

# Singing *Finnegans Wake*: A Key to Samuel Barber's "Nuvoletta"

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SAMUEL BARBER'S 1947 "NUVOLETTA," the only freestanding song of his maturity, has long been a niche favorite among performers, critics, and listeners. As early as 1951, James Quillian, in a survey of the composer's songs for *Repertoire* magazine, wrote, "No matter that the words are somewhat strange; the music is positively captivating and a joy to perform."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in a 1954 review of the score, composer William Flanagan referred to the number as "wonderfully ingratiating," while in a 1956 notice of an all Barber concert in Boston, critic Harold Rodgers reported, "For sheer lyricism and musical subtleties . . . 'Nuvoletta' . . . is unsurpassed."<sup>2</sup> Early in the song's career, distinguished opera stars Eleanor Steber and Leontyne Price programmed "Nuvoletta" with some regularity, with Steber recording the number, somewhat past her prime, in 1964; more recently, sopranos Roberta Alexander, Ann Murray, Cheryl Studer, Gweneth-Ann Jeffers, Anne Cambier, Kateryna Kasper, and Bonita Glenn also have released recordings of the song. Although relatively slow to make much of a mark, "Nuvoletta" now seems firmly a part of the American art song repertoire.

The song's popularity makes it all the more striking that Barber derived his text from the most famously arcane and unread novel in the literary canon, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Piecing together various lines from three pages of the book, the composer created the following lyric:

Nuvoletta in her lightdress, spunn of sisteen shimmers, was looking down on them, leaning over the bannistars and listening all she childishly could . . . She was alone. All her nubied companions were asleeping with the squirrels . . . She tried all the winsome wonsome ways her four winds had taught her. She tossed her sfumastelliacinous hair like *la princesse de la Petite Bretagne* and she rounded her mignons arms like Mrs. Cornwallis-West and she smiled over herself like the beauty of the image of the pose of the daughter of the queen of the Emperour of Irelande and she sighed after herself as were she born to bride with Tristis Tristor Tristissimus. But, sweet madonine, she might fair as well have carried her daisy's worth to Florida . . . Oh, how it was duusk! From Vallee Maraia to Grasyaplaina, dormimust echo! Ah dew! Ah dew! It was so duusk that the tears of night began to fall, first by ones and twos, then by threes and fours, at last by fives and sixes of sevens, for the tired ones were wecking, as we weep now with them. *O! O! O! Par la pluie!* . . . Then Nuvoletta reflected for the last time in her little long life and she made up all her myriads of drifting minds in one. She cancelled all her engauzements. She climbed over the bannistars; she gave a childy cloudy cry: *Nuéé! Nuéé!* A lightdress fluttered. She was gone.<sup>3</sup>

Journal of Singing, January/February 2022  
Volume 78, No. 3, pp. 319–325  
<https://doi.org/10.53830/NFOX9256>  
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Barber intimated that even he did not entirely understand these words, stating late in life in a published interview (that misquoted some of the text, and hence corrected below),

I'm not unlearned in Joyce; I've read quite a few books on him. But what can you do when you get lines like "Nuvoletta reflected for the last time [in] her little long life and she made up all her myriads of drifting minds in one[.] She cancelled all her engagements[.] She climbed over the bannist[a]rs; she gave a chily cloudy cry" except to set them instinctively, as abstract music, almost like a vocalise.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, the particular lines actually set by Barber featured the sort of vivid imagery and lyric resonance that generally attracted him as a songwriter, further enhanced by some judicious editing on his end; and as the song's history would suggest, one can enjoy and "get" the song without particular knowledge of the lyric's context and deeper meanings. But a study of this puzzling text, the purpose of this article, can only enrich our understanding of the song and its composer.

Barber composed "Nuvoletta" in the early fall of 1947 on his return from a five-month trip to Europe. Earlier in the year, he had composed what many regard as one of his greatest masterpieces, *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, for voice and orchestra, to a text taken from a poetic short story by James Agee. Barber had not written that work for any particular singer, although after hearing *Knoxville*, Eleanor Steber, famous at the Metropolitan Opera for such roles as the Countess (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Eva (*Die Meistersinger*), and Sophie (*Der Rosenkavalier*), agreed to commission the work for \$1,000 (about \$21,000 in current currency), and premiere the piece sometime in the 1947–48 season with Serge Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

An extraordinary prodigy who had triple majored at the Curtis Institute in voice, piano, and composition, Barber coached Steber in *Knoxville* in the months prior to the work's April 1948 premiere, and he might well have written "Nuvoletta" during this time period especially for her; indeed, the song includes a cadenza, ranging from B<sup>#</sup><sub>3</sub> to B<sup>#</sup><sub>5</sub> two octaves above, that requires the sort of extraordinary control and flexibility that Steber possessed. The received wisdom further presumes that Steber premiered the song, although documentation

supporting this claim has not as yet surfaced.<sup>5</sup> The first known performance seems to be the one that Leontyne Price, accompanied by Barber, gave at the Library of Congress in 1953, a preserved rendition in which the artists zip through the song at a faster tempo than that even indicated by the composer's rather speedy metronome marking, bringing the song in at about four minutes as opposed to the more common five minutes.

By this time, Barber had long shown an inclination toward Irish writers for his song texts, especially James Joyce. This might have had something to do with his own Scots-Irish heritage, as well as his beloved uncle Sidney Homer's similar preference for Irish poets for his own songs. At any rate, in the period 1935–37, Barber set to music no fewer than six poems from Joyce's youthful collection of thirty-six poems, *Chamber Music*, including the now popular numbers "Rain Has Fallen," "Sleep Now," and "I Hear an Army."

Joyce continued to inspire Barber for the rest of his life. In his later years, long after "Nuvoletta," he used a portion of the novel *Ulysses* for "Solitary Hotel" from his song cycle, *Despite and Still* (1969); wrote an orchestral work, *Fadograph of a Yestern Scene* (1971), whose title derived from a phrase in *Finnegans Wake*; and composed one final Joyce setting (after the Irish writer's translation of some abbreviated verse by the German Romantic poet Gottfried Keller as found in a song by Othmar Schoeck), "Now I Have Fed and Eaten Up the Rose," as one of *Three Songs* (1972) written for baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. In the context of Barber's rather modest catalog, this engagement with Joyce seems all the more conspicuous.

Still, that Barber would create a song from a text like *Finnegans Wake*, one sooner associated with the *avant-garde* than with so relatively a conservative figure as himself, perhaps seems on its face surprising—as opposed to the text's attraction to more experimental artists, such as Harry Partch, whose 1944 microtonal *Two Settings from Finnegans Wake* for soprano, double flageolet, and kithara Barber presumably knew nothing about. But the appeal of *Finnegans Wake* accorded with Barber's high level of literary sophistication, as seen in his decision to set Agee's somewhat Joycean "Knoxville: Summer of 1915" earlier in the year. He even had given some thought to a *Finnegans Wake* dance in collaboration with Martha Graham in the early 1940s. A voracious

reader, he read up on Joyce, as noted, and in general consumed a good deal of literary criticism. In the course of the 1940s, he also had the opportunity to discuss the Irish writer with those Joyce experts among his acquaintances; these included scholar Joseph Campbell and playwright Thornton Wilder, who on one apparently inebriated occasion read aloud and explained to him some of *Finnegans Wake*. Barber surely had a better grasp of the novel than he let on.<sup>6</sup>

Published in 1939, *Finnegans Wake*, a monumental *tour de force*, embraces the entire story of human civilization as seen through the prism of a single family: father Mr. Porter (Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, or HCE), mother Mrs. Porter (Anna Livia Plurabelle, or ALP), their twin sons Jerry (Shem) and Kevin (Shaun), and their daughter Isobel (Issy), a young girl of sixteen. Unfolding in a densely symbolic and nonlinear way, the book employs wide-ranging guises and allusions, along with highly idiosyncratic language, including multilingual puns and portmanteaus. One notable interpreter, writer Anthony Burgess, views the novel as depicting a single dream of Mr. Porter, who appears mostly as Earwicker in the book, and who "re-lives the whole of history in a night's sleep" to assuage his guilt.<sup>7</sup>

Barber culled his text from an episode, known as "The Mookse and the Gripes," from the book's sixth chapter. As recounted by the novel's Professor Jones, this fable, described by critic William York Tindall as "actually about the conflict and union of all opposites," concerns especially the Earwicker children: Shaun (as Mookse), Shem (as Gripes), and Issy (as Nuvoletta).<sup>8</sup> Shaun throughout the novel represents the man of action; Shem, the artist; and Issy, a combination of innocence and sensuality. Joyce apparently modelled Issy, for whom the mythological Isolde serves as one her principal avatars, in part after his daughter Lucia, a dancer who was eventually institutionalized for schizophrenia; in the passage under discussion, Nuvoletta's reflection in the water tellingly appears as *Nuvoluccia* (emphasis added), the sort of double imagery that frequently characterizes Issy, as seen also in this section in the references to both Isolde and the less famed Isolde of the White Hands. In the course of Professor Jones's parable, the imperious Mookse and the humble Gripes encounter each other along a river bank and quarrel about various things, including religion. Overhearing

their altercation, Nuvoletta, who appears near the fable's end, strives to divert the two young men with her feminine allure, but to no avail: "For the Mookse, a dogmad Accanite, were not amoused and the Gripes, a dubliboused Catalick, wis pinefully oblivious. I see, she sighed. There are menner." The tale—purportedly "[J]avanese," although the story references Aesop's "The Fox and the Grapes" (alternately, "The Mouse, the Fox, and the Grapes"), from which the expression "sour grapes" derives—concludes with Nuvoletta falling into a river called the Missisliffi, a name that conflates the Mississippi River and Ireland's River Liffey.<sup>9</sup>

This Mookse and Gripes interlude draws especially heavily on two twelfth century legends that involve Ireland: 1) the possibly spurious bull of Pope Adrian IV urging King Henry II to invade Ireland, with Mookse representing the Roman Catholic Church, and Gripes, the Irish Church; and 2) tales surrounding the two Isoldes: Isolde, the Irish princess who, although betrothed to King Mark of Cornwall, falls in love with his nephew, Tristan; and Isolde of the White Hands, a Breton princess whom, according to some tellings, Tristan marries after arriving in Brittany from Cornwall. These parallel twelfth century allusions highlight the contrast between the masculine principle of power (as represented by Mookse and Gripes) and the feminine one of romance (as embodied by Nuvoletta).

Nuvoletta's name in Italian means "little cloud," and her story accordingly unfolds on two levels, with the character representing both the novel's central young woman, Issy, and a cloud. Joyce likely derived this conceit from Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, a prosimetrum in which the soul of the Italian poet's great love, Beatrice, appears as a gliding "nuvoletta" amid a host of heavenly angels.<sup>10</sup> Nuvoletta listens to Mookse and Gripes, for instance, "over the bannistars," a portmanteau, combining "bannister" and "stars," that suggests not only the young girl standing by a rail, perhaps atop some stairs, but also a cloud in the sky. Such double entendres—captured further in such phrases as "tears of night," "drifting minds," "all her engauzements," and "cloudy cry"—continue right to the end of the fable, when Nuvoletta, as a weeping girl but also as a rain cloud, drops tears/raindrops into the river.

Barber used only fragments of this three-page Nuvoletta section, selecting lines from three prin-

cipal portions, and avoiding any direct mention of Mookse and Gripes. The first part of the song concerns Nuvoletta's fruitless attempts to attract Mookse and Gripes. Omitting a paragraph regarding the inattentive Mookse and Gripes, the song's second part, starting "Oh, how it was duusk!," portrays the coming of night and its attendant weeping/raining. Skipping another large paragraph, this one about the removal of Mookse and Gripes from the scene, the song's third and last section, which begins, "Then Nuvoletta reflected for the last time," describes the girl's leap into the river, without including, however, the tale's final lines in which as a tear she becomes part of the river's flow.

The song unfolds an ABA design that corresponds to these three primary sections, with dots indicating ellipses, and instrumental interludes essentially substituting for the omitted paragraphs. The opening A section, for Nuvoletta's primping and posing, takes the shape of a fast and light waltz in 3/8, "Allegretto" and "con grazia," rather French in style, and cast in a pandiatonic E major. The chantlike setting of Joyce's parody of the Latin prayer Ave Maria leads to an F minorish middle section, "Adagio," in which darkness falls amid tears and raindrops. A vocal cadenza at "O! O! O! *Par la pluie!*" serves as a transition back to E major and Nuvoletta's descent into the river.

The piano part, which periodically reiterates the main four-note motive accompanying the first mention of Nuvoletta's name, engages in some tone painting, as in the quotation of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* at the words, "Tristis Tristor Tristissimus"; the chiming repetition that follows "echo"; the irregular rhythms in the piano that match the numbers in the phrase, "by three and fours, at last by fives and sixes of sevens"; the cascading figure at "over the bannistars"; and the quivering gesture following "[a] lightdress fluttered." As a whole, the song offers a fairly wide range of expression—from the coquettish to the mock tragic to the bittersweet—making this dramatic *scena* that much more effective in concert than on recording.

In the interest of a more complete appreciation of "Nuvoletta," the song's complete text follows in bold (including the dots added by Barber to indicate omitted text), accompanied by some commentary in regular roman font.

**Nuvoletta in her lightdress, spunn of sisteen shimmers, was looking down on them, leaning over the bannistars and listening all she childishly could . . .**

This line introduces us to Nuvoletta, while the "them" refers to the unmentioned Mookse and Gripes. "Lightdress" plays on the word "nightdress," conflating the girl-cloud imagery, as does, as mentioned, the word, "bannistars." "Sisteen shimmers," sounding like, "sixteen summers," alludes to Nuvoletta's age of sixteen, but also the *Sistine* chapel, which depicts the heavens with clouds, as well as Nuvoletta's presence as a stand-in for Issy, the *sister* of Shem and Shaun. The allusion to the *Sistine* chapel also evokes the papal politics at the heart of the argument between Mookse and Gripes. Nuvoletta is "looking down" on "them," that is, on Mookse and Gripes, both physically and figuratively, as she finds their bickering tiresome.

**She was alone. All her nubied companions were asleeping with the squirrels . . .**

This line follows after one cut sentence. Regarding the "nubied companions," the Issy archetype—of which Nuvoletta forms just one manifestation—often appears in the company of twenty-eight other schoolgirls, sometimes referred to by Joyce as the "rainbow girls"; the number twenty-eight explicitly surfaces later in this story, as we shall see, while the implicit evocation of the "rainbow girls" ties in with the section's sky and rain imagery, as well as God's covenant with Noah.

The word, "nubied," suggests not only the Italian word, "nubi," for "cloud," but the Latin first-person verb declension, "nubo," for "I marry," furthering the girl-cloud double meanings; for the missing "companions" can be seen as both girls and clouds. The phrase, moreover, references a famous 1805 song, "The Last Rose of Summer," written by the Irish poet Thomas Moore; describing a last surviving summer rose, Moore writes, "All her lovely companions / Are faded and gone. . . Since the lovely are sleeping / Go, sleep though with them." This allusion points to the themes of loneliness and death associated with Nuvoletta, as well as to the mock-sentimental tone undergirding this narrative.

An early draft of *Finnegans Wake* had the companions "asleeping *like* the squirrels" (emphasis added); given

the section's association with the Tristan and Isolde legend, Joyce possibly made the change to "with" to suggest Nuvoletta's companions sleeping with squires.<sup>11</sup> In any case, the reference to squirrels concerns that mammal's habit, particularly in cold weather, of sleeping for long periods, even in some species for hibernating—yet another denotation of death. (Barber rewrote Joyce's "squirrels," incidentally, as "squir'ls," to emphasize his wanting the word sung monosyllabically.)

**She tried all the winsome wonsome ways her four winds had taught her. She tossed her sfumastelliacious hair like *la princesse de la Petite Bretagne* and she rounded her mignons arms like Mrs. Cornwallis-West and she smiled over herself like the beauty of the image of the pose of the daughter of the queen of the Emperour of Irelande and she sighed after herself as were she born to bride with Tristis Tristor Tristissimus.**

This next passage follows after some omitted material, an ellipsis indicated again in Barber's score by the preceding dots. Here, Nuvoletta endeavors, in a rather over the top way, to seduce Mookse and Gripes; she tosses her "sfumastelliacious" hair, rounds her "mignons arms," that is, delicate arms, and smiles "over herself," conjuring both her narcissistic satisfaction with her mirror image in the water as well the cloud's reflection in the water. The nicely alliterative phrase, "winsome wonsome ways," a play on "win some, lose some," denotes her wily confidence acquired from "her four winds," yet another sky-associated metaphor.

The complex portmanteau, "sfumastelliacious," contains both the Italian words for pale or hazy, "sfumato" (from "sfumare," meaning, "to evaporate like smoke") and star, "stella"; that the girl-cloud should have pale, hazy, starlike hair hardly surprises. The word "sfumato" intimates other relevant meanings, including a painterly technique, *sfumato*, developed by Leonardo, Michelangelo, and other Renaissance artists that created blurred, soft imagery—an allusion that harks back to the mention of "sisteen [Sistine chapel] shimmers" and other Vatican-related matters. Another Italian word, "sfumata," meanwhile, refers to the cloud of dark smoke created by the burned ballots following an inconclusive vote at a papal conclave, traditionally held in the Sistine

chapel; this allusion turns on its head the church history that preoccupies Mookse and Gripes.

This paragraph also compares the seductive Nuvoletta to both Isolde of the White Hands ("*la princesse de la Petite Bretagne*"), and the tragic Irish princess Isolde, ill fated to love her betrothed's nephew Tristan, whose name is more than intimated in the phrase, sardonically melodramatic in context, "Tristis Tristor Tristissimus," the Latin for "sad, rather sad, very sad." Mrs. Cornwallis-West, meanwhile, might refer to Patsy Cornwallis-West, an aristocratic Irishwoman who became the mistress of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) before her marriage to William Cornwallis-West in 1872, as well as to her daughter-in-law, Beatrice Cornwallis-West, better known by her stage name, Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Nuvoletta's performance would make both allusions apt, while for extra drollery, Cornwallis puns Tristan's home of Cornwall. Nuvoletta's disappearance into the river recalls still other exemplars, including Ovid's Narcissus and Shakespeare's Ophelia; that Narcissus at the time of his death, relates Ovid, was also sixteen years old, the same age too as the "sinless" Isolde of the White Hands when she first met Tristan (according to Algernon Charles Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse*), as well as the age of the future Patsy Cornwallis-West when she became mistress to the Prince of Wales, might strike one as stunningly coincidental but for that fact that nothing seems incidental in *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>12</sup>

**But, sweet madonine, she might fair as well have carried her daisy's worth to Florida . . .**

Coming directly after the portion quoted above, this line encapsulates the futility of Nuvoletta's cajolery; comments William York Tindall, "She [Nuvoletta] is as powerless as Tristan's Isolde at a papal conclave."<sup>13</sup> "Mandonine" resembles "madonnina," the Italian word for "little Madonna," preparing Nuvoletta's identification with the Virgin Mary later in the story. That she "carried her daisy's worth to Florida" describes her ineffectiveness, comparable to the expression, "carry coals to Newcastle," for it seems superfluous to bring flowers to Florida, which gets its name from the Spanish word, "florido," meaning "flowery." The phrase, "daisy's worth," meanwhile, puns "day's worth," pointing to the

full extent of Nuvoletta's attempts at seduction as well as the coming night.

**Oh, how it was duusk! From Vallee Maraia to Grasyaplaina, dormimust echo! Ah dew! Ah dew! It was so duusk that the tears of night began to fall, first by ones and twos, then by threes and fours, at last by fives and sixes of sevens, for the tired ones were wecking, as we weep now with them. O! O! O! Par la pluie!**

As mentioned, Barber omits Nuvoletta's exasperated, "There are menner," a humorous allusion to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* in its use of a homonym for "Männer," the German word for "men." The composer also skips a paragraph, signalled by the dots after "Florida," detailing the obliviousness of Mookse and Gripes, and arrives rather at the twilight scene cited above. This section opens with Joyce's take on the opening lines of the Latin prayer Ave Maria—"Ave Maria, gratias plena, Dominus tecum" ("Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you")—associated with the twilight Vespers service, but here rewritten to encompass Nuvoletta's farewell, with "Valee Maraia" incorporating the Latin word, "vale," for "farewell." The prayer further forewarns Nuvoletta's leap into the river by suggesting movement from a valley toward a grassy plain and sleep ("dormimust" combines the Italian word, "dormi," meaning "you sleep" or "sleep!," with the English word, "must") as do the exclamations of "Ah dew!," which puns the French words for "goodbye" ("Adieu") and "God" ("Dieu"). "Echo," meanwhile, invokes the mythological nymph in love with Narcissus, whose legend weaves its way throughout this Ovidian tale.

Nuvoletta's tears begin to flow, but so do those of her appearing companions, as cryptically indicated by the fact that the groupings of tears—"first by ones and two" and so forth—add up to twenty-eight, the number of the book's rainbow girls (with Joyce working out this numerology in the margins of an early manuscript draft); later in the section, in a part not set by Barber, the story refers to Nuvoletta's tear as a "leapyear," an allusion to leap year, and thus to her status as the twenty-ninth girl, as February has twenty-nine days in leap years. In his early draft, Joyce wrote, "the tired ones were weeping," not "wecken," a later revision that plays, for some

uncertain reason, on "weeping" and the German word, "wecken," meaning, "to wake."<sup>14</sup> The line, in any case, carries religious connotations, recalling such phrases as "weep with those who weep" from Romans 12:15. Meanwhile, the exclamation, "O! O! O! Par la pluie!," puns the French words for "by the rain" ("par la pluie") and "says the rain" ("parle la pluie"), again associating the girl with the sky above.

**. . . Then Nuvoletta reflected for the last time in her little long life and she made up all her myriads of drifting minds in one. She cancelled all her engauzements. She climbed over the bannistars; she gave a childy cloudy cry: Nuée! Nuée! A lightdress fluttered. She was gone.**

As mentioned, Barber bypasses the exit of Mookse and Gripes, a departure that leaves Nuvoletta alone with "only elmtree and but a stone" (symbols, respectively, of Mookse and time, on the one hand, and Gripes and space on the other), and proceeds with these sentences, which bring his setting, although not the story, to its end; here the composer indicates the omission by dots *before* the ensuing text. "Engauzements" integrates the somewhat proper "engagements" with "gauze," creating more girl-cloud dual imagery. Nuvoletta's final cry, "Nuée! Nuée!," using the literary French word for "a thick cloud," seems the only text unambiguously in Nuvoletta's voice, although some other words might be interpreted as utterances of both the girl and nature, as arguably the case with "Ah dew!" and the "O!" exclamations.

Barber leaves unset the fable's last two sentences that bring the tale to its conclusion.

And into the river that had been a stream (for a thousand of tears had gone eon her and come on her and she was stout and struck on dancing and her muddied name was Missisliffi) there fell a tear, a singult tear, the loveliest of all tears (I mean for those crylove fables fans and who are "keen" on the pretty-pretty commonface sort of thing you meet by hopeharrods) for it was a leapyear. But the river tripped on her by and by, lapping as though her heart was brook: *Why, why, why! Weh, O weh! I'se so silly to be flowing but I no canna stay!*

This ending has been widely viewed as delineating a transformation from adolescence to maturity; unable

to mediate between the conflicting Mookse and Gripes, Nuvoletta joins the Missisliffey, which sounds like Mrs. Liffey, a married name that conjures the book's mother archetype, Anna Livia Plurabelle, a figure associated in the novel with rivers and the River Liffey in particular. "As after Waterloo," writes Tindall, "A.L.P. [Anna Livia Plurabelle] picks up the pieces to renew them, so her daughter, after this verbal battle, drops into the river to renew the cycle of river, sea, cloud, and river again. Nothing more pleasing and nothing funnier than the fall of the 'leap tear' into the river whose 'muddied name was Mississliffi'."<sup>15</sup> Comments Christy Burns along these lines, Nuvoletta falls "not to her corporeal death but to the death of physical innocence"; reading "nuée" as a pun on "née" (the French word for "born"), Burns writes that with her leap, the character becomes reborn.<sup>16</sup>

*Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, composed, as mentioned, just prior to "Nuvoletta," provides some clue as to why this particular passage should attract Barber, over and above the section's sheer lyric beauty; for both works touch on themes related to lost innocence and youthful isolation. In this sense, Nuvoletta also forewarns Erika in Barber's opera *Vanessa*, a character whose unrealistic ideals lead to an attempted suicide and a withdrawal from the world. That particular opera's librettist, Barber's partner Gian Carlo Menotti, surely regarded this subject as central to the composer's interests and imagination, reflected as well in Barber's profound response to the novels of Henry James. In *Knoxville*, Barber handles the topic with keen nostalgia; in *Vanessa*, with melodramatic intensity; whereas in "Nuvoletta," which Barber himself described as "slightly ironic," the theme becomes a witty account of that very innocence whose loss is more elegiacally mourned elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

### NOTES

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He who hath glory lost, nor hath  
 Found any soul to fellow his,  
 Among this foes in scorn and wrath  
 Holding to ancient nobleness,  
 That high unconsortable one –  
 His love is his companion.

James Joyce, "He Who Hath Glory Lost"