

Hermit Songs

Sung by Vera Much
Piano by Yoshiko Sato
Songs by Samuel Barber
Texts by various monks
Programs by Gweneth Asher

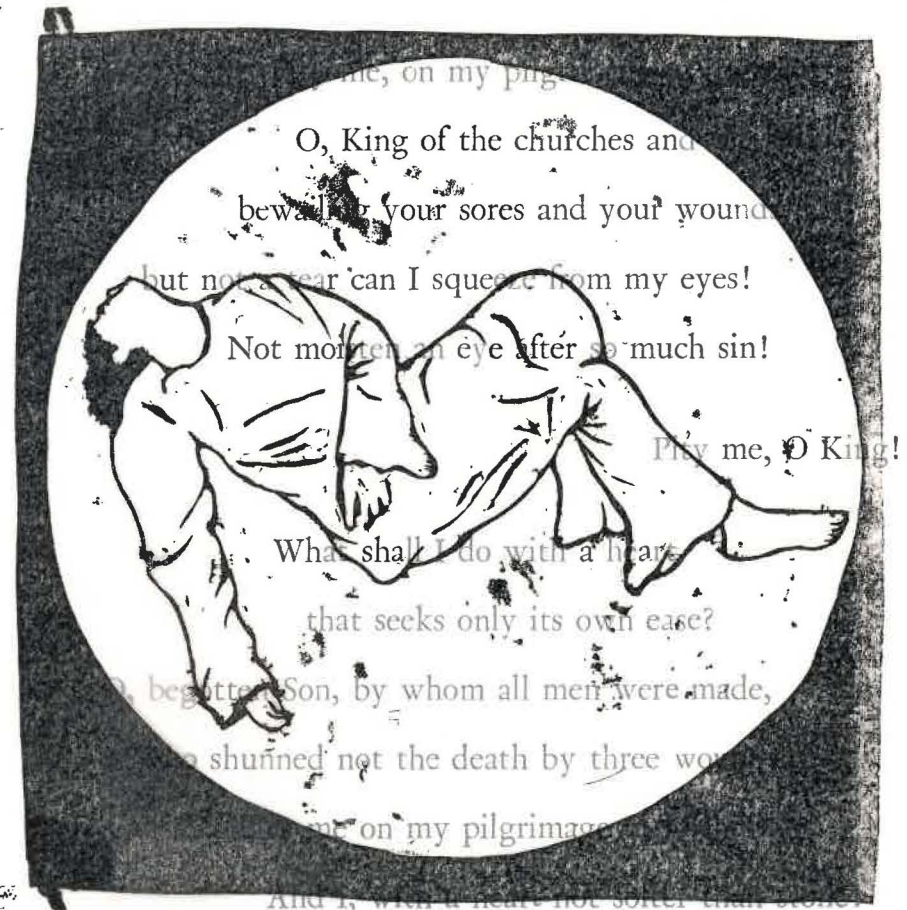
December 5, 2021
Deane Carriage Barn

Special Thanks to Tom Bogdan

I. At Saint Patrick's Purgatory

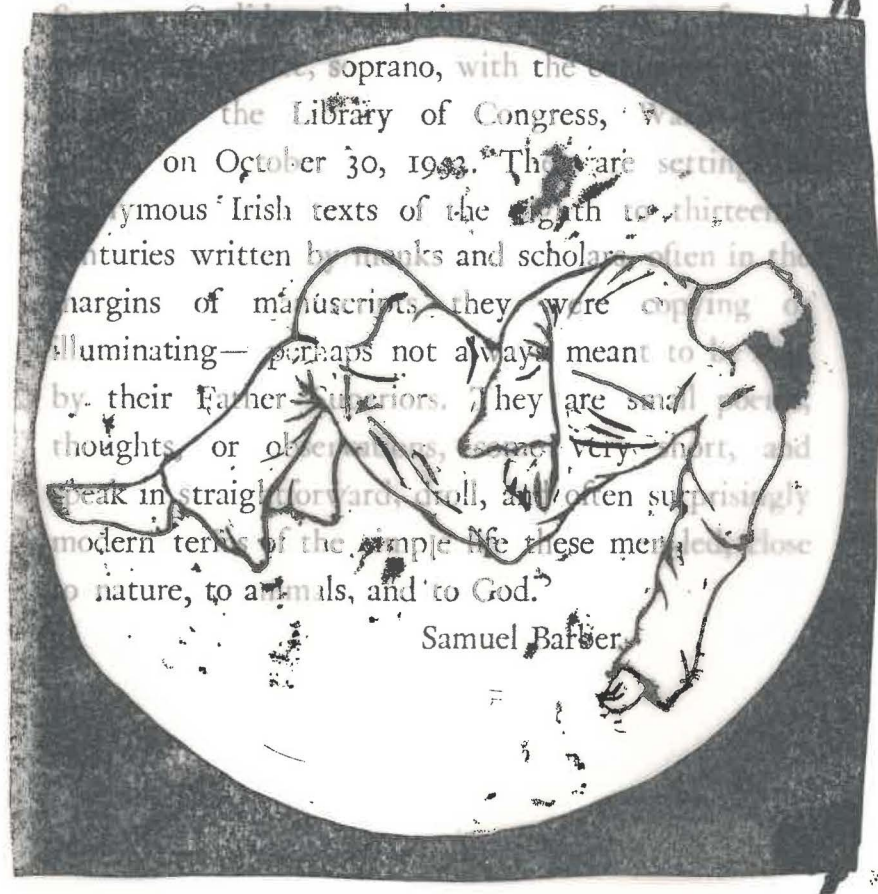
"The Hermit Songs, commissioned by the Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge Foundation, were first performed by Leontyne Price, soprano, with the composer at the piano, at the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., on October 30, 1953. They are settings of anonymous Irish texts of the eighth to thirteenth centuries written by monks and scholars, often in the margins of manuscripts they were copying or illuminating— perhaps not always meant to be seen by their Father Superiors. They are small poems, thoughts, or observations, some very short, and speak in straightforward, droll, and often surprisingly modern terms of the simple life these men led, close to nature, to animals, and to God.'

Samuel Barber



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"The Hermit Songs, commissioned by the Elizabeth



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I. At Saint Patrick's Purgatory

Pity me, on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg!

O, King of the churches and the bells

bewailing your sores and your wounds,

but not a tear can I squeeze from my eyes!

Not moisten an eye after so much sin!

Pity me, O King!

What shall I do with a heart

that seeks only its own ease?

O, begotten Son, by whom all men were made,

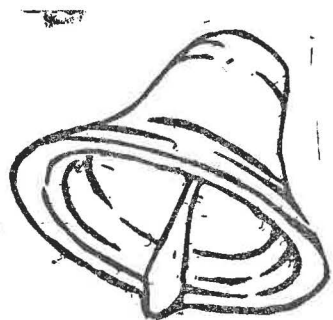
Who shunned not the death by three wounds,

Pity me on my pilgrimage to Loch Derg!

And I, with a heart not softer than stone!

II. Church Bell at Night

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



III. Saint Ita's Vision

'I will take nothing from my Lord,' said she,
 'unless He gives me His Son from Heaven
 in the form of a Baby that I may nurse Him.'
So, that Christ came down to her
 in the form of a Baby,
 and then, she said:

'Infant Jesus, at my breast,
 nothing in this world is true
 Save, O tiny nursling, You.

Infant Jesus at my breast,
 by my heart every night,
 You I nurse are not a churl,
 but were begot on Mary,
 the Jewess, by Heaven's light.

Infant Jesus, at my breast,
 What King is there but You who could,
 Give everlasting good?
 Wherefore I give my food...

Sing to Him, maidens, sing your best!

There is none
 that has such right to your song as Heaven's King
who, every night, is Infant Jesus, at my breast.'

IV. The Heavenly Banquet

I would like to have the men of Heaven
in my own house,
with vats of good cheer laid out for them!

I would like to have the three Mary's
their fame is so great.

I would like people, from every corner of Heaven.

I would like them to be cheerful in their drinking!

I would like to have Jesus sitting here among them.

I would like a great lake of beer for the King of Kings.

I would like to be watching Heaven's family
drinking it through all eternities.

V. The Crucifixion



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

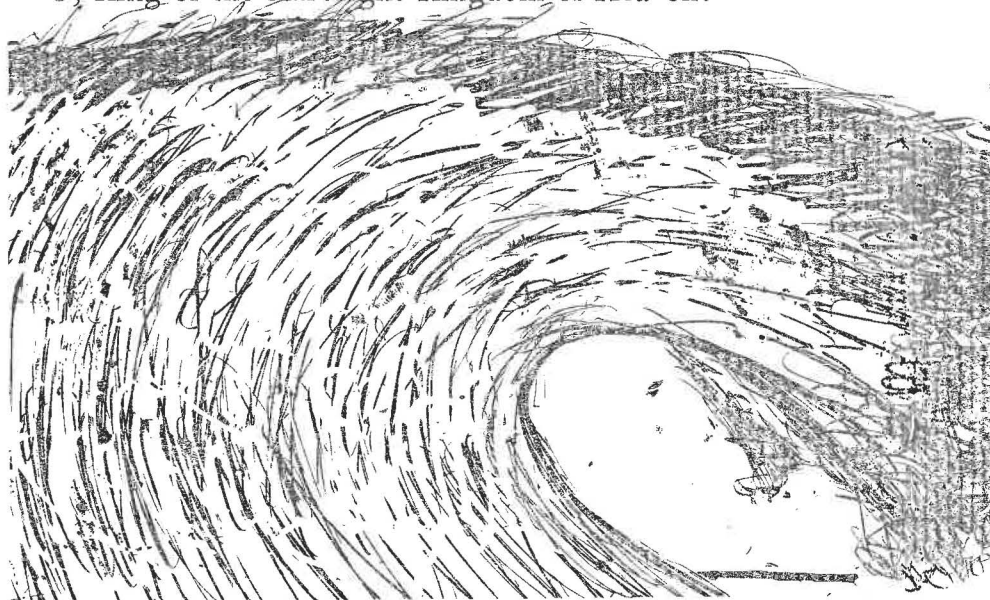
Never shall lament cease because of that.
It was like the parting of day from night.

Ah, sore was the suffering borne!
by the body of Mary's Son...
but sorer still, to Him was the grief,
which for His sake,
came upon His Mother.



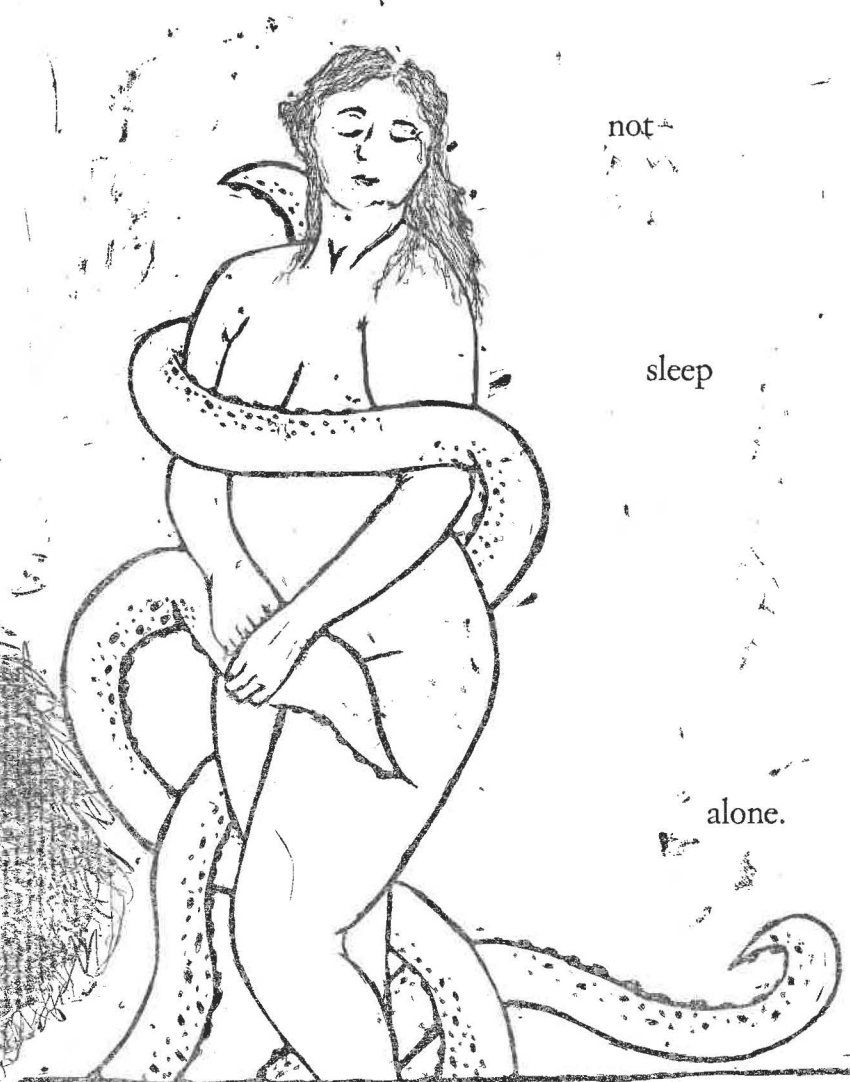
VI. Sea Snatch

It has broken us,
it has crushed us,
it has drowned us,
O, King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven!
The wind has consumed us,
swallowed us,
as timber is devoured by crimson fire from Heaven!
It has broken us,
it has crushed us,
it has drowned us,
O, King of the starbright Kingdom of Heaven!



VII. Promiscuity

I do not know with whom Edan will sleep,
but I do know that fair Edan will

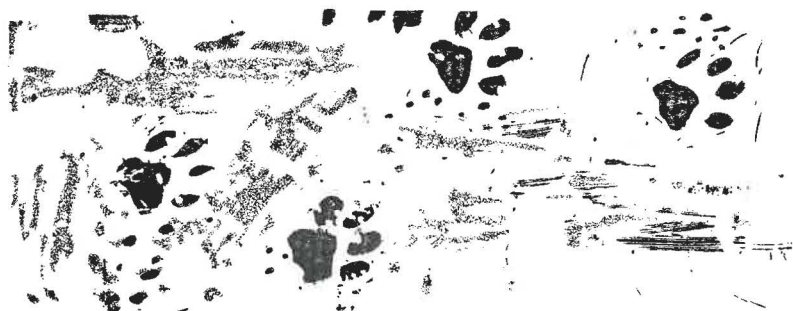


not

sleep

alone.

VIII. The Monk and his Cat



Pangur, white Pangur,

how happy we are!

Alone together,

scholar and cat.

Each has his own work to do daily—

For you, it is hunting,

for me, study.

Your shining eye watches the wall,

My feeble eye is fixed on a book.

You rejoice when your claws entrap a mouse!

I rejoice when my mind fathoms a problem.

Pleased with his own art,

neither hinders the other;

thus, we live ever, without tedium and envy...

Pangur, white Pangur,

how happy we are!

Alone together,

scholar and cat.

Pangur, white Pangur,

how happy we are.



IX. The Praises of God

How foolish the man
who does not raise his voice,
and praise, with joyful words,
as he alone can,
Heaven's High King!
To Whom the light birds,
with no soul but air,
all day, everywhere,
laudation sing!



X. The Desire for Hermitage

Ah!

To be all alone,
in a little cell with nobody near

Me;

beloved that pilgrimage,
before the last pilgrimage to Death.

Singing the passing hours to cloudy Heaven;
feeding upon dry bread,
and water from the cold spring.

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

Ah!

To be all alone,
in a little cell,
to be alone,
all alone...

Alone I came into the world,

alone I shall go from it.

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all alone...

Alone

alone

