic rhythm (poetic lines in parentheses). This psalm tone changes with every introduction of Voice 2 (m.6,12,18,25,30,37). The bass octave also changes and doubles the pitch of Voice 2 (Fig. 10. m.3-8 Poetic two-voice vocal setting).

voice1

voice2

double octave pitch ↑

Figure 10. m.3-8. Two-voice vocal setting
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The setting is a parody of a combined religious oratorio/chant. Barbara Cook's delivery of this song is mockingly oratorical. The message in the text is satirical.

Coda

1. There's little in taking or giving.
2. There's little in water or wine;
3. This living, this living, this living
4. Was never a project of mine.
5. Oh, hard is the struggle, and sparse is
6. The gain of the one at the top,
7. For art is a form of catharsis,
8. And love is a permanent flop,
9. And work is the province of cattle,
10. And rest's for a clam in a shell,
11. So I'm thinking of throwing the battle—
12. Would you kindly direct me to hell?

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Parker's verse consists of three quatrains combined into twelve lines rhyming *abab*. The meter is a mixed iambic-anapestic syllable-stress of tetrameter/trimeter. Odd-numbered lines have nine syllables while even-numbered have eight, producing rhythmic asymmetry.

Table No. 8 Musical Structure *Coda*

MUSICAL FORM	MUSICAL MEASURE	POETIC LINE	HARMONIC OUTLINE
Intro	1	———	No Key Signature 32 nd five-note turn/ C c accidentals/ambiguous
A (3 phrases)	2 -12	1 -4	A \flat (d \sharp) key unstable
Extension	13-14	———	A \flat pattern continues
A' (5 phrases)	15-28	5 -10	B (a \sharp) sharps/unstable m.22 sudden change/ E \flat (a \sharp) flats/unstable
Extension	29	———	E \flat pattern continues
A''	30-37	11-12	C (sharps/flats in accompaniment)
Coda	37-42	———	D Major

Barab divides the verse into three parts but not evenly. Section A (first strophe) consists of poetic lines one through four. The second strophe contains lines five through ten. The third strophe is the shortest (lines 11&12). Section A' is emphasizes repetition, even though the text is different each time; as though it does not matter what is being said, because it has been said before (Fig. 11. M. 22-28. Voice-piano musical repetition). There is only one solution: "Would you kindly direct me to hell?" (Poetic line 12). Propriety is maintained in making a request instead of a demand. This is the coda, the final section and the final song of the cycle. It is also the final poem from *Sunset Gun*, the second collection of poetry published in *The Portable Dorothy Parker*.

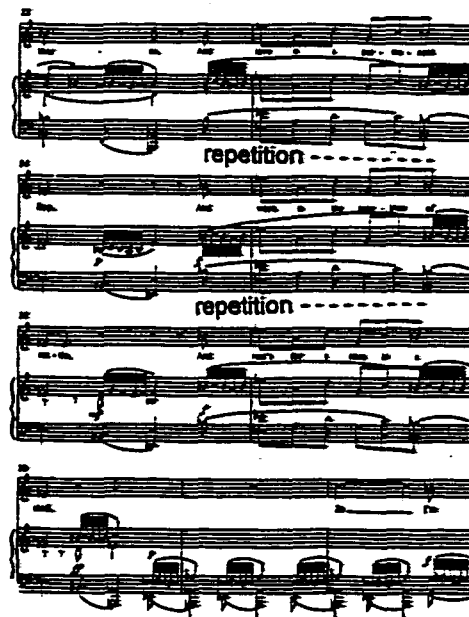


Figure 11. m.22-28. Musical repetition as poetic interpretation
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A burlesque dance rhythm in the form of a five-note turn dominates and gives color to Parker's verse, the most dramatic of the eight selections. It is this burlesque sound, particularly when heard through the orchestral ensemble, that brings out the humor of the text. Producing a heavy texture, the turn appears between strong beats and continues throughout the song changing pitch and range along with the underlying harmony. Only one measure (m.16) places the turn on the downbeat. The turn becomes an accelerated passage of sixteenth notes in the instrumental Coda, driving towards the end, coming to a complete halt and momentary silence with a dotted-quarter-note rest. The ensemble ends the song with a trill and a final five-note turn on d³ in the bass (Fig.12. m.37-42. Five-note instrumental turn used for theatrical effect).



Figure 12. m.37-42. Five-note instrumental turn used for theatrical effect
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This piece is a brilliant finale to the cycle, in terms of choice of Parker's text and Barab's extended, more theatrical musical setting.

The following is a brief summary of the general structure of Barab's songs. In each of the eight selections chosen for this study Seymour Barab maintains the poetic syllable stress as created by Parker. He adjusts the irregular syllabic structure of Parker's verse by musical compositional methods when he wishes to produce overall symmetry in the number of measures of each song. In six of the eight selections, there is no key signature at the beginning of the song. Each song begins and ends in a different tonal center, without exception. The abundance of accidentals throughout each song maintains unstable or ambiguous tonal centers which, in many cases, switch back and forth between major and minor tonal sections of no more than two or three measures. The exception is *Somebody's Song* containing a second section in each strophe which, except for one measure, remains in one key. The form of each song is a modification of binary, ternary or strophic form. Barab introduces seven songs in the accompaniment and adds a concluding section to all but six. The vocal range of each song is for medium range and extends, usually, from middle c to the top of the treble staff. Word-painting is extensive and varied, both in the vocal line and in the accompaniment.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSION

Seymour Barab's *Songs of Perfect Propriety Volumes I and II* hold the position of being the first published song cycle which sets various verses by Dorothy Parker. Upon discovery of *Songs of Perfect Propriety*, this author found it both innovative and daring that in the 1950s a male composer would decide to use Dorothy Parker's verse for an art song cycle. Even though the verses are humorous, they are also clearly feminine, from a woman's point of view. Barab states "he has always been a feminist". He indicated sympathy for women by his choice of Parker's verse and his settings of them, but more than that he appreciated the humor with which Parker was able to convey the truth, followed by brilliant punch lines. Barab therefore paralleled this creative method of Parker's by using humor, rather than drama, in his settings, through musical parodies, cabaret timbres and burlesque imitations. The poetic verses of eight songs selected for the musical study are not full of complaints about men as much as they are complaining about women: women's vulnerability and the fact that all their life some women wait around for "some damn man"!

It is my conclusion that Seymour Barab has honored Dorothy Parker. Barab has stated he did not think the decision to use Parker's verse was an unusual one because they were some of the best light verse he had ever read, a belief also acknowledged by other authors. Parker's private life and the implications of the influence it had on her writing were not well known until after her death. The first biography, by Lillian Hellman, appeared in 1969. Barab's

musical settings therefore are not overwhelming, but complementing and supportive of Parker's writing style.

The interpretation of this music and the words is ultimately left to the performer, and that is where it will be possible to display more or less drama and intensity, for those individuals inspired to do so. It is also possible for the text to be understood, since Barab's settings stay in a medium vocal range. His accompaniments never overwhelm the text, even in the chamber ensemble arrangement. Performer and audience, hearing the songs, are able to experience Parker's verse almost always in the original poetic rhythms. Perhaps most importantly, music and words acknowledge the vulnerability, hints of sadness, cynicism and mockery; all leading to Parker's punch lines which were her means of cloaking in irony the drama and tragedy of it all.

Observations about Seymour Barab, the man, have been made as a result of the 1997 telephone interview, one other previous conversation, and several of the aforementioned journal articles. This author finds Barab to be modest, private, almost humble, though he is certain of his proven ability and proud of his accomplishments. He does not over-elaborate when questioned, but will give the facts about any of his compositions.

Barab generously gives Barbara Cook, the soprano who performed on the original recording of *Songs of Perfect Propriety*, credit for having the talent to know exactly how to interpret his songs. Barbara Cook created the role of Cunegonde in Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*. Barab engaged Cook for his recording after attending a performance. She has since become a member of

the Broadway Hall of Fame, an honor bestowed for Cook's many legendary creations of musical theater roles.

Some suggestions for performance are included in this study. The entire cycle, Volumes I and II, is approximately forty minutes in length. If performed in its entirety, employing the chamber orchestra arrangement for voice would result in a more colorful performance. The arrangement gives an added dimension of contrast in timbre and some special effects not achieved with the voice and piano score alone. A select group of songs, such as the eight songs in this study, might be appropriate as part of a recital with voice and piano. A recital program devoted to any portion of the cycle might include a lecture about Barab and Parker, and/or points of interest about the songs. A reading of the verses could also be included.

This author hopes that teachers, students and performers of *Songs of Perfect Propriety*, with the information presented in this document, will agree that Seymour Barab has offered singers, and especially female ones, a chance to express themselves more personally through his music and the verse of Dorothy Parker, an opportunity not often given in American art song.

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APPENDIX 1

Telephone Interview with Seymour Barab by Sandra J. Gall, December 5, 1997

Interviewer: Int

Mr. Barab: B

Int: You were with the Galimer String Quartet?

B: Yes.

Int: Thank you for the cassette, I've listened to it already, three times, and every time I listen I enjoy it even more. I think, from my own personal view, Barbara Cook was the right choice... for me she was able to get the 'cabaret' sound, which I think is so appropriate, especially for the text. I want to apologize to you, because I had not looked over the chamber score when, the first time, I indicated that that score would probably be more enhanced, but I went back and looked at the piano score and I see that you transcribed pretty much all the chamber parts into the piano. I have not heard the piano, but I really enjoy the chamber score. Did I understand you correctly, did you write them while you were in France?

B: No, I wrote them when I was in New York. I wrote a lot of songs in France but those were not some of them.

Int: The songs you wrote in France, have those been published?

B: Some have, some haven't. I have a lot of unpublished material.

Int: One source, *A Singer's Guide to the American Art Song*: have you heard of this? An article by Nathan Thompson where he states that you have

approximately two-hundred songs, many of which have been published.

Is that correct?

B: I wouldn't say many, I would say some of which.

Int: I have an internet printout, through the library, of various of your compositions, including chamber works and so forth. Have you written chamber works?

B: Yes, mostly operas and chamber works.

Int: Do you recall Heather Parr? [Yes] I have that dissertation and she examined *Chanticleer*, *Game of Chance* and *Not a Spanish Kiss*. Is that correct, *Not a Spanish Kiss* has not been published?

B: It hasn't been printed but, it is, I think it's published by G. Schirmer, but I have to warn you, published does not mean printed. [OK] Because the publisher gets the rights and does mail order with it and it does not appear in stores and I think there is going to be more and more of that. I am sure that more and more works are going to appear in stores that are not printed scores.

Int: I have the quintet arrangement of the *Songs of Perfect Propriety* [they] are hand-written.

B: They are published! I can't explain that. This is all very mysterious.

Int: They have your notes in them and there are notes to you. I have that on perusal and they told me I can request to copy it. I was hoping to buy it, but that is not possible. Are you aware of the dissertation of Martha Malone for her DMA in 1994 entitled "*Opera For American Youth: a*

Practical and Analytical Study”? Your *Toy Shop* is brought up as being, in recent times, the most performed children’s opera.

B: *The Toy Shop*, oh no!

Int: Yes, that is what she [Martha Malone] wrote. She was in contact with numerous opera companies from whom she got this information.

B: I don’t think she ever got in touch with me, but there is a William McCrary who did a doctoral thesis on my operas that were adapted from fairy tales.

Int: Where is he?

B: He is at the university in Greely.

Int: Ok, thanks. [She] Martha Malone mentions you and highly praises you and talks about *Red Riding Hood* being absolutely the most often performed children’s opera.

B: Well, that’s true. In fact for a while it was the most performed opera, period. When the *Opera News* was still publishing, they had seven-hundred forty some performances here and abroad which of course is even more than Menotti, who is the next most performed with *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

Int: I will make note of that for sure. Are you familiar with the *NATS Journal*? I have an article by Jan Trammel-Savine entitled: “Seymour Barab’s Songs as a Pedagogical Tool.” It’s a short article but she does mention some of your songs and she does mention *Songs of Perfect Propriety* and that a great deal of your songs are good for young singers. I wonder

what you think of that: because my impression, so far, that with your input, may or may not change...

B You mentioned a woman before.

Int: Yes, Martha Malone.

B: Did that information come from *Opera For Youth*? There's a publication called *Opera For Youth*. Yes that was a wonderful article. She analyzed note by note and word by word.

Int: No, this was a dissertation from the University of Cincinnati.

B: No, the one I'm talking about came from a magazine, *Opera For Youth*. I don't have a copy in my hands but you can ask. The publishers are Jim and Barbara Zimmerman.

Int: This article, [referring to the songs] as a pedagogical tool; I see them as being musically, technically, not as difficult as some other.

B: Are you quoting her?

Int: No, I'm saying musically, because of the range and because you keep them simple; your following the text in stressing the verse and so forth. I would probably find your arias in the operas more complex.

B: Not necessarily! I am really not interested in "pushing the envelope" as they say or extending the limits of technical things that singers, or instrumentalists, for that matter, can do. That just does not interest me.

Int: Well what I was concerned about: she was talking about [the songs] for younger singers, but I find that the text would not be comfortable for

younger singers because one has to have at least the experience of age that Dorothy Parker was.

B: Well, I never wrote anything for younger singers meaning students or kids, except once I wrote something for children's chorus. I never wrote anything that kids are suppose to perform, they are all for adults to perform. Although I must admit that I used kids in the last two children's operas that I wrote, just so they could involve the various schools where they played these pieces at. It was a big thing for the schools to have their kids get up on the stage and be a part of the show.

Int: What were those last two operas?

B: One was *Snow White and the Seven Drawfs* in which the kids played the drawfs, very simple stuff. And the most recent was the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* in which the kids play rats and children.

Int: On the internet I found you have written a one-act called *I Can't Stand Wagner*.

B: Oh yes, that was just recently done in London. Oh it's been done. It's not in the hands of a publisher but it's been done. I'm sorry it is. It is in the hands of G.Schirmer and it has also been done here a few times.

Int: I am interested in parody. Is it a parody?

B: No., it is not a parody but it has quotations from Wagner in it. [Ok] Did I send you something of mine called *Parodies*?

Int: I have that score. I'm anxious to hear those as well. I heard recently that one of Mr. Carey's programs presented the "Miss Lucy". You also wrote a song cycle, *Lovers*?

B: Yes, it's handled by Seesaw Publishers. It's not actually published. I wish publishers would give themselves a different name if they are not going to publish them. You don't know what to call them, if they have the piece but they are not publishing it.

Int: You've written a couple of cantatas?

B: No, just one. It's *Rest Eternal* for soprano and tenor and for baritone.

Int: That's the one Mr. Ronson mentioned. That is very new; it's written to a text by Kurt Vonnegut. It's been done a couple of times and it's coming out on a CD. You never know with CD's though.

Int: Was that commissioned?

B: In a manner of speaking, yes, it was commissioned by the conductor of the orchestra who asked me to set these words of Kurt Vonnegut.

Int: Mr. Barab. . .

B: I would feel more comfortable if you would call me Seymour.

Int: Ok, I would be more comfortable but I needed your permission first. Thank you, and I am Sandra. Well I was hoping we could get on with first names.

Int: Right. Have the majority of your works been commissioned?

B: No, the majority have not been commissioned but that's because I don't wait for commissions and I don't get that many.

Int: Would you say the majority of the works that have been commissioned have been operas? [Yes] I have in my notes from FirstSearch that there was a corrected edition of the *Songs of Perfect Propriety* that came out in '91. Yes, I did that for a different instrumentation, because there was a group in a suburb of New York that did regular chamber music concerts and the leader of the group told me that he couldn't use the instrumentation that was on the recording but he did want to do it with a wind quintet; that is, flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon. Some of those instruments were on the recording but I thought it would be a good idea to have a standard combination like a woodwind quintet.

Int: Well now, that's what I have!

B: But that is not what you have on the tape though. [OK] On the tape you hear a trumpet. Actually, I want the revised version to be the only version, and I'm even hoping someday that there will be a new recording of them with the instrumentation.

Int: So, on the original the trumpet takes the place of which instrument?

B: The French horn. But I think there was some other change too, because as I remember there were only four instruments with the piano in the original version and in the new version there are five instruments.

Int: Yes, I have information that the first version was accompaniment for small instrumental ensemble, flute, clarinet, trumpet, bassoon and piano, so that is what is on the recording?

B: Yes, there is added an oboe and a French horn.

Int: When you added those instruments, did you also revise any of the actual lines?

B: No, absolutely not. But that's already published, I mean, printed. I feel that once the thing is printed it is beyond revision. By that time you better have made up your mind.

Int: *Fortunes Favorite*: that's printed?

B: That's printed by EMC in Boston. That was in 1986.

Int: The score that I saw in our library states that it was published by Galaxy, but Galaxy was taken over by EMC. I thought the text was hilarious.

B: Oh, it's a funny opera. People laugh. I love it when people laugh at opera because that means they can understand the lines. So if they can understand the lines then I did not waste my time writing them.

Int: Sometimes it depends on the singer.

B: It always depends on the singer. Whatever I do, I am in the singer's hands.

Int: It was premiered at New York Theatre in the Park, correct?

B: Oh yes, in New York City, I forgot that. The name of the theater was "The Singers' Theater" and it was in Yorktown Heights, New York, to be precise.

Int: I would love to see that done here.

B: Would you sing the role? It's for mezzo.

Int: Probably not, I do have a rather strong middle voice, but I'm not a mezzo.

B: You are a soprano.

Int: Yes, but I do sing a lot of middle voice things because my diction is pretty good but I don't have that dark timbre. You 'rhymed' that yourself?

[Laugh] I didn't say that right.

B: Yes, I did all the rhymes, I wrote the libretto.

Int: It seems so far that the majority of your vocal works are on the 'light side'. Correct?

B: Yes, I don't have a dramatic temperament. I have more an Italian or French one. I think there is enough misery in the world.

Int: I'm sure there are a lot of opinions on how to interpret Dorothy Parker's verse.

B: Why, how many different ways can there be?

Int: For instance, I have a dissertation that is called "I'm a Feminist: Gender Issues and Selected Stories by Dorothy Parker" and it mentions her verse in which she [the writer] is contradicting people who are calling Dorothy Parker a misogynist and that her verse and particularly her short stories are a reflection of her basic beliefs. It's rather confusing because the latest biography on Dorothy Parker by Marion Meade tells that Dorothy Parker was not that interested in causes but she did leave her

estate to NAACP. [That's right.] I am trying to figure out how to approach this. When you chose these verses, were you looking at them from a light side.

B: To me they were some of the best light verse I had ever read and I thought they would lend themselves marvelously to song and I can only hope that I was right.

Int: So, in other words, you did not see a dark side to them at all?

B: Not at all. You know once you say that they are very clever specimens of light verse and some of the best ever written, you've said everything you can say but if you want to go on then you have to get into territory that is negative and how long can you go on praising them? So there has to be something negative there if you are going to write a dissertation. Don't do that with me, by the way.

Int: I don't see any negativity in your settings.

B: Oh good. I think her lyrics suited my style of writing songs perfectly, because even though some are slow and sad they are still not tragic and they are not dramatic.

Int: She probably would have liked that interpretation best.

B: Oh yes, I wish she could have heard it, but of course she never did.

Int: When you visited her, was this to get permission to have them published or had you already written them?

B: No. I'll tell you, there was a friend of mine, I hope I am not repeating myself, there was a friend of mine who was just starting a record

company. It was in the early days of long-playing records, the ten and twelve-inch long-playing, and it had just been invented and he was an engineer and wanted to go into the business of producing records so he approached me for any ideas I might have. He liked it a lot. So it was then that I got permission and after that, I wrote the music.

Int: Has this anything to do with the time you spent in France? You said you were producing records there.

B: Oh yes, but not for anything I could have written. It was just for various record companies like Vanguard and Esoteric, and other small companies at that time and I was producing standard works like symphonies and operas which [Renae] liked. It was all standard, no contemporary stuff.

Int: That had nothing to do with you recording your own works.

B: Nothing, whatever. As a matter of fact, I was only learning how to write music then. [I see.] I was doing that stuff for money.

Int: The *Snow White* premier: You were commissioned by Cimarron Circuit?

B: Yes, by Thomas Carey.

Int: Were you here for the premiere? [Yes] And that was in October of 1988? [That 's right.] Were you here also to direct?

B: No, I think it is a good idea for the composer to be allowed to come and make any revisions or corrections he might want to do but I don't think it's a good idea to let him direct. [Laugh] Composers generally don't know too much about the theater. I think a lot of composers don't even

like opera. Some of my friends who are composers hate opera. I try to be friends anyway.

Int: Are you a fan of the standard repertoire?

B: Not anymore. I've heard enough of the *Butterflys* and *Bohemes*.

Int: And do you share the opinion: "I can't stand Wagner."?

B: No, I like Wagner. I think Wagner is very important.

Int: What about *La Pizza Con Funghi*? Cimarron did that also.

B: Wonderful. Is Thomas Carey still directing? [Yes.] Well the same company who is doing *I Can't Stand Wagner* this season did that piece last season. I found it very operatic. I know it's an opera. Talk about parody, it's a real belcanto opera.

Int: You obviously like parody yourself. Have you ever thought about doing parody on Puccini?

B: I don't know how you would parody Puccini, in a very cynical way. It would have to be very burlesque.

Int: That's my sense of humor.

B: Incidentally, there is some Puccini parody in *La Pizza con Funghi* because I just wanted to parody every Italian composer who ever lived. Someone told me today: Not one Italian has written a successful symphony. [That is true.] Great songs. I guess they were so enamoured of opera they didn't have time.

Int: I have a picture of you, the Chautauqua report. I find it very interesting because the lady on the other side of Theodore Uppman; I studied voice with her in New York.

B: Whitfield Schanzer? I did not know she taught voice. I always thought she was a stage director.

Int: Yes, she taught voice in Manhattan and I studied with her.

B: I didn't even know she could sing. Well I'm in touch with them still. They live in Florida now. The next time I talk with them I will mention your name.

Int: I'm really interested in the opera but that is not what I'm about. Everything I read mentions how you pay attention to the words and of course that is very obvious in the *Songs of Perfect Propriety*.

B: It should be obvious for other reasons that I'm interested in words because I write them myself so often. In fact it has been a very long time since I've set anybody else's words.

Int: I'm glad you mentioned that. Can you pinpoint when you began writing your own words?

B: *Little Red Riding Hood* was the first time I "got up the nerve" to try to write my own libretto. Because I was so unsuccessful in finding my own librettist. You know there is nothing in it for the librettist. The composer gets the money, his name on the cover and in small type with an asterisk is libretto by 'whoever'. There is nothing in it for the librettist so you have to find somebody who is a poet and the poet may not write rhyme

verse, all kinds of problems. So I thought, the heck with it. In fact a friend of mine who had to have his toilet repaired, called the plumber and he watched the plumber and he said this guy did nothing. So from then on he never called the plumber. Some skills are so easy you don't need a professional.

Int: *Philip Marshall*, is that a serious opera?

B: It is really a serious opera with a philosophical point.

Int: And were you commissioned for that one?

B: No. I wrote that because I got very excited about the idea and did it.

That's the way it usually happens.

Int: Is that one of your few serious operas?

B: Gee, it's very hard for me to think in terms of serious and trivial, flighty, or whatever the opposite would be because: it's not a comedy, and I like to write comedy. I like to write stuff that ends happily and has a lot of plot. This has a lot of plot but it doesn't end happily.

Int: Was it performed quite a bit after that?

B: Yes, there were two or three productions after that but it has 'lain fallow' as the expression goes and I would really like for someone to pick it up but there are so many operas being written every day.

Int: The book, *A History of Song*, ed. by Denis Stevens has articles by various people. Have you heard of this? This is a highly valued book, it's out of print now. . .it discusses art song from middle ages to modern period in all the different countries, and last but not least , it mentions the

United States of America. This article is by Hans Nathan and I want you to know about this because I think it is quite a tribute to you because he mentions quite a few people, talks about their music and then in the Coda of this article he devotes a paragraph to you, after listing many famous people and their music. Then, if this list were complete it would include about one hundred names: as it is, the third paragraph down says: the songs of Seymour Barab [excuse me] Barab-there's a lot of discussion how to pronounce your name, by the way.

B: That's all right. I don't know how to pronounce it myself.

Int: The songs of Seymour Barab deserve special mention and . . . most fittingly at this point. . .but it would be fairer to consider them equivalents of 'light verse' or of the sophisticated illustrations of the "*New Yorker*" magazine, etc. etc.

B: Boy, and Bernstein only got a mention!

Int: And he was sixth down on the list!

Int: Do you know this person? Hans Nathan.

B: No. What makes you think he knows me.

Int: He obviously knows your work.

B: That's different. That is what I find complimentary that he took the trouble

to learn it and to write about it.

Int: What impressed me is that there are other names here. . .

B: More important names.

Int: Well, more famous names, important and famous aren't necessarily the same.

B: That's true.

Int: *Bad Ballads* and *Bab Ballads*, are those one and the same?

B: Bab is the name under which W.F. Gilbert wrote when he wrote for a magazine. He wrote a lot of poems, light verse, and he attributed it then to Bab, his alias. So, that's one thing. *Bawd Ballads* are just the collection of kind of racy poems. They are through Seesaw, maybe you could get them through perusal.

Int: I just recently read the text to *Game of Chance*. You did not write the text.

B: That was the first opera I ever tried, and then *Chanticleer*, too, has another librettist, M.C. Richard. *Red Riding Hood* was the third opera I tried to write. Originally I called the *Bawd Ballads* the *Bad Ballads*. I changed that because it would be too confusing.

B: I'm really amazed at how much information is out there. It's incredible.

Int: There is but I found that as far as you personally there is not a lot and I take it you are a very private person.

B: I'm kind of reticent and I don't enjoy talking about myself, frankly. I'm a better listener than a talker.

Int: Is there anything about you that you would want people to know?

B: No.

Int: Well, the composers of old, stories, anecdotes, and so forth.

B: Yes, that's how musicologists make a living. I am not going to deprive them of the opportunity to make a living.

Int: You were born in Chicago?

B: Yes the date is January 9, 1921.

Int: What nationality is Barab?

B: Hebrew. It's not an nationality, it's a language, and my people did not come from Israel, they came from Poland, but it is a Hebrew name. It means something in Hebrew. It gives me an air of mystery. The only one I have.

Int: It certainly does. *Snow White* was performed in Chicago. Did you have anything to do with that in 1990?

B: I never know about these things. Once the publisher handles it I never know until the end of the year when he sends me a [royalty] check.

Int: I want to ask you about the Urania label. It's listed as X113, the number of the recording.

B: I know nothing about that. It was simply sold from Esoteric to Urania and that particular tape changed hands several times.

Int: The pianist, was that you?

B: No, I don't play the piano. I'm a cellist. I play the piano a little but I am certainly not going to play in public or on a record. I supervised and conducted the recording.

Int: That's what I was interested in because of the way it was interpreted by Barbara Cook.

B: Oh yeah. I got exactly what I wanted. You may be giving her the credit but I'm the one who gets the credit.

Int: She must be a truly talented person to do that well.

B: Believe me I am only kidding. She was-she just did it right. I conducted only because this was a recording session and at recording sessions you don't have rehearsals. You just run the thing down once and you record it so time is of the essence and you don't want to run up too large a bill in overtime. The efficient way to do it is to have someone conduct, even a small ensemble like that.

Int: I take it you coached her as to how. . .did you coached her as to how it should be or did she just interpret them the way you wanted them the way you thought they should be.

B: Absolutely, once we got the tempi, she seemed to know exactly what to do. You know that's become my definition of talent. Somebody who just seems to know what to do.

Int: I loved her lyric side as well as the ability for musical theater style.

B: Exactly, it was a perfect combination.

Int: Do you have around thirty operas?

B: Around that, yes.

Int: Were any of your immediate family musicians?

B: No. I seem to have a gene that was not meant for me. A musical gene that slipped in there.

Int: That sounds like me although I did have an aunt who played 'by ear' on the piano.

B: That was my situation. I had an aunt who could play the piano. She taught me and she was also a singer, an amateur singer.

Int: Before *The Little Red Riding Hood*, had you already found that you had a natural ability, a talent for writing as well, particularly rhyme?

B: I found that all out in *Little Red Riding Hood*. I had no idea whether I could do it.

Int: Would you be able to name some of the companies that have commissioned you to write for them?

B: New York City Opera, Virginia Opera Theater, Cimmaron. I may have some written down: Detroit Opera, Manhattan School of Music (*That Maker of Illusions*).

I was commissioned to do other things but that's the operas.

Int: May I call you again if I have more questions.

B: Yes. It's not every day that a dissertation is written.

Int: Would you say that the *Songs of Perfect Propriety* are your most well known?

B: I don't know. They have been out of my life for such a long time.

Int: How do you feel about them now.

B: I listened to them as I was making the copy for you and I like them a lot and I think I couldn't do better. I can send you a glossy for publicity if you like.

Int: I wonder what you think of this: your songs combined with Dorothy Parker's writings would make a wonderful one-woman show.

B: It's not a show, it's a recital. But that is what happened out in the place where I redid an arrangement for different instrumentation.

Int: Did you know much about Dorothy Parker before you met her?

B: Nothing, absolutely nothing, except her writing.

Int: So you weren't aware of her drinking problem at all.

B: Nothing.

Int: I would have thought in choosing these poems, you would have known more about her.

B: Why, I don't know anything about Shakespeare. What do I have to know.

Int: I find it interesting that a man would choose Dorothy Parker poems.

B: I think, I have always been a feminist. I have always hated sexist jokes. Of course you can't go through life being a man and not hear thousands of sexist jokes, but to me they were very negative, like anti-Semitic humor. I don't appreciate it. I didn't think there would be anything unusual about it. I liked her poems and it was long before feminism became a controversial subject.

Int: She called herself a feminist in 1956, in a *Paris Review*.

B: She used the word feminist. That's very interesting. Maybe she knew Betty Friedan and they were cooking something up. Betty Friedan is still

around by the way. I see her at concerts. She's a music lover. Maybe I should ask her if she knew Dorothy Parker. The *Paris Review* is published in Paris.

Int: There's also a dissertation on women alcoholics. I think Dorothy Parker was very bold, out there, as far as what she said.

B: I think what she was trying to do was to be independent of a reliance on men which women sort of had to have until recently. Unless they could get married and be supported they had a pretty rough life.

Int: For the most part I think she led more of a man's life than a woman's.

B: I think you are right about that.

Int: Her long-term marriage, her husband took on the household role.

B: Was the bread winner.

Int: I appreciate your time. It's been fun. It even invades my dreams.

B: Don't hesitate to call again. Until then, happy dreams.

APPENDIX 2

General listing of vocal solo compositions by Seymour Barab

Art Song

- Airs and Fancies*. New York: Galaxy Music Co., 1988.
Seven songs, misc. authors, for high voice, piano or instrumental ensemble.
- Bagatelles*. New York: Galaxy Music Co. (ECS Publishing), 1979.
Eight songs, misc. authors, for high voice, recorder and guitar.
- Bawd Ballads*. New York: Seesaw Music Corp., 1995.
Ten songs, misc. authors, for high voice, piano or strings.
- Bits and Pieces*. New York: Seesaw Music Corp., 1993.
Nine songs for soprano, clarinet and piano.
- A Child's Garden of Verses, Volumes I and II*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1985.
Twenty-four songs, words by Robert L. Stevenson, for med voice, piano or instrumental ensemble.
- An Explanation*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1964.
Words by Walter Learned, for medium voice and piano.
- Four Songs*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc. 1955.
Four Songs, four poets, for medium voice and piano
- A Little Light Music*. New York: Seesaw Music Corp., 1998.
Five songs, words by composer, for soprano, clarinet (viola or cello) and piano.
- Lovers*. New York: Seesaw Music Corp., 1994.
Seven songs, words by Sir John Suckling, for mezzo-soprano, strings and piano.
- A Maid Me Loved*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1964.
Words by Patrick Hanney, for medium voice and piano.
- Moments Macabres*. New York: Galaxy Music Co., (ECS Publishing), 1981. From the Oxford Book of Light Verse.
Eight songs for voice and piano or instrumental ensemble.
- Parodies*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes. 1986. (As some traditional jump-rope rhymes might have been set to music by the masters.)
Six songs for high voice and piano.
- The Rivals*. Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Theodore Presser Co., 1971.
Four songs, words by James Stephens, for high voice and piano.
- Songs of Perfect Propriety, Volumes I and II*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes 1959, 1984. Words by Dorothy Parker.
Twenty-four songs for medium voice, piano or wind quintet.

(Approximately 200; half of which have been published.)

Cantata

Cosmos Cantata (Rest Eternal). New York: Seesaw Music Corp., 1995.
Text by Kurt Vonnegut, for soprano, tenor, baritone and orchestra.

Opera

Forty-one operas, mostly comic one-acts.

[Catalogue of compositions available from
<http://www.seymourbarab.com/catalogue.html>; Internet]