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**Three Songs by John Duke,
Poems by Edwin Arlington Robinson
*Luke Havergal, Miniver Cheevy, Richard Cory***

by

Sang Jun Yoon

B. M., Manhattan School of Music

M.M., Manhattan School of Music

Performance Research Document

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Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
College of Music

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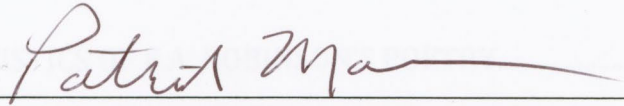
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Sang Jun Yoon

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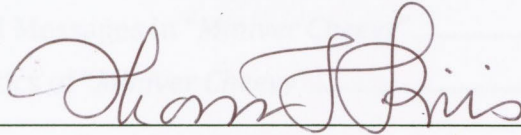
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Introduction

John Duke is a composer who strongly believed that in a good song words became assimilated by the music. Although John Duke was an active pianist, having much knowledge of keyboard music, he devoted himself to writing art songs. The reason why his compositions include so few piano works and many songs is that he had a core belief, i.e., vocal utterance is the basis of the music's mystery.

I, as a singer, discovered that Duke's choices for the texts of songs are tasteful. The range in mood of the poems that he used for his songs runs from sprightly wit to biting irony, sometimes to unabashed romanticism or even to a meditation. Most of his songs create a mood based on meanings of the texts, and Duke used the music to support the stories of the texts.

The poems that I would like to present in my performance research document are by Edwin Arlington Robinson: "*Luke Havergal*", "*Miniver Cheevy*" and "*Richard Cory*". These quite serious poems depict ironies as well as human emotions in a broken society. John Duke did not follow the traditions in composition of American art songs in the twentieth century, but created his own musical language, a great mixture of sounds of traditional European classical music and sophisticated modern American poems.

I would like to discuss the general styles of Robinson's poetry, emphasizing poetic meanings of three songs and the musical characteristics of each setting by John Duke.

General characteristics of E.A. Robinson's poetry

The great achievement of Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935) in American poetry is his establishment of a relationship between very traditional, nineteenth century poetic characteristics and very modern features of American poetry. Using dynamic language, most Romantic poets of the nineteenth century illuminated live actions or situations as topics of their poetry. In contrast, 20th century poetry is characterized by experimental writing techniques that border on the bizarre. Robinson transformed characteristics of nineteenth century poetry (egocentric perspectives, the depletion of impulse) into his own modern poetic values.

The period of industrial boom in the United States known as the Gilded Age started in the late nineteenth century. Increased industrialism during this time forced Americans into a busier and more preoccupied lifestyle that contributed to alienation of individuals and the breakdown of traditional family and societal relationships. This sometimes even led to what could be called "broken" community environments. Robinson was a poet who was interested in societal failure,¹ as well as the conflicting relationship between materialistic wealth and human soul. In this capacity, he also paid specific attention to people who were alienated or disconnected from society.

Transcendentalism, the most popular intellectual movement of America in the nineteenth century, is reflected in the poems of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, the main representative poets of the century. The core belief of the transcendentalist movement is the inherent goodness of both people and nature. Emerson emphasized the

¹ James Dickey, *Babel to Byzantium: Poet and Poetry Now* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1968), p.221.

goodness of the human spirit in his essay, "Self-Reliance," while Walt Whitman brought out egocentrism in his poem, "Song of Myself" from *Leaves of Grass*, his magnum opus. They both believed that people were unique and good in society, and had almost a religious relationship to nature. In his poetic critique of transcendentalism, Robinson shows that egocentrism is not a way to make people good. Instead he preaches that the only way to live is to communicate and to do work. The town of Tilbury, a fictional town in the poems of Robinson, demonstrates the failure of relationships in a society as well as the destruction of community. The titles of many of his poems appear to represent unimportant or isolated people. These include "Richard Cory," "Miniver Cheevy," "Luke Havergal," "Cliff Klingenhagen," and "Reuben Bright."

Scholar Roy Harvey Pearce notes in an article,

In the 1880's and after, as the promise of American life appeared uncertain and confused, so did the promise of American Poetry. The American poet could no longer afford to figure himself as no more (and no less) than an unreconstructed Adam who had only to behold his world in order to bring it alive and make it worthy of the beholding.²

The sense of wholeness, freedom, and energy of life in society allowed poets to express his/her instinctive hopes in life with a strong sense of confidence. Due to encroaching industrialism, however, the newly reconstructed American society of the period bred a high level of depersonalization and mechanization. With this situation, individuals en masse often felt frustrated, and more and more people did not relate with their society. Instead they became outsiders to it, and as such people lacked the confidence to declare their position or status in their community, as well as a means of communicating with others in society. People also began to lose their ways of communication. Pearce notes,

² Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry* (Princeton, N.J : Princeton University Press, 1961), p.253.

“The poet could only name what he witnessed, not transform it. He was in the position of the first Adam after the fall, cast out of his new world.”³ In this cultural environment, amidst this societal turmoil, Robinson deliberately put himself in the position of a societal outsider, and expressed satirical, pessimistic opinions in his poetry.

Another important facet of Robinson’s writing is that he was the only poet of the time who paid profound attention to people, and made their failures, psychology and motivations living themes of his poetry. The main characters who appear in his poetry are alienated, frustrated with society, and unable to convey their states of mind or what they confront in community. James Dickey has noted, “Robinson writes as an outsider; in this world no one is on the inside. Robinson’s work is one vast attempt to tell the stories that no one can tell, for no one can know their real meaning, their real intention, or even whether such exists, though it persistently appears to do.”⁴ In this way, readers have no clue as to the states of mind of the frustrated people in Robinson’s poems. Therefore, they are forced to use their imaginations and infer from the events of the poem. Pearce explains, “the poems are not really expressive of the psyches of their protagonists; rather they are expressive of the poet’s, and putatively the reader’s mode of understanding them.”⁵ This is why Robinson’s poems are always written in the third person. Pearce said also, “When they are in the first (person), they are still somehow in the third, consisting of the speeches of actors who are quite self-conscious as regards the masks they are

³ Pearce, *The Continuity of American Poetry*, p.253.

⁴ James Dickey, *Babel to Byzantium: Poet and Poetry Now* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1968), pp. 215-216.

⁵ Pearce, p. 260.

assuming.”⁶ This indicates that even when it appears that the characters in the poem are speaking in the first person, they are, in fact, in the third.

Robinson describes the world of the frustrated people in his poems using a classical pattern of English writing. Although his poetry is at times prosaic and lengthy, most verses of his poems are very pithy and direct. He controls rhymes and meter, and uses blank verse and sonnets, indications of a classical style of writing.

We, as readers, can also observe much allusion in the poems of Robinson. Because of hidden or uncertain messages in his poems, readers might imagine or guess at various ways of understanding them. Robinson does not force specific meanings or messages on his readers. Instead, he allows readers to approach his poetry with abstraction and supposition. For instance, Robinson treats the suffering of frustrated people with an unaffected attitude in a deliberate, matter-of-fact and unpretentious tone.⁷ Unpretentious tone and a casual speech style also emphasize the suffering of bewildered children and bring out a more ironic world. This characteristic of his writing is most evident in his poems, “*Richard Cory*”, “*The Mill*”, and “*Reuben Bright*”. They all sound as if they are dramatic events or attitudes observed by bewildered children. Without giving any clues or tips to readers, bewildered children do not do what the readers can expect at all. This perspective is perhaps symptomatic of modern society. Without a doubt, Robinson’s poems are not lyrical but are dramatic and extreme. Robinson’s frequent use of allusion is also one of the most important indications of his modern poetic style. The many possible reactions to the uncertain messages Robinson brings out in his poems draw the readers in different directions because each reader has an individual way

⁶ Pearce, p. 260.

⁷ Dictionary of Literary Biography, American Poets: 1880~1945, 3rd series, Part 2. Ed. Peter Quartermain(Detroit, MI : Gale Research Company), pp. 370-71.

of understanding. On later reflection, Robinson's poems may remind them of their troubles, their trials, dramatic events in their past, and so provoke them to consider more deeply the meaning of their own lives. Later on, it will remind them of their troubles, life, and dramatic events, and compare with what those mean in their life. By reading these poems, readers are forced to identify the unsolved problems in their own modern lives.

Poetic meanings and messages in "*Luke Havergal*"

Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There where the vines cling crimson on the wall,
And in the twilight wait for what will come.
The leaves will whisper there of her, and some,
Like flying words, will strike you as they fall;
But go, and if you listen she will call.
Go to the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies
To rift the fiery night that's in your eyes;
But there, where western glooms are gathering,
The dark will end the dark, if anything:
God slays Himself with every leaf that flies,
And hell is more than half of paradise.
No, there is not a dawn in eastern skies—
In eastern skies.

Out of a grave I come to tell you this,
Out of a grave I come to quench the kiss
That flames upon your forehead with a glow
That blinds you to the way that you must go.
Yes, there is yet one way to where she is,
Bitter, but one that faith may never miss.
Out of a grave I come to tell you this—
To tell you this.

There is the western gate, Luke Havergal,
There are the crimson leaves upon the wall.
Go, for the winds are tearing them away,—
Nor think to riddle the dead words they say,
Nor any more to feel them as they fall;
But go, and if you trust her she will call.
There is the western gate, Luke Havergal—
Luke Havergal.

Robinson's own personal love, a hopeless love for the beautiful Emma Shepherd who eventually became his sister-in law, is a theme that can be read throughout, although it is never described clearly by the poet. Originally, the poem had four stanzas. The

composer, John Duke, however, omits the second stanza and only uses three stanzas as a text for his piece. The song lyrics paint a dark and gloomy atmosphere, a feeling of dead love reflected mournfully. A first impression of the poem suggests a state of a serious depression. At the same time, however, it also surprisingly lets readers feel hope for Luke to find his love or for him to be lifted out of his depression. The poem includes a discussion between Luke and a narrator who indicates what to do and where to go. The role of the narrator changes progressively through the first stanza to the fourth stanza. At the beginning, the narrator invites Luke to go to the “western gate” to find his desire, and then, in the second stanza gives Luke the comfort as he decides to kill himself.

In the third stanza, the narrator becomes more active. Phrases such as “out of a grave” or “quench the kiss” might give us the idea that the narrator is Death himself. In the final stanza, Death hurries Luke towards the final action. Death also pushes Luke not to think of anything else besides his own death.

Ideas of what and where the “western gate” is are never clearly described at the beginning. The true meaning of the “western gate” is that it is not an actual gate, but instead a symbol of death. The East is the site of dawn, sunrise, and day’s beginning, so it makes sense that the West would be a metaphor for the end, for final peace, night and death. This poem expounds the idea that what a person really hopes for can actually happen beyond the grave. Using symbolism, the “western gate,” an unclear and unrealistic place, becomes a powerful tool to describe a place after death. The poem implies that death can be the only way to find his hopes and true love. Luke’s suicide, symbolized by his arrival at the “western gate,” is progressively described and developed by imagery of the man who loses his love.

Robinson creates beautiful assonantal rhymes with Havergal/wall/fall/call and skies/eyes/flies/paradise/skies. Using commands, such as “But go,” and “Go to the western gate,” he gives the reader a sense that this poem is actually a hidden conversation between Luke and some sort of absolute being. The poem uses powerful imagery, such as “western gate,” “falling,” “grave,” in order to negotiate a deathly mood and add to the dreaded atmosphere of having to make the decision for suicide.

Musical Characteristics of “*Luke Havergal*” by John Duke

The book *American songs, American Art Song, and American Poetry*, states, “This theme of lovers being reunited in death provided the occasion for Duke’s composition of one of his finest Romantic ballads which offers a gratifying vehicle to singer and pianist at the same time that it captures the brooding passion of the text.”⁸ In order to express the profound meanings of the text in “*Luke Havergal*,” John Duke set up a clear distinction between his styles of musical composition, depending on each stanza and the various voices of the speakers. I would like to analyze a few of these elements.

A. Omission of a stanza

Originally, the poem consisted of four stanzas, but John Duke omits the second stanza in his setting. Typically, composers do not rearrange parts of a poem (as opposed to using the poem in its entirety). It is apparent that Duke believed omitting the second stanza would make the message of the song more succinct.

⁸ Ruth C, Friedberg, and Robin, Fisher. *American Art Song and American Poetry* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press), p.115.

The song is clearly divided into three parts according to the different speakers in the text, by using different harmonies, and even different rhythms. For dramatic reasons that aid in the development of the story, Duke omitted the second stanza. Through his setting of the poem, he paid attention to a drama that is given by each stanza, being faithful to the text.

B. Structure

The structure of the song is A (mm.1~48)-B (mm. 49~86)-A' (mm. 87~end), a form that is both simple and effective for the setting of this poem. Although there are two A sections (the beginning and last stanzas), the roles of these two sections are clearly very different. With the same E-flat Major harmony and repeated phrase “western gate”, the first and last stanzas look visually similar. However, the intensity of the text, the commitment level of the narrator in the conversation, and the harmonic texture of the piano part support Duke’s musical intentions. He uses gentle and simple melodic lines as well as a light harmonic texture to express a gentle invitation to the “western gate” at the beginning.

In contrast, the second “A” section is characterized by a more powerful and thicker harmonic texture along with a short insertion of C minor, a musical sign meant to indicate the messenger’s voice. The messenger’s voice also allows listeners to predict something that indication about last command or suicide commitment as a confirmation for the character.

The B section, which is set in G# minor, clearly represents feelings of messenger's urgency, and the text includes a straightforward conversation to Luke.

C. Piano part

John Duke's writing for the piano part in this song seems to express Luke Havergal's mystical ecstasy. The A sections are characterized by melodic phrases in the accompaniment that continuously take over the melodic line of the vocal part as if representing a real voice and a resounding echo (call and response). The introduction begins with neo-Romantic figurations⁹ that give the effect of an ongoing melody, as if music is showing the direction for the "western gate" in the text. The piano part in the first stanza simply supports the vocal line. It also blends with the vocal phrases to present a smooth flowing melody. Passages that are characterized by parallel thirds, octaves, and widely spread, broken chord patterns¹⁰ seem to represent Luke's unsettled mind and insecure mentality in the second and third sections. Harmonically, the second section changes frequently without giving the effect of constantly and urgently moving forward. The piano accompaniment in the last section is written in an operatic style that uses a heavier harmonic texture along with significant dynamic growth. The drama of the text at the end is expressed by a building of the harmonic texture towards a climax.

⁹ Friedberg, and Fisher, p. 116.

¹⁰ Friedberg, and Fisher, p. 116.

D. Clear writing styles for different voices

This song possesses more musical elements that are more indicative of operatic style than a typical art song usually has. John Duke introduces a tuneful melody at the beginning like an overture or an aria, highlighting the solo melodic line of the vocal part. The second part of the song is symptomatic of techniques associated with narrative style of songs in the twentieth century vocal music in its use of conversational speaking patterns. The last part sounds like a final operatic chorus that uses bigger dynamics, dense harmonies, as well as a wider range of vocal lines.

E. Use of rhythm

John Duke uses ties across bar lines to stretch various phrases of the poem as well as to add continuous drive to the music. He initially employs ties on the triplet rhythmic patterns on words such as “Go”(m.9) and “There”(m.13), employing an agogic effect to accent these important words through the music. These words are thus emphasized as keywords to suggest a directional goal, i.e. the place where Luke Havergal should be, the “Western gate”. For the words like “Flames”(m.57), “Yes”(m.65), “Faith”(m.70), and “Tell”(m.78), he also used ties that carry over to the next strong beats and highlight the importance of those words to the context of the poem. His use of eighth rests on the first strong beats in the piano accompaniment of the first stanza creates a sense of unassertive time, a hammering beat that appears to lag behind. It provides a point of departure that allows the melody to flow better. In contrast, the piano accompaniment in the last

stanza emits a stronger sense of time; it is more active and energized in an effort to express the main character's confirmation of his fate.

Miniver Cherry, child of mine,
Crawls back while he gazes at the sunset,
He weeps that he was ever born,
And he laments no more.

Miniver lived the days of old
When worlds were bright and stars were pouring,
The vision of a warrior laid
Would set him dancing.

Miniver gazed for what was real,
And dreamed, and wept from his longing,
He dreamed of Uther and Lancelot,
And Piers the knight.

Miniver mourned the days of old
That made so early a name of legend,
He mourned Ravana, hero of the name,
And all a fragment.

Miniver loved the Mallik,
Albeit he had never seen one,
He would have served him proudly
Could he have been one.

Miniver cursed the conquerors
And eyed a stall-fork with loathing,
He cursed the medieval grace
Of iron chains.

Miniver gazed for what he sought,
But was surprised was he within it,
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
And thought of it.

Miniver Cherry, born too late,
Scratched his head and left on the stage,
Miniver wept, and called it fate,
And wept no more.

Poetic meanings and messages in “*Miniver Cheevy*”

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,
Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;
He wept that he was ever born,
And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old
When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;
The vision of a warrior bold
Would set him dancing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,
And dreamed, and rested from his labors;
He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,
And Priam’s neighbors.

Miniver mourned the ripe renown
That made so many a name so fragrant;
He mourned Romance, now on the town,
And Art, a vagrant.

Miniver loved the Medici,
Albeit he had never seen one;
He would have sinned incessantly
Could he have been one.

Miniver cursed the commonplace
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the mediæval grace
Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
But sore annoyed was he without it;
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
Scratched his head and kept on thinking;
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,
And kept on drinking.

A real interest of Robinson was the true human condition. To him, the real world in which he lived was corrupt and became a place of alienation as time went by. The strange name “*Miniver Cheevy*” suggests by its sound someone isolated from society and also implies an image of social inhospitality. The prefix “Mini” gives the reader a sense of weakness and diminution, while we could interpret the significance of “Cheevy” in more than one way. For example, Robinson might give us the image of being poor, like the word “Cheap.” We may also interpret the word “chivvy” out of “Cheevy,” which would suggest the chase or scurry of mouse-like behavior. Miniver Cheevy lives in the fictional town of Tilbury, a community modeled after Robinson’s hometown of Gardiner, Maine.

In this poem there are cruel criticisms of the world, along with regrets for what we as a society have done so far. Through the cynical, sarcastic mindset of the narrator in the poem, we, as readers, can imagine Robinson’s social perspectives. Eight short verses in the poem work as short narratives or monologues. According to James Matthew Wilson¹¹, “He distinguished himself for the plainness of his speech, its colloquial, flat, and sometimes obscure abstractions moving across the lines as if indifferent to where they ends”. Each verse has connotative meanings of what Robinson convinces us is better living conditions.

The first stanza expresses a blank despair. It introduces the “child of scorn,” whose true identity might be inferred as being Robinson himself, as his own birth was to be unwanted son¹² for his family unfortunately. The second stanza describes what he weeps for in the first stanza, as Miniver loved the “days of old”. The third stanza can be

¹¹ James Wilson, *The Violent and the Fallen* (Georgetown, Kentucky: Finishing Line Press, 2013)

¹² Friedberg, and Fisher, p. 116.

understood to illustrate an ideal escape of reality, as the narrator realizes that Miniver (perhaps the poet himself) is dreaming of life rather than living it. From the third stanza through to the sixth the ironies increase: there are certain ancient things that he is longing for – Thebes, Camelot, Priam, Troy and the Medici – all distant and illusory, in contrast to the mundane reality of Tilbury. In the fourth stanza, “the ripe renown” implies that Miniver mourns the lack of heroes, and mourning for romance and art also expresses that he holds the past only as a good memory, which he never actually experiences except in fantasy. In the sixth stanza, he finds a khaki suit, modern clothing, distasteful and longs for clothing of medieval period. “The gold he sought” in the seventh stanza implies that he is still working to earn a living without any motivation, disliking how he is doing to survive. In the eighth stanza, Miniver relies on drink to lose himself in a dream world of the past with no connection to his modern daily life.

Brutally honest realism and naturalism are the poetic characteristics of Robinson’s “*Miniver Cheevy*”. Realistic view of death, living and reasons for the human condition are described by his poetic sense of writing. Miniver’s delusion is pitiable, but made it comical Robinson’s derisive tone.

“*Miniver Cheevy*” is written symmetrically in eight four-line stanzas. In each stanza, the first and third lines have masculine end rhyme, and the second and fourth lines have feminine end rhyme. The beginnings of second, third and fourth stanzas are parallel with the beginnings of the fifth, sixth and seventh stanzas rhetorically. In addition to this, the eighth stanza’s opening is also rhetorically parallel with the first stanza’s opening.

Musical Characteristics of “*Miniver Cheevy*” by John Duke

John Duke’s setting of “*Miniver Cheevy*” is a unique set of variations based on one original, 8-bar theme that implies Miniver Cheevy’s many emotions. John Duke rarely changes a harmonic progression in each variation. Instead, he changes rhythmic figures for different variation, he indicates clear tempo markings and specific directions for moods of how each variation should be sung. He also emphasizes word paintings equally for the vocal part and as well as the piano part.

A. Passacaglia form

John Duke sets *Miniver Cheevy* in a form of passacaglia, a form that became popular in the Baroque era but originated as a dance style in Spain. Later on, it developed as an independent instrumental music. It is usually characterized by a duple meter in four to eight measures as well as a stable basso ostinato. While the basso ostinato provides a steady harmonic progression, the upper voices follow the progression with varying melodic lines. Later on, it developed as an independent instrumental music.

With a few exceptions, Duke maintains the same basso ostinato and harmonic progression through each variation while using different rhythmic patterns each time. With this compositional technique, Duke succeeded in describing the uniqueness of each verse.

B. Narrative vocal phrases

The ending of each variation audibly stand out in contrast to the rest of the section; Duke appears to want his audience to hear the lyrics at the end of each variation more clearly by setting the vocal part in more of a speech-like, narrative pattern (as opposed to a tuneful melody). These narrative components are emphasized because the lyrics involved are especially important for the listeners to understand the various character of each variation. They also act as links between variations, connecting two distinct sonic events.

C. Clear description in tempo markings and moods

John Duke asks for many rapid dynamic changes and sets up specific tempos. Like a scene change, he requires abrupt changes between the variations. Because of specific requests of tempo and moods, eight different stories stand out clearly and become independent. This variation form with various tempos and moods is certainly appropriate to express the unstable status of Miniver Cheevy's mind. Providing a specific expressive adjective for each variation (Var1-Melancholy, Var2-Sprightly, Var3-Dreamy, Var4-Dolorous, Var5-Grandiose, Var6-Indignant, Var7-Puzzled, Var8-Tipsy), helps the singer interpret each mood or message through the variations.

D. Lack of down beat

First vocal lines in all variations lack a strong down beat. The piano accompaniment in most of variations, except 2, 4, and 5, is missing a first strong

beat as well. John Duke uses a musical sighing gesture to describe the mind-set of a character who still misses olden days. In the first measures of each variation there are quarter rests on first strong beats and triplet rhythms with the word “Miniver”. This omission of the first beat in every verse seems to describe musically Miniver’s despair and unhappiness.

E. Sound effect for weeping

In the theme and epilogue, there is a certain melodic figure, a full chord on second beat, then, he makes the following chord drop down half step or a full step from the second beat. This sounds like an image of weeping or sighing, even regrets. Slow movements (Var.1, Var.3 and Var.7) are written with descending melodic lines that create a passive and sorrowful atmosphere for performers and listeners. John Duke applied simple compositional ideas, but the ideas he used strongly control each variation to keep producing specific moods individually in each variation.

Poetic meanings and messages in "*Richard Cory*"

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

This poem, about a rich man who ultimately commits suicide, is essentially a story of how appearances can be deceiving. Robinson not only gives us the thoughts and reactions of the townspeople who watch him enviously every day, but also rich descriptions of Richard Cory that lead the readers to think he is the ideal, perfect human being. What Robinson wants to communicate and emphasize in this poem is the irony that one's outward appearance is not the only part of a human being that shows other people who one truly is. In the poem Robinson never hints at the relationship that Richard Cory might have had, with lovers, family or even friends. Through the poem, he might want to convince about companionship that has the most value for people as well as touches of humanity.

The first stanza shows a clear distinction between “we” and “he,” indicating the two different classes of people in the town. The first line, “Whenever Richard Cory went down town, we people on the pavement looked at him” also tells us that his appearance must be different from the people in downtown. The middle class, the working people, resides in down town to do their business for living, and Richard is clearly a very important person for people living there.

In the second stanza, the speaker of the poem introduces Richard as a gentle and kind person to the townspeople with whom he meets. His attitudes and behavior, to the townspeople, are neither arrogant nor bossy, and yet he still makes people nervous when they meet him because of the awareness of Richard’s wealth and status.

The third stanza explains not only his wealth but also his apparently successful life and attractive personality, with the phrase “clean favored and imperially slim”. It also informs us that Richard was well educated, knowledgeable, and respectable in the eyes of the townspeople. They, in turn, envy what Richard has and appears to be, and they wish to have what Richard has.

In the fourth stanza, the poet mentions again the difference between a common class of people who struggle for money and admire wealth, and Richard Cory, the man who has everything, yet later kills himself.

The poem avoids poetic devices such as metaphors, simile, or symbolism in favor of simple description saving the information about his suicide until the very last line. The poetic language is rich and still gives readers very strong imagery with which to think about the truth of life. They might be puzzled to find a reason for his suicide. The focus on “why” might be the hidden goal for Robinson and it is implicitly addressed from the

beginning of the poem but never answered. In other words, cumulative silence¹³ in this poem, one of poetic styles Robinson used, provides unclear ironies. Robinson avoids giving us any hints whatsoever about Richard Cory's motives, we can guess. The ways of describing "*Richard Cory*" imply an irony: the apparently perfect man in every way of living, Richard Cory, is not perfect at all in how he felt about himself. Robinson also lets readers feel sympathy with Richard Cory's life. They are forced to consider the true meaning of life and death.

Musical Characteristics of "*Richard Cory*" by John Duke

John Duke's rhythmic scheme and his use of keys support the narrative style of the poetry, a representative characteristic of Robinson's writing. Rather than using abrupt changes in rhythms and harmony in the piano accompaniment, Duke lets the piano part keep a steady motion independently of the voice. The vocal part is also written in a smooth flowing motion like a narration. Through three songs, "*Luke Harvergal*", "*Miniver Cheevy*" and "*Richard Cory*", John Duke employed "pianism" that was brought out at first time in his song writing. The piano part of "*Richard Cory*" is an example of how John Duke creates variety in his pianistic musical language with some realistic examples of text painting on important words in the text.

A. Rhythmic scheme

There are two different rhythmic patterns included in both the piano part and vocal part. The 6/8 time of the piano accompaniment figure sounds very simple

¹³ Dickey, p. 230.

yet elegant as it reminds the listener of Richard Cory's sophisticated personality, his successful social status, and fine appearance. The 2/4 figures in the vocal melody, which is set against the 6/8 figures, present somewhat plain and unattractive music. These figures might be an example to describe how townspeople feel when they meet Richard Cory. The juxtaposition of 6/8 and 2/4 thus becomes a powerful musical tool employed by Duke to express the two vastly different viewpoints of the people in town.

In the middle part, when the text says "fluttered"(m. 46) and "glittered,"(m.50) Duke's accented sixteenth notes in the vocal melody provide abrupt and unpredictable musical agitation. This might also highlight for the listeners the envious relationship between Richard Cory and the townspeople. In addition to these unexpected rhythms in the vocal part, two measures are filled up with twelve sixteenth notes as an ascending motion in the piano part that finally stops when the text says "glittered." This ongoing rhythmic pattern builds up musical tension to emphasize how the townspeople admire everything what Richard Cory has. In addition to these two examples of using sixteenth notes, the most powerful example, "bullet"(m.90), is written in vocal part at the end of song. Without any accompaniment, Duke uses two sixteenth notes on the downbeat, unpredictably but purposefully creating a surprising but intense and shocking mood of abrupt death right at the very end of a song that has thus far not been centered on the idea of death at all. The overall effect of this at the end of the piece is to ensure the understanding that Richard Cory's appearance has been deceiving to us for the entirety of the song until his untimely death.

John Duke also writes more syncopated rhythmic patterns in the piano part as transitions to a new key. These give us rhythmic and harmonic tension in the transitions and let us know that there is or will be a visual scene change. Duke puts ties over the weak beats in order to allow the musical phrases to connect smoothly while also building up the dynamics to indicate clear entrances for new sections.

B. Tonal areas

At the time when John Duke wrote "*Richard Cory*", he seems to have changed his song writing style. Before 1944, experimental and harmonically complex music writing was characteristic of his style. This included atonality, dissonant harmonies, irregular rhythms, chromatic scales, and unique rhythms. Between 1944 and 1948, Duke seemed to return to a more traditional style of song writing, using tuneful melodies, clear rhythms, and tonal key areas. "*Richard Cory*" has three tonal areas, Bb Major (mm.1~24) – A Major (mm.51~54) – Db Major (mm.59~end). Unlike the beginning (Bb Major) and ending sections (Db Major), there are a few modulating bridge passages in the middle section. These modulations eventually confirm a clear A Major section and support the narrative style of the melody. The text of "*Richard Cory*" is very serious and perhaps not a typical topic for an art song. Duke's use of a solid tonality as well as clear progression of key signatures allows the listener to concentrate more on the severity of the text itself.

C. Subtle word painting

The range of Duke's use of word painting throughout the song is very broad. For example, the aforementioned contrast between the two different time signatures in the vocal and piano part is already a sonic representation of the conflict between how the townspeople admire Richard and how Richard feels about himself. Rather than decorating some important words with special harmonies and unusual rhythms, John Duke brings out much broader and more fundamental musical elements to convince us of his word painting skills. The tremulous rhythmic pattern that is given in the piano part before the word "glittered" creates an image for townspeople's envy when they meet Richard Cory. Multiple grace notes in the piano part reconfirm this and remind us of the image of being glittered even in the short piano interlude.

Syncopated rhythms that occur frequently in the piano interludes provide sounds that are noble and elegant, and musically describe Cory's high social position, his formal appearance, and his attitude.

Conclusion

John Duke used classical style of musical composition in his setting, whereas his texts by Robinson are modern and experimental poetry. His musical languages in this setting include conventional tonal practice, expressive tone color, colorful harmony with an expansive pianism and expanded range of rhythms, dynamics and tempo. These elements that were influenced by the styles of art songs in Europe from the nineteenth century, and later he continued to use these in most of his subsequent art songs. Robinson's poetry is not straightforward in its meanings. Representative compositional methods of the twentieth century, such as polytonality, serial procedure, improvisation, elements from jazz, and even mixed meter do not often appear in John Duke's settings of Robinson's work. Instead, John Duke emphasizes the genteel poetry by making his music more classical, avoiding *avant garde* and complex musical elements. In order to create a successful marriage of music and poetry, John Duke did not ignore the musical contexts that are familiar to our ears. He maintained these as a trademark of his sung works throughout his career.

One of John Duke's most powerful tools to express Robinson's poetry was his use of the piano part. He tried as much as possible to make the piano an independent voice in order to provide additional meaning to each piece. As an accomplished pianist, John Duke paid full attention to the piano part so it could be heard with more feeling of sensitivity and completeness, rather than simply as an accompaniment to the voice part. The metaphorical expressions that are inherent in Robinson's poetry are well described by the piano part.

John Duke also paid careful attention to elements of poetry, such as sounds, rhythms, meaning of the entire lines, stanzas, and subtext. Duke understood that as the twentieth century progressed, the listeners' acceptance of realism worked against the old romantic poetry. Although he admitted much value of the realism in poetry and brought it into his musical setting, he did not experiment to show off modernistic techniques in his composition. He also used the rhythmic inflection of the spoken line in his music properly, and this helps the singer to sing the phrases in the way the text would be spoken. Duke was fully aware of how to give freedom when expressing Robinson's texts by the way he set the texts, and did not create a compromise between poetry and music.

It is somewhat ironic that Duke chose a text that was very modern and topical to his time period and yet never chose to set that text in the radically modern styles of music composition that were dominant in the twentieth century. Duke's stylistic, unconventional attempts of his composition does not only create the best effect for a blending of the music and the text but also suggested a good example of the representing style in American art songs.

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