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The Art Songs of Louise Talma

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Edited by Michael J. Budds

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FOREWORD
From the Series Editor

The College Music Society can boast of a proud tradition of contributions to the study of American music with its series Monographs and Bibliographies in American Music. For many years, volumes disseminated under this banner were rather lavishly produced and fell into the category of reference works, the majority of which were devoted to individual—and sometimes neglected—musical figures. In more recent times, the Society has determined to intensify its efforts by considering a greater range of topics and formats and by making available publications in paperback editions at reasonable prices.

In this spirit, The College Music Society has initiated a correlative series titled CMS Sourcebooks in American Music. The new venture was conceived to underscore the remarkable diversity in our nation’s musical expression and to call attention to both landmark and representative achievements in its evolution. Whether the subject is a concert or stage work communicated through a notated score, a virtual performance frozen in time by modern technology (such as a film score or a recording), or some other mode of preservation not yet invented or standardized, the goal is the same: to gather materials for study, to reconsider and synthesize existing commentary and criticism, and to offer a fresh assessment or appreciation. Although a canonizing tendency is implicit in any selection process, every attempt has been made to address as many strands in the fabric of American music as possible.

These texts should not be perceived as ends in themselves, moreover, but as educational resources directed to teachers of music, students of music, and other lovers of music. Each author has been advised to take the benefit of primary sources of various kinds as well as the generous body of relevant scholarship and to place his or her subject in contexts most meaningful to contemporary readers. Although there is no intent to provide scholastic tracts of the most exacting rigor, these studies have been carefully and engagingly written and fully documented. Whenever possible, a compact disc featuring performances of historical importance has been attached to the volume as both a convenience and an added value.

It is always prudent to question the feasibility of yet another series of music publications. This is so especially now—when the fruits of the “Information Age” overwhelm the most curious, voracious, or dedicated reader and when the capacity and immediacy of the Internet challenge traditional practice. And yet it is never foolhardy to respond to the needs of an honorable profession in the service of a glorious art.
I am pleased to acknowledge the assistance of Jacob Anthony Hallman and Joseph Rulli in the production of this volume and Meghan Walsh for her proofreading prowess. Their problem-solving skills, curiosity, and judgment all contributed to the excellence of the finished product; just as important were their reliability and wit, which made my work easier.

Michael J. Budds
Columbia, Missouri
PREFACE
From the Author

This project could not have been made possible without the support of the 2014 Judith Tick Award by the Society for American Music. I am truly grateful to the Society, the awards committee, and Judith herself for their support of this work. I am also grateful to the staff of the Music Division of the Library of Congress who helped facilitate the majority of the research necessary for this book. Many thanks to the MacDowell Colony for its gracious permission to reproduce photographs and music from the Louise Talma Collection at the Library of Congress. For his commitment to this project and assistance throughout, I would like to thank CMS Sourcebooks editor Michael Budds. I also wish to acknowledge the counsel of three pre-publication reviewers: Marva Griffin Carter, Andrew Dell’Antonio, and Stephanie Jensen-Moulton.

I am also grateful to Elizabeth Johnston Overmann and Dave Foley, who gave the public premiere performances of “On the Surface of Things” and “Song in the Songless” at my Library of Congress/American Musicological Society Fall 2013 Lecture and who provided significant contributions to the creation of this volume. For their help on matters technical, aesthetic, and otherwise, I thank Kathryn Ananda-Owens, Paul Attinello, Jonathan Bellman, Paula Bishop, Kevin Clifton, Jeannette DiBernardo Jones, Jessie Fillerup, David Foley, John Graziano, Suzanne Hamlin, Lisa Kramer, Mandi Magnuson-Hung, Margarita and Steven McGuire, Aaron Manela, Felicia Miyakawa, Diana Pasulka, Jane Riegel Ferencz, Colin Roust, Joanna Smolko, Laurie Stras, Erin Smith, Pam Stover, Patrick Warfield, and Chris Wells. And, as always, I owe thanks to Karl Rufener for his unstinting encouragement and support.

Some material in this book is excerpted and/or adapted from my book Louise Talma: A Life in Composition (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2014).

Kendra Preston Leonard
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Louise Talma (ca. 1906–1996), the American composer born of Danish and French heritage is, perhaps, best known today for her choral works, notably her setting of e. e. cummings’s “Let’s Touch the Sky” (1952), her oratorio The Divine Flame (1948), and her treatment of John Donne’s Holy Sonnets in La Corona (1955). During her career Talma was, however, equally recognized as a composer of art songs for solo voice and piano, with nearly thirty works usually for soprano or tenor. Because she often disseminated her compositions personally as handwritten manuscript copies or did not publish them at all, very few of her art songs exist in the form of commercially engraved scores. In addition, she created conflicting versions of some of her songs and did little to publicize those that were released in print. In this study, I seek to establish Talma’s songs for solo voice and piano as important and fascinating works of art created over the course of the composer’s career, often depicting her life through choice of texts and their musical settings.

A Brief Overview of Talma’s Life

Talma, whose mother was a singer, had already launched a career as a concert pianist when she began composing in the early 1920s. She soon embarked on composition lessons with Harold Brockway (1870–1951) and Percy Goetschius (1853–1943) at the Institute of Musical Art—later to become the Juilliard School—before studying with Nadia Boulanger (1897–1979) at the Conservatoire Américain in Fontainebleau, France, in 1927. From her earliest works Talma indicated that her aesthetic interests lay with the French neoclassical school. Her first songs illustrate her early embrace of common neoclassical tropes: an emphasis on counterpoint and rhythm, extended or otherwise non-traditional harmony, and the presence of the grande ligne. Aaron Copland (1900–1990), who had also studied with Boulanger in the 1920s, defined this last element as “the sense of forward motion, of flow and continuity in the musical discourse; the feeling for inevitability, for the creating of an entire piece that could be thought of as a functioning entity.” This ideal was particularly stressed as an essential part of a successful composition by Boulanger but also by other French composers.

Under her teacher’s guidance, Talma converted from agnosticism to Roman Catholicism in 1934 with Boulanger as her godmother and adopted an outwardly ascetic lifestyle similar to Boulanger’s in its devotion to music. She did not give up worldly ways, however: she was well-known for her enjoyment of good food (particularly chocolate), pulp detective novels, French fashion, smoking, and
Illustration 1.1.
Nadia Boulanger and Louise Talma (ca. 1930s)

Reproduced through the courtesy of the Digital Department of the Library of Congress, Duplication Services Division, and with the permission of The MacDowell Colony
shooting pool. While many of her early works express grief and melancholy, possibly for a sister who died at a young age, and the compositions of her late twenties and early thirties are outpourings of desire for an unattainable beloved—likely Boulanger herself—she composed more than twenty religious works after her conversion, setting a number of sacred texts and spiritual writings.

Talma became a full-time member of the music faculty at Hunter College in New York City in 1928 and taught harmony there until 1979. With two of her students, Louis Martin and James Harrison, she helped author two harmony textbooks. Her Piano Sonata No. 1 (1943), Toccata for Orchestra (1944), and Alleluia in the Form of Toccata for piano (1945) were highly praised by critics and helped establish Talma as an important American composer. Based in part on the success of these works, she became the second woman (after Ruth Crawford Seeger in 1930) to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship in music composition and the first woman awarded back-to-back Guggenheims, in 1946 and 1947. After teaching harmony at the Conservatoire Américain for several years—the first American to do so—she began spending most of her summers at two artists’ colonies: the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, and later Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, New York. Because of her teaching obligations during the academic year, most of her mature works were composed while she resided at one of these or other artists’ colonies.

In 1952, Talma heard Irving Fine’s serial but tonally-centered string quartet. Confessing that it was the first serial work that made sense to her musically, she immediately started working with serial approaches and techniques in her works. Although, when she announced that she had moved into “non-serialatonality,” she claimed that her “serial period” extended from 1952 until 1967, the majority of her works until her death engaged in some form of serial practice. Her first completed serial piece was a setting of e. e. cummings’s “Let’s Touch the Sky” (1952); her String Quartet (1954), Six Etudes for Piano (1954), Piano Sonata No. 2 (1955), and La Corona (1955), a treatment of Donne’s Holy Sonnets, all clearly communicate audible serial elements. As she developed her own compositional voice with serial procedures, Talma created rows that allowed for tonal centering as well as for a more traditional, stricter manipulation of pitch class sets.

Talma began working on a grand opera with writer Thornton Wilder (1897–1975) in 1954 after the two met at the MacDowell Colony. They considered several scenarios before deciding to base their collaboration on Wilder’s existing stage play about the Greek figure Alcestis. Talma composed the bulk of the opera during visits to the American Academy in Rome and to the MacDowell Colony. The Alcestiad was completed in 1958. Although several American opera houses, notably the Lyric Opera in Chicago, the Metropolitan in New York City, and the San Francisco Opera, expressed interest in the work, all of them ultimately deemed it too difficult for American performers and audiences. Primarily because Wilder had enjoyed considerable success in
Germany with his stage plays, The Alcestiad was given its premiere at the opera house in Frankfurt-am-Main in 1962. It was the first time that an opera by an American woman had been performed in Europe. Perhaps due to the enormous resources the work requires and despite the fact that it was critically and publicly well-received, it has not been mounted in the United States and remains relatively unknown. The Alcestiad, nonetheless, secured its composer a place in the ranks of groundbreaking American and female composers: in 1963, she was the first female composer to win the Sibelius Medal for composition, and in 1974 she became the first woman composer elected to the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

During the 1960s, Talma’s work took a political bent. She dedicated her Dialogues for piano and orchestra (1964) to President John F. Kennedy after his assassination and composed A Time to Remember (1967), an oratorio presenting Kennedy’s own words. The Tolling Bell, a setting of texts by Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Donne for baritone and orchestra, was completed in 1969 and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in music. Talma wrote her own libretto for her 1976 chamber opera, Have You Heard? Do You Know?, a work about the Cold War, the desire for utopias, and covert same-sex desire. She continued to compose prolifically into her eighties. She died while working on an elegiac piece, The Lengthening Shadows, at the Yaddo colony in August of 1996.

Talma kept her personal life relatively quiet. Copious correspondence reveals, however, several passionate affairs with women, including one in late life with Ethelston (Eth) Chapman (1920–1998), a fellow student at Fontainebleau whose professional life was similar to Talma’s and who taught harmony for the majority of her career. Talma left no surviving relatives and after her death, because she believed that composition could not be taught, had no composition students to champion her works or her pedagogical methods in harmony and theory. In recent years, however, performers have become interested in Talma’s works, which are once again gaining a foothold in the vocal and piano repertoires.

**Talma’s Compositional Language**

As I have written elsewhere, Talma’s works display two attributes that are especially crucial in understanding her approaches to composition. The first of these is what I call “dis/continuity.” She often cited the influence of Stravinsky’s music on her own, which explains, in part, the prominence of block forms, quasi-tonal writing, and dis/continuity in her creations. Stravinsky’s influence on Talma can be attributed equally to her studies of his music with Boulanger and to her own interest in his work and study of his pieces throughout her career. The latter phenomenon that I term “dis/continuity” is described in the context of Stravinsky’s works by Joseph Straus as having strong centripetal forces, with each of the formal units asserting its own independence and integrity. But the centrifugal forces are equally strong, holding the sections together. The result in
Stravinsky’s music is not the gentle harmonious reconciliation of opposing tendencies, but rather a furious tension, at all levels, between the forces of integration and disintegration.9

In Talma’s works, dis/continuity can often be traced through specific compositional elements, such as tonality or pitch center, rhythm, texture, and motifs. For example, she might begin a work in an established pitch center with a three-voice texture and Motif A; in the next section Motif A continues while the pitch center changes (either to a related area, such as from A to C, or radically, for example, from A to D-sharp; Talma did both), and the texture is altered to two voices; in the third section, the pitch center from section 1 might return while the texture of two voices remains, providing continuity, and she introduced Motif B as a dis/continuous gesture.

The construction of block forms also provides opportunities for dis/continuity. By avoiding transitions Talma could immediately shift from one set of elements to another, keeping or dropping ingredients as she chose. This is particularly common in her songs, which often exhibit a basic ternary form (ABA). In using this form, Talma was able to employ fundamentally different textures, vocal approaches, pitch centers, and other compositional components; often at least one feature will carry over between sections, but this is not always the case. Other forms that lent themselves well to dis/continuous practices, such as variations, were also preferred by Talma. Her sets of variations are works in which the practice of dis/continuity is most obvious. Both block forms and variations allowed her to create contrast and a sense of linear motion through the opposing forces of static and changing materials instead of traditional harmonic development, which she generally eschewed. As Gretchen Horlacher commented on Stravinsky’s similar approach, “development is a product of the changing vertical coincidences created by the strata”;10 as a result, Talma often created and maintained interest through dis/continuities between strata and sections. While her patterns do not necessarily result in the shifting pitch centers of her work, as Stravinsky’s do, it is, nonetheless, apparent that his use of block forms, cyclic ostinati, and interval cycles all influenced Talma’s treatment of the same tools.

As part of her concern for dis/continuity, Talma conceived unique methods for developing melodic and structural ideas. While she herself described her work as having three periods,11 it is more accurate to observe that her work developed and changed fluidly throughout her career, with the accretion of new approaches and elements being blended with existing techniques over the course of time. Although she did not begin labeling her music as “twelve-tone” until 1952,12 Talma was always interested in the use of limited pitch sets as a method of structuring form and melodies. Analysis of even some of her earliest pieces, beginning with her 1926–1927 song “On the Surface of Things,” reveals the presence of limited sets and their variations, in this case the {0,2,7} set. Frequently Talma treated a single pitch as a pivot tone on which to move from one set to another; for the majority of her works she created sets and relationships between
them that allowed her to rotate from traditional harmony to different modalities to axial centricity. The vast majority of her songs for solo voice and piano display axial centricity instead of true diatonic harmony or any kind of modality.

The second window of understanding concerns Talma’s approach to composition as a method of autobiographical writing. As Hélène Cixous has famously written, “women must write themselves.” This need not be limited to writing prose. Indeed, by reading Talma’s writings—primarily letters—and scores together, it is possible to perceive connections between her personal life and her projects at the time. Knowing what she was reading and listening to, what was on her mind politically and personally, and what her reactions to all of these stimuli were, often make clear the meaning of Talma’s choices of text, the details of text-setting, and her methods of composition in her songs and other works.

Appropriate Research Methodologies

I have suggested in a previous publication that, by invoking tools from traditional music analysis, feminist and queer musicologies, and women’s autobiographical theory, Talma’s life and works come into a clearer focus than they would otherwise. Feminist musicology examines female identification with musical practice, opening the exploration of musical works and their creators to multidisciplinary approaches that include considering the implications of compositions by women created in a male-dominated environment and women’s individual histories in such contexts. Because Talma was an active composer during all three waves of American feminism, it is integral to understanding her experiences in this climate as it was at the beginning of her career as well as the ways she reacted to that milieu as it began to change under the aegis of growing numbers and presences of female composers over the course of the century.

Similarly, queer musicology reorients the view of scholarship away from heteronormative assumptions about composers and their works to examine the relationship between music and sexuality. As with feminist musicology, such readings and analyses of music take into account the various atmospheres in which composers worked. Using both “hard” historical evidence such as letters or other writings by the composer as well as connections that appear between the composer’s identity (closeted or otherwise) and musical gestures that suggest what Sophie Fuller has called “queerable history,” scholars can reveal meaning and method in the works of queer composers. While Talma never made any overt, spoken, or visible public proclamations about her sexuality, I have identified a number of sources that suggest hers is, indeed, a queerable history and that the use of queer musicology can reveal the inspiration behind and clarify the meaning of many of her works, including several of her songs.

Finally, while finding autobiography in the works of Sibelius, Mahler, and other male composers is not new, little has been done to look for such markers in the compositions of women. Therefore, applying tenets of women’s autobiographical theory and écriture féminine to the work of women composers can result in illuminating interpretations and understandings of their works.
In the case of a composer creating her autobiography through the written score and expressed sound, traditional forms and formal expectations—such as the expectation that women write short, characteristic piano pieces and parlor-type songs—may seem unnecessary and unwelcome at some times, but useful at others. Such a composer might take some aspects of her works in unexpected directions as a means of liberating her narrative from old, unworkable patterns or use established patterns and devices in innovative or subversive ways. Talma’s works indicate that she was, indeed, sensitive to such questions and options. Theorizing further, as Leigh Gilmore does in her theory of “autobiographics,” it can be claimed that “autobiography does not simply possess an experiential base from which it departs and which it seeks to depict.”18 Thus, the self-aware autobiographer and its representation is its construction. The autobiographical subject is produced not by experience but by autobiography. This specification does not diminish the autobiographer; rather, it situates him or her as an agent in the autobiographical production.19

Accepting this theory, it is possible to read an entire life—with its creative works—as autobiographical practice for the subject concerned with self-expression and public reception of that self without isolating certain actions or products as autobiographical while labeling others as non-autobiographical. Talma, always highly aware of her position as a woman—daughter, teacher, composer—in primarily masculine institutions, appears to have implicitly understood that performance of self—in the classroom, in composing—necessarily meant self-construction.

Talma’s awareness of the politics of self-construction through her music imbues her songs and other vocal works with a particular sense of her selfhood. Her choices of texts often appear to represent her own reactions to events in her life, and her settings of these texts frequently reflect issues important to her for which she created recurring musical codes. Among these are the descending minor- or major-second “sigh” gesture; the use of duple meters or rhythms to signify the human, as opposed to triple meters and rhythms implying the presence of God; and the use of explicit performance directions that indicate her own emotional and psychological states even as she embeds them into vocal or piano lines.

**Concerning This Volume**

This volume is divided into five chapters and three appendices. In Chapter Two, I examine Talma’s earliest songs, composed between 1925 and 1941. Chapter Three concerns the composer’s development during the 1940s, especially her song cycle *Terre de France*, which helped establish her as a composer of importance during this time. In Chapter Four I analyze the collection *Seven Songs*, which also contains works primarily from the 1940s connected by a thread of melancholy and loss. Chapter Five covers Talma’s last works for solo voice and piano: her *Infanta Marina*, which sets nine poems by Wallace Stevens (1879–1955), one of Talma’s favorite poets; and “Finis,” her very last completed
song. Three appendices follow: a bibliography of suggested sources (scholarly writings and reviews) for more information on Talma and her vocal works; a complete listing of Talma’s works for voices (for solo singer, multiple voices, voice with orchestra, and other configurations); and an accounting of relevant recordings.

In my discussion of each song, I have noted where changes have been made from Talma’s original manuscript scores. I have modernized vocal notation in terms of barring throughout and have organized increments of time as clearly as possible while retaining Talma’s original intent. In a number of places, Talma employed polymetrical writing, with the voice and piano (and sometimes each hand of the piano) in different meters. In these cases, I have also kept Talma’s original meters and barring and have numbered the measures according to the vocal parts. In one piece, “Song in the Songless,” I have added measure lines; Talma wrote the song in two very long measures, experimenting with different ways of depicting musical time.

In several instances, Talma did not duplicate the complete punctuation of poems in her manuscripts. It is unclear whether she did this to provide a sense of continuity from line to line or simply neglected to insert these elements when copying the text into the manuscript. Given her propensity for detail, I would venture that she omitted punctuation at times to avoid giving the singer a false sense of closure after a phrase. As a result, phrases flow without visual, textual pause from one to the next. Therefore, I have kept the text as Talma set it but have provided the poets’ original concepts in formatting and punctuation with my commentary.

This publication represents the first time that Talma’s solo songs have been gathered in a single volume and that all of them are presented in engraved notation.

Notes


5 These projects were conceived as texts for actual classes and were copied for dissemination at Hunter College and the State University of New York at Purchase.

7 Ibid. See also Louise Talma, letter (June 2, 1956) to Thornton Wilder, Thornton Wilder Collection (Beinecke Rare and Manuscript Library, Yale University).
12 Ibid.
19 Ibid, 25.
SONGS OF MOURNING 
AND LOVE

Talma’s earliest extant song is dated “New York, 1925” and therefore is one of the few conceived during the period when she was studying composition in New York City with Harold Brockway and Percy Goetschius at the Institute of Musical Art. It was thus written before she began her studies at the Conservatoire Américain with Nadia Boulanger. Her first efforts in the genre of art song suggest that Talma was already interested in and beginning to work with the compositional tropes of neoclassicism as practiced in France: small, intimate ensembles; extended, non-traditional, or non-functional harmony; an emphasis on rhythm as the driving force of a work; counterpoint; and the \textit{grand ligne}, or the concept that the melody dictates all. These pieces also establish what I call “dis/continuity,” a recurring process in Talma’s works in which she constructed sectional or block forms, as I describe in Chapter 1.

Talma’s early songs take their texts from a variety of sources, but she seems to have preferred American and British poetry. At the beginning of her career as a composer of art songs, she selected poems by English writers: William Blake (1757–1827), John Keats (1795–1821), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861), and George Meredith (1828–1909) as well as a traditional Irish prayer. Her second song, “On the Surface of Things,” marks the beginning of a long professional relationship with the poetry of American modernist Wallace Stevens (1879–1955), whose works she turned to a number of times. “Song in the Songless,” with a text by Meredith, is melancholy and conveys a sense of mourning, as do the three previous songs. I have proposed that these text-settings arose from the grief the composer felt at the death of a younger sister, Laura, who was listed as living with Talma and her mother in New York City in the 1920 Census but was not reported as a member of the household in the 1930 Census.1 During the 1930s, Talma set five of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s \textit{Sonnets from the Portuguese} (1850) at a time when her music appears to have been devoted to expressing her unrequited desire for Boulanger; this is also seen and heard in her \textit{Three Madrigals} (1929) for three voices and string quartet or piano and was probably communicated in the currently-lost songs.
Illustration 2.1.
Louise Talma at Fontainebleau (ca. late 1920s)

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“La Belle Dame Sans Merci” (1929), based on Keats’s 1819 ballad, and “Never Seek to Tell Thy Love” (1934) with text by Blake.

It is important to keep the probable emotional context for each song in mind when studying and performing it. As noted, it is possible that the first five songs refer to the loss of a younger sister sometime between 1920 and 1925. Indeed, I have speculated that in 1926 Talma with her mother traveled to study in France for the first time as part of their recovery from Laura’s death. The Five Sonnets, as I have previously documented, “likely refer to another aspect of her life, namely, her love and desire for an erotic relationship with Nadia Boulanger,” and constitute a “non-traditional form of autobiography,” or what Caren Kaplan calls an “out-law genre.”

This collection of Talma’s early songs suggests that the composer had heavy thoughts on her mind, selecting texts about loss, confusion, and the cyclical nature of the world. Her first exclusively instrumental work employed similarly melancholy folk songs for its melodic material. Isabeau Poème, written for a 1927–1928 Canadian Railways composition contest, is scored for chamber orchestra and referenced several French and French-Canadian folk songs as its basis, including “Isabeau s’y Promène” and “Alouette.” She altered the melodies slightly from their traditional form and recast both songs in G minor. In a communication to the competition jury appended to the score, Talma noted that she had also quoted phrases from “La belle francoise,” “Une perdriole,” “Sept ans sur mer,” “Le miracle du nouveau-né,” and “La bergère muette.” For the poems for voice and piano, Talma also placed these song fragments in minor keys and slow tempi and incorporated the “sigh” motif repeatedly.

Lacking further documentation, it is impossible to prove that the loss of her sister at a young age was an influence on Talma’s early compositions. What is clear, however, is that she had a sister living with her and her mother as of January 1920; that her first musical compositions arrive rather abruptly after a previous declaration of a career as a performer and teacher; and that these works express sorrow, grief, and bereavement. The cause, place, and date of the death of Laura Talma will probably remain unknown. Nor will the full impact of her life and death on her sister be documented, but some hints to the answers to these tantalizing questions can be discovered in Talma’s earliest songs.

“Invocation to the Rain” (1925)

Yellow butterflies over the blossoming virgin corn
with pollen painted faces,
Chase one another in brilliant throng.
Blue butterflies over the blossoming virgin corn
with pollen painted faces,
Chase one another in brilliant streams.

Over the blossoming corn, over the virgin corn, wild bees hum.
Over the blossoming corn, over the virgin beans, wild bees hum.
Over your field of growing corn all day shall hang the thunder cloud
Over your field of growing corn all day shall come the rushing rain.
Hopi Corn-Planting Song

Nothing in Talma’s archive indicates where she found the lyrics for “Invocation to the Rain,” but the text, a Hopi corn-planting song, was disseminated in a number of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century anthologies of “women’s poetry” and was also published in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1903. While a small school of American composers led by Arthur Farwell (1872–1952) and showcased in publications from his “Indianist” Wa-Wan Press were active around this time, Talma does not seem to have written this song as part of this movement or in response to hearing or becoming familiar with any particular Indianist works.

Instead, she seems to have been drawn to the language itself and its use of metaphor. She later stated that the origins of a text held no particular attraction for her; the words, and often the sounds of the words, were all. Nonetheless, the text here appears to connect butterflies with young women, a trope not uncommon during this period and in this kind of poetry. If the song were a response to a death in her family, Talma’s approach is not surprising in its treatment of the words “yellow” and “blue” and the movement in the work from happiness to the coming storm.

Talma divided the song into three sections: mm. 1–32; mm. 33–39; and mm. 40–54. The form is a basic ABA, with a tempo change (m. 33) and a return to the original tempo (m. 40). She created a sense of continuity by the placement of a crescendo that begins anew and rises through each section and with the manipulation of a descending minor or major second as a “sigh” motif, well-documented to represent melancholy in music and what would become one of Talma’s favorite signifiers of emotion. At the same time, she shifted the harmonic language of the song between modal and tonal schema and increasingly pushed the rhythmic phrases into shorter and shorter blocks as the song progresses.

The song’s beginning in D pentatonic in the voice and D major in the piano with chords moving in a pattern of I—IV—I—V establishes the first of several harmonic progressions in which a more traditional movement of IV—V is interrupted by a I chord in root position. Talma introduced scale degrees 2 and 7 into the vocal line only at the end of the first stanza (m. 12), creating a perfect cadence (m. 13). She then began to assign C naturals and F naturals to the voice, suggesting D dorian. Whereas the seventh scale degree did not occur in the previous phrase until the cadence, here it is heard frequently in its lowered form to signify the change in mode. Talma also changed the piano texture here. The part is marked *leggiero*, and quarter notes in place of dotted quarters lessen the density of the piano’s part. The change in the modality from the first two lines (“Yellow butterflies”) to the second pair (“Blue butterflies”) is heard as movement from a major to a minor inflection, made all the more noticeable by the minor dominants supporting the line. While the first two lines rise to an E

\[ E \]
and return pentatonically stepwise to D, the second two lines fall from the E, with the introduction of duplets (mm. 28 and 29) that destabilize the established 6/8 meter.

Talma’s pattern of destabilization is confirmed at measure 32, where the harmony moves toward G dorian and then unexpectedly introduces F-sharp minor. The increased chromaticism imbues the song with a building anxiety that is most fully realized in the B section, marked *meno mosso*. At the *meno mosso* Talma not only unexpectedly introduced a new tempo but also changed the meter from 6/8 to 9/8. A series of minor seconds in the vocal line is supported by a series of dissonant passages in the melody and piano that, through secondary dominants, eventually wend their way to B minor for the return to Tempo I (m. 40). Minor seconds continue to subvert the expectation of resolution in the A1 section, and unexpected upbeats spanning an octave provide the largest intervallic space heard in the voice anywhere in the work. Talma returned fleetingly to D pentatonic in the voice’s final measures, as the piano part likewise modulates through leading-tone exchanges to D major.

Talma’s text-setting suggests that this work was influenced by French impressionist and neoclassical vocal works, which generally privilege the text above the music. The natural stresses of each word are mimicked by the musical rhythm. To ensure that the text is completely clear, Talma’s treatment is mostly syllabic, and it becomes increasingly more so as the song moves from its quiet beginning to a stormier end. The words “one another” (mm. 13–14) are first heard as a two-note melisma but are set syllabically when they are repeated. The words “brilliant” (m. 30) and “virgin” (m. 38) are the last expressed as melismas until the pre-cadential “rushing” (m. 47).

See Example 2.2 on page 000.

“On the Surface of Things” (1926–1927)

In my room, the world is beyond my understanding;  
But when I walk I see that it consists of three or four  
hills and a cloud.

From my balcony, I survey the yellow air,  
Reading where I have written,  
“The spring is like a belle undressing.”

The gold tree is blue.  
The singer has pulled his cloak over his head.  
The moon is in the folds of the cloak.  
Wallace Stevens

For her second song, Talma chose another text with descriptions of the natural world as well as elements of “blueness” and sadness. Stevens organized “On the Surface of Things,” first printed in 1919 and collected in his first book of
poetry (1923), in three sections. Talma’s setting reflects this in the way she made changes to the pitches in the left hand. Like “Invocation,” “Surface” is tonally ambiguous: the composer employed melodic minor seconds, harmonic tritones, and major sevenths in such a way as to obscure potential key centers and cadence points. In section A (mm. 1–13) Talma placed A, B, and E in the left hand and in section B (m. 14/the first half of m. 25) replaced them with G, C, and D; the C section (the second half of m. 25/first half of m. 32) is based on F-sharp, B, and E; and section D (the second half of m. 32-m. 40) is marked by a movement to E flat, B flat, and F. While Talma did not deliberately begin working with serial techniques until later in her career, all of the three-pitch groups here are transpositions of prime form \{0,2,7\} of pitch class set 3–9. Each of these three-pitch groups implies multiple possible key centers, which along with the plaintive vocal line aptly captures the text’s wonder at the beauty and changeability of the world.

“Surface” is the first of Talma’s songs to demonstrate her interest in counterpoint, with its simple canonic technique to propel the piece. In it the right hand of the keyboard foretells the vocal line ten beats before the vocal line enters in canon, by which time the piano has moved on to the next phrase. This creates both a sense of consistency in the repetition of the melodic line but also destabilizes the sense of meter by placing these ten beats of the canon against the song’s 6/4 time signature. In addition, ties and slurs frequently group notes into irregular cells of five and seven beats, further obscuring the work’s meter. As in “Invocation,” the clarity of the text remains Talma’s top priority, and the music follows the natural rhythm of the words.

See Example 2.3 on page 000.

“\textit{When the Storm Breaks}” (1927–1928)

When the storm breaks for him,
   may the trees shake for him their blossoms down.
And, in the might, the night that he is troubled,
   May a friend wake for him so that his time be doubled.
And at the end of all loving and love
   may the Man above give him a crown.

Traditional Irish Prayer

Talma’s setting of this anonymous Irish poem dates from roughly the same time as “Invocation” and “Surface” and reveals many of the same neoclassical characteristics of the two earlier songs. Like them, it is composed in distinct blocks, and she privileged the text, changing meter often to accommodate it. Also similar are the prominence of the “sigh” motif and its resulting melancholy cast.\footnote{In “When the Storm Breaks,” Talma placed parallel octaves throughout the piano part and created counterpoint to the vocal line. She also constructed a third voice in the bass to emphasize an occasional dissonance, usually that of a whole step. The vocal line moves frequently from minor to major second,}
creating a melodic function of scale degrees 2–1, which takes form as a phrase
ending gesture or leads to an open fifth with the piano.

“When the Storm Breaks” is non-developmental. The focus instead is the
counterpoint between the voice and piano. Its harmonic language is non-
functional, and the two parts are entirely dissimilar apart from the presence of
major and minor seconds. The play with chromaticism and the privilege of the
grande ligne are integral parts of the song. The text setting is primarily syllabic,
and the frequency of a dotted-quarter/eighth rhythmic construction in the vocal
line creates a sense of repetition even as the text forces emphases on off-beats
and in unexpected places. The piano’s straighter rhythms set against the voice’s
dotted rhythms create a tension resolved only in part in the last two measures of
the song, when the piano line mimics the vocal line for the first time.

See Example 2.4 on page 000.

“Song in the Songless” (1928)

They have no songs, the sedges dry,
And still they sing.
It is within my breast they sing,
As I pass by.
Within my breast they touch a string,
They wake a sigh.
There is but sound of sedges dry;
In me they sing.

George Meredith

“Song in the Songless,” Talma’s last stand-alone work for voice and piano
from this early period, is more experimental than her previous pieces. While
“Surface” and “Storm” lacked key signatures and relied on accidentals to indicate
pitches, “Songless” has neither a key signature nor bar lines but one, which falls
approximately one-quarter of the way through the piece, after the first two lines
of text. The double bar at the end of measure 4 marks this position in the
original manuscript. For this edition and ease of performance, I have added bar
lines and reminder accidentals and have re-voiced some of the piano part in
places where the multiple lines were too difficult to parse clearly in Talma’s
manuscript version.

As in “Invocation,” “Surface,” and “Storm,” Talma frequently used the minor
second and tritone both melodically and harmonically in “Song” to represent
sadness or mourning. Like the others, it too is cast in block form, with one block
or section per stanza, differentiated by changes in the piano’s introductory
chords and by the tonal centers implied by the vocal line where the ascending
melodic second functions as scale degrees 7–1. The piece begins with an
introductory section of stacked thirds moving in contrary motion between the
two hands in a palindromic progression over seven beats. This symmetry,
repeated throughout the piece, creates continuity from one section to the next.
Talma also stressed the relationship of the fifth between the song’s tonal centers (G# and C#) by beginning the first and last sections with an open fifth one half-step away from those centers in the piano (A–D). She also approached the tritone in the harmony to destabilize the expectation of the interval’s constancy.

The vocal line is, as in the previous works, carefully crafted to fit the stresses of the text. Each repetition of the words “In me they sing” is set to an unchanging motif of three static eighth notes that rise a semitone higher to a note of the length of a quarter note or longer. Because of its chromaticism, “Song in the Songless” is more technically demanding for the singer than the earlier pieces, calling on the performer to sing semitones apart from the piano and to leap into dissonances.

See Example 2.5 on page 000.

Five Sonnets from the Portuguese (1934)

Talma’s intense relationship with Nadia Boulanger has been well-documented in biographies of Boulanger and histories of the Conservatoire Américain in Fontainebleau, where they first met as student and teacher.15 As Marjorie Garber has pointed out, the relationship of student and instructor is a dynamic one rife with erotic possibility.16 Countless lesbian and bisexual narratives relate the phenomenon of a female student’s “crush” or “flame” for an older female teacher, and Talma’s own letters serve as this kind of narrative. Talma filled her rooms with photographs of Boulanger; cherished gifts from her almost to the point of fetishization; wrote and re-wrote countless letters, saving both copies of her own and those from Boulanger, no matter how brief or impersonal; and, looking any human foibles her love interest displayed, rhapsodized about Boulanger’s qualities to others.

There is, however, no evidence that Boulanger returned any of these feelings for Talma. While the women were certainly close, no letters or other materials indicate that Boulanger experienced a romantic interest in Talma. This did not dissuade the student from attempting to woo the teacher through her music. Her Three Madrigals (1929) for women’s voices and piano or string quartet and the songs “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” (1929), “Late Leaves” (1934), and “Never Seek to Tell Thy Love” (1934) are all love songs with texts that speak of a lover’s despair over the beloved’s disinterest.17

Talma composed her first song cycle during the summer of 1934 at the Conservatoire Américain in Fontainebleau and revised two of the songs slightly the following year. She took as her texts five of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Sonnets from the Portuguese (1845–1846), love poems written for her husband, the poet Robert Browning. In her notes for the songs, Talma listed all of Barrett Browning’s sonnets and placed check marks by certain numbers; the heading at the top of these pages of notes are generic indicators, separating the sonnets into three types: “about death—mostly of a young girl,” “personal,” and “nature.”
Illustration 2.2. Manuscript of “Song in the Songless,” Page 1

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She selected sonnets from “about death” and “personal,” possibly planning to set all of the checked items at some point.\(^1\) In 1934, however, Talma elected just five of the sonnets: numbers XXI, “Say Over Again”; VII, “The Face of All the World Is Changed”; XII, “When Our Two Souls Stand Up”; I, “I Thought Once How Theocritus Had Sung”; and XXXIII, “Yes, Call Me by My Pet Name!”

In each of these, a lover implores the beloved to confirm her love, to call her by pet names, and to reassure her of her devotion. The texts speak of the lover being “caught up into love, and taught the whole/Of life in a new rhythm” (VII); pleading with the beloved to embrace their emotions and the relationship, and, eventually, being united in death as they may never be in life. The choice of this particular sonnet further indicates Talma’s intention for the works to represent same-sex desire. Theocritus (flourished ca. 270 BCE) was well known for love poetry addressed to other men and for Bucolic poems that focus on the fidelity of lovers in spite of the fact that they may be manipulated by the gods to love others or renounce their love. The connection between these texts and Talma’s own desire for Boulanger seems clear. During the period in which she composed the *Five Sonnets*, she repeatedly promised Boulanger that her devotion had not faded, writing, “As for you, you are enshrined in the inmost sanctuary of my heart where neither Time nor the vicissitudes of life can make the smallest change.”\(^1\)

The *Five Sonnets* were composed for a woman’s voice (like the writing for the *Three Madrigals*, with a rather limited range) and piano.

Talma’s settings are somewhat like “Songless” in that they are not metered, although she did usually provide bar lines to mark measures. I have added time signatures for all five songs without altering Talma’s bar lines except for a long, unevenly-measured passage in the first song, where I have added bar lines for clarity. As in “Songless,” I have occasionally re-voiced lines for readability. Two songs, No. 2, “VII. The Face of All the World Has Changed,” and No. 3, “XXII. When Our Two Souls Stand Up,” are represented by two extant fair copies in the Louise Talma Collection at the Library of Congress. I have based my editions primarily on the later fair copy, adding details such as dynamics and expressive marks from the earlier copies in order to create the most complete version possible. In the case of differing notes or directives, I have followed Talma’s practices and deferred to the later copy as definitive.

By the time Talma began composing the songs of this cycle, she had begun studying with Boulanger and was preparing for conversion, with Boulanger as her godmother, to Roman Catholicism. Barrett Browning’s poems seem an obvious fit for this period of Talma’s life: while they are passionate expressions directed to a beloved, they also reference non-sexual Christian love. The songs were first performed by soprano Helen Marshall with the composer at the piano at a League of Composers concert in New York City on February 23, 1936, a highly publicized and public event.\(^2\) This, too, signifies that, like *Three Madrigals*, the works were intended as public statements of a woman expressing her love for another woman.
“XXI. Say Over Again” (1934)

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem a “cuckoo-song,” as thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Belovëd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt’s pain
Cry, “Speak once more—thou lovest!” Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

This first song of the cycle, “XXI. Say Over Again,” contains excellent examples of Talma’s practice of dis/continuity, both in terms of meter and rhythm and in regard to tonality. Constructed in an ABA\(^1\) form, it begins by clearly indicating that the entire song will juxtapose two against three in a variety of ways. Talma syncopated triplets over duples and across multiple beats; the right hand has alternating measures of two and three beats while the left hand plays a steady pattern of triplets. The vocal line moves easily over and between these meters and rhythms, slipping from one to another without pause. In Talma’s original score, during the B section (mm. 14–30) the bar lines between voice, right hand, and left hand do not match up. Example 2.1 shows how Talma originally barred this section beginning at measure 14.

**Example 2.1. Original Barring in “Say Over Again” (mm. 14–16).**

While the song begins in F-sharp minor, as indicated by its key signature, it becomes bitonal at measure 14, where Talma wrote in a change of key to A-flat major but simultaneously suggested C minor. This B section employs an unchanging ground bass of eighth notes: [C—A-flat—D-flat; F-sharp—G—C]. The right hand plays eighths or quarters above the ground in a similar repeating pattern, positioning D-flat and F with or near to the bass’s C—A-flat; E-flat and G
near or with the D-flat—F-sharp; and F-flat—A-flat against the C—G. When the
recapitulation of the opening material returns (m. 30), there is a formal key
change back to F-sharp minor, but the metrical ambiguity persists. Although the
bar lines now line up between both hands of the piano and the singer, the
uncertainty of the free time before remains, and the length of the measures
changes with each new bar line.

See Example 2.6 on page 000.

“VII. The Face of All the World Is Changed” (1934)

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

“VII. The Face of All the World Is Changed” is also fluid in meter but focuses
more on traditional contrapuntal techniques than its precursor. Talma relied on
repetition as well as the shifting of patterns to create a kaleidoscopic soundscape
in which running sixteenth notes in the right hand are contrasted with repeated,
highly chromatic phrases of eighth notes in the left. The vocal line is stepwise
and tonal at the beginning but becomes less so as the counterpoint grows more
complex in the course of the song. A series of quick modulations destabilizes the
last section, which was established around D. Only through some highly
chromatic passages does the voice finally return to the tonic of the song’s
opening. A short coda, during which the sixteenth notes return, provides
continuity through the rhythmic pattern but also continues to unseat a sense of
tonality. The song ends ambiguously with an unexpected turn to the relative
minor, ending on octave Bs in the bass. Here Talma also applied some of the
text-painting heard in her earlier songs. The words “I, who thought to sink” move
downward from D to G as the phrase unfolds. The vocal line climbs through each
stanza, however, rising a minor or major second each time, and the second-
highest pitch of the song peaks on the word “new” in the phrase “caught up, into
love, and taught the whole life in a new rhythm.”

See Example 2.7 on page 000.
“XXII. When Our Two Souls Stand Up” (1934)

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think! In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

In “XXII. When Our Two Souls Stand Up,” the third song of the cycle, Talma contrived an ABA form with an initial section in F minor, a highly chromatic B section, and a return to the A motif and well-defined tonality in a brief coda. The A section is comprised of a complex, repeating, descending motif in the left hand and melodic octave Fs in the right, while the vocal line avoids rhythmic intricacy and chromaticism until measure 10. At this point Talma abandoned the descending motif and began the B section, which moves through a series of quickly changing meters and key areas, perhaps in reflection of the text, which has moved from expressing happiness in the A section to examining the limitations of that happiness.

When the A motif returns (m. 35), it signifies a gradual return to F minor after the chromaticism of the B section. Nonetheless, it is altered and appears in various forms as the poem’s narrator desperately hopes for “a day” to stand in love with the beloved. Only after the brevity of this day and its foreboding surroundings, “darkness and the death-hour,” are acknowledged does the material of the opening finally return to provide closure.

See Example 2.8 on page 000.

“I. I Thought Once How Theocritus Had Sung” (1934)

I thought once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years—
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,
“Guess now who holds thee?”—“Death,” I said. But there
The silver answer rang, “Not Death, but Love.”

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

“I. I Thought Once How Theocritus Had Sung” refers to the proposed originator of bucolic Greek poetry. In the *Idylls* and other works attributed to him, Theocritus wrote of singing-matches, ill-fated loves between men and immortals, and the histories of the region. He is also known as one of the earliest voices describing same-sex desire, which may have been a factor in Talma’s choice of the poem as a lyric. This fourth sonnet of the cycle is the longest of the songs; it borrows materials from the three previous songs as well as posits new ideas. A short canon of syncopated rhythms in the piano accompanies a long vocal line in E minor that contains the first two lines of the text (mm. 1–15). Talma introduced chromatic complexity in setting the next line, in which the lover looks back and sees missed opportunities for happiness. An intense contrapuntal texture begins with the pickup to measure 29, and just as the rhythm seems to have settled into a pattern of its own, it is broken by a series of sixteenths much like those in “The Face of All the World Is Changed” before the protagonist is accosted by an unearthly voice.

A sudden break abruptly halts the long passage of sixteenths and the singer’s increasingly frantic, repeating motif. In the measures that follow, the text explains that the lover has been grasped by love and not death. This is signified by bare, quiet fourths in the piano and a return to a simpler texture of tonic octaves with added major seconds and minor thirds. As with Talma’s earlier work, the interval of the second appears to represent pain or longing, emotional conditions that not even the joy that comes from expressing her love can soothe.

See Example 2.9 on page 000.

“XXXIII. Yes, Call Me by My Pet Name” (1934)

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips plied,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven’s undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God—call God!—so let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The final song of *Five Sonnets from the Portuguese* is a setting of Sonnet XXXIII, “Yes, Call Me by My Pet Name,” which along with “Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?” is, perhaps, the best known of Barrett Browning’s poems. Once again Talma contrived an ABA form that shifts from a stable, tonal opening through a more nebulous chromatic middle section to a still somewhat harmonically unstable version of the initial section. It begins in E minor with a steady passage of eighth notes creating a dialogue between the piano and voice. The composer changed the texture (m. 17), however, to one much sparser and rhythmically slower than that of the preceding section. The voice leading, much clearer in the A section, now jumps between hands and the vocal line before entering into a much more solemn transition with half notes spaced a minor seventh apart. When the A section material returns (m. 42), along with a reprise of the song’s first line, Talma adopted dissonance as a method of emphasizing the lover’s plea to the beloved and the resulting unhappiness at the beloved’s delay in addressing the lover. Nonetheless, she ultimately transferred the material back to the original tonic, allowing for musical, if not emotional, resolution.

See Example 2.10 on page 000.

**Vocal Ranges in the Early Songs**

In both the *Three Madrigals* and all of these other early works for solo voice, Talma chose what appears to be a remarkably limited range for the singers. In *Three Madrigals*, none of the four voices extend much over an octave from lowest to highest pitch demanded, and not even the sopranos are asked to sing higher than G-sharp. The range for the singer in the *Five Sonnets* is just C4 to G5. Is this, as Sophie Fuller asked in relation to a similar situation, an example of a composer writing in her own range? Or is it a manifestation of the “Sapphonic” voice, as coined by Elizabeth Wood? Wood described the Sapphonic voice as a woman’s voice that is characteristically powerful and problematic, defiant and defective. Its flexible negotiation and integration of an exceptional range of registers crosses boundaries among different voice types and their representations to challenge polarities of both gender and sexuality as these are socially—and vocally—constructed. Its negation of categories and the transgressive risks it takes act seductively on a lesbian listener for whom the singer serves as a messenger of desire, her voice as vessel.

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Talma may have assigned limited vocal ranges to these works to help in finding performers. Given the personal nature of the works, I believe that it is no coincidence that all of the parts fit easily within Talma’s own range. The vocal ranges in these song cycles are not easily classified as to fach; parts of the ranges fall into the traditionally masculine range of the tenor, contributing to the transgressiveness of the works. In all of these pieces, the voices are limited to a small middle but larger lower range, frequently asking the altos in the *Three Madrigals* to drop to G3 and the sopranos to sing near the bottom of their usual range, C4. All of these attributes suggest that the composer deliberately selected these vocal ranges for their personal and potentially erotic qualities in communicating her desire to Boulanger and establish the autobiographical qualities of much of Talma’s oeuvre.

Allegretto

Example of music notation with lyrics:

Yelllow but-ter-flies over the blossoms vir-gin corn with pol-len pain-ted fac-es chase one-an-o-ther in bril-liant throng.
Example 2.2. continued

Blue butterflies

Over the blossoming virgin corn, with pollen painted

Faces chase one another in brilliant streams
Example 2.2. continued

```
32
\begin{music}
Meno mosso
mf
\end{music}

\text{o-ver the blos-som-ing corn}

35
\begin{music}
cresc.
p
\end{music}

\text{o-ver the vir-gin corn wild bees hum o-ver the blos-som-ing corn}

38
\begin{music}
cresc.  \text{\textit{mf}}
\end{music}

\text{o-ver the vir-gin beans wild bees hum o-ver your}
```
Example 2.2. continued

41  f
cresc.

field of growing corn all day shall hang the thunder cloud over your field of

46  mf
m.d.

if

growing corn all day shall come the rushing rain

49

allargando

\[ \text{\textit{p tenderly (mezzo voce)}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{In my room,}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{the world\hspace{1em} is\hspace{1em} beyond\hspace{1em} my\hspace{1em} understand\hspace{1em} ing}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{But when\hspace{1em} I\hspace{1em} walk}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{simile}} \]
Example 2.3. continued

I see that it consists of three or four

hills and a cloud.

From my

balcony, I survey the yellow air.
Example 2.3. continued

20

Reading where I have written, “The

spring is like a belle, undressing.”

27

The gold tree is blue. The singer has
Example 2.3. continued

31 pulled his cloak over his head

pp

35 The moon is in the folds of the

cloak.

38

\[ \text{Tranquillo } \dot{d} = 52 \]

\[ \text{When the storm breaks for him May the trees shake for him Their blossoms down} \]

\[ \text{p legato} \]

\[ \text{And in the night that he is troubled May a} \]

\[ \text{friend wake for him So that his time be doubled; And at the end} \]
Example 2.4. continued

_of all lov-ing and love May the Man ab-o ve the

Man a-bo ve Give him a crown Give him a

crown Give him a crown

1. b
Example 2.4. continued

And at the end crown.

\[ \text{più p} \]

\[ \text{rit.} \quad \text{dim.} \]
Example 2.5. “Song in the Songless” (1928). Text by George Meredith.

\[ \text{They have no songs, the sedges} \]

\[ \text{dry} \quad \text{And still they sing} \]

\[ \text{It is within my breast they sing} \quad \text{As I pass by} \quad \text{Within my} \]
Example 2.5. continued

breast they touch a string
They wake a sigh

There is but sound of
Example 2.5. continued

sed-ges dry  In me they sing.
Text by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.
Example 2.6. continued

word re-pea-t-ed Should seem “a cu-ckoo song,” as thou dost

treat it, Re- mem-ber, ne-ver to the hill or plan, Valley and

wood, with-out her cu-ckoo strain comes the fresh
Example 2.6. continued

Spring in all her green completed.

Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted

By a doubtful spirit voice in that doubt’s pain. Cry, _
Example 2.6. *continued*

```
cresc. poco a poco

“Speak once more thou lov- est!” Who can fear too ma- ny stars, thoug- each in
```

```
heaven shall roll, Too ma- ny flowers, thoug- each shall crown the year?
```

```
Poco agitato
```

---

44 SONGS OF MOURNING AND LOVE

1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 2.6. continued

30

Say thou dost

31

love me, love me, love me

33

roll the silver i-ter-ance! on-ly mind-ing, Dear, To
Example 2.6. continued

love me al-so in si-lence with thy soul.

poco rit.  a tempo

molto rit.

\[\text{\textbf{The}}\]

\[\text{\textbf{face of all the world is changed, I think, Since}}\]

\[\text{\textbf{first I heard the footsteps of thy}}\]
Example 2.7, continued

soul Move still, oh still, be -
side me,

as they stole Be-twixt
Example 2. Continued

10 cresc. poco a poco
me and the dreadful outer brink of obvious

13 death, where I, who thought to

14 sink, was caught up into love, and taught the
Example 2.7. continued

whole of life in a new rhythm.
Example 2.7. continued

The cup of dole God gave for baptism I am fain to

drink, And praise its sweetness, sweet, with thee a-

near. The names of country, heaven, are changed a-

crescendo
Example 2.7. 

34  cresc.

way  For where thou art or shall be, there or here; And

38  a tempo

this  this lute and song

40  loved  yes - ter - ray,  (The sing - ing an - gels
Example 2.7. continued

42 pp Ritardando Poco rit.

know) are-on-ly dear Be-cause thy name moves right in what they

45 a tempo

say.

46 rit.

3

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Example 2.8: When Our Two Souls Stand Up (1934).}

\text{Text by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.}
\end{align*}\]
Example 2.8. continued

in- to fire At ei- ther cur- vèd point, what bit- ter

wrong can the earth do to us that we should not

long Be here con- tent- ed! Think. In mount- ing
Example 2.6. continued

higher, The angels would press on us and aspire To drop some golden

orb of perfect song In - to our deep, dear si - lence, Let us

stay Rather on earth, Beloved, where the unfit con - tra - rious
Example 2.6. continued

moods of men recoil away And iso-late, pure spirits, and pes-

mit A place to stand and love in for a day. With

dark-ness and the death-hour round-ing
Example 2.8. continued
Example 2.9. continued

15

young:
And, as I mused it in his an-tique tongue, I

19

saw, in gra-du-al vi-sion through my tears, The sweet, sad years, the

m.d.

23

me-lan-cho-ly years, those of my own life, who by turns had flung A
Example 2.9. continued

27

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{shadow a cross me} & \quad \text{Straight way I was} \\
\end{align*} \]

30

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{ware, so weeping, how a mystic shape did move} \\
\end{align*} \]

33

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{hind me, and drew me back ward by the hair; And a} \\
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{cresc. poco a poco} & \quad \text{cresc. poco a poco} \\
\end{align*} \]
Example 2.9. continued

voice said in mastery, While I strove

“Guess now Who holds thee?” “Death,” I said. But there, the

silver answer rang. “Not Death, but Love.”

Con moto $d = 75$

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear the name I used to run at, when a child, From in-nocent
Example 2.10. continued

play and leave the cow-slips piled, to glance up in some face that

proved me dear with the look of its eyes.

I miss the clear fond voices which being
Example 2.10. continued

drawn and re-con-ciled into the mu-sic of HeaVEN’s un-de-filed, Call me no

ger. Si-lence on the bier, While I call God

call God! So let thy mouth be heir to

very intense
Example 2.10. continued

those who are now ex-a-ni-mate.

Gather the north flowers,

to complete the South,

And catch the ear-ly love up in the late.

Yes, call me by that
Example 2.10. continued

43
name._ and I, in truth, With the same heart, will

46
answer and not wait.

48
Notes

2. The Keats setting was composed on commission from the Women’s University Glee Club of New York City, directed by Gerald Reynolds, and was given its premiere in May 1929.
3. See Kendra Preston Leonard, “A Great Desire: Autobiography in Louise Talma’s Early Vocal Works,” *Current Musicology* XCII (Fall 2011), 7–31. In this essay, I quoted passages from letters exchanged between the two women that shed light on their personal relationship over the course of time. Some of the observations I relate in this chapter were first published in that article.
8. Two later works also suggest a connection to children and death. *A Child’s Fancy* (1935), a setting of poems for children by Edith Kingdon Gould (1920–2004), and “One Need Not Be a Chamber to Be Haunted” (1941), with text by Emily Dickinson (1830–1886), also hint at nostalgia for an earlier, happier time in Talma’s life and a subsequent sense of loss. While neither the text nor score for *A Child’s Fancy* has survived, the Dickinson poem is well known and is discussed in a later chapter.
12. The image of butterflies as women and girls is analyzed in Michelle Wick Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin*, 152.
18 Louise Talma, *Five Sonnets from the Portuguese* and related notes, 1934, Louise Talma Collection, (Library of Congress).

19 Louise Talma, letter (September 1935) to Nadia Boulanger, Louise Talma Collection (Library of Congress).

20 “League Offers 2d Program of New Works,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (February 16, 1936), 44.


FAREWELL TO YOUTH

While writing the *Five Sonnets* in 1934, Talma converted to Roman Catholicism with Boulanger as her godmother. The twenty-eight-year-old composer had hoped that this profession of faith would draw the women closer together, but her hopes were dashed when Boulanger became more remote; in 1941 their relationship faced a serious breakdown when Talma confronted her former mentor and putative lover with accusations of anti-Semitism. During this same period of the late 1930s and early 1940s, Talma found herself in the position of needing to teach full-time and care for her ailing mother, who had been stricken with Parkinson’s disease. Between these two commitments she cut back on composing, writing only three pieces between 1939 and 1942. When she took it up again following her mother’s death in 1942, her life had considerably changed. She had given up her wooing of Boulanger and focused her energies primarily on sacred and religious music, sublimating her desire for her former teacher with the love and worship of God.

In 1943, Talma was invited to the MacDowell Colony for the first of many extended stays there. Away from the distractions of teaching, New York City, and Boulanger, she renewed her commitment to composition and enjoyed a remarkably productive summer. Her first work since the death of her mother, “Mère, voici vos fils,” became the first song in her cycle *Terre de France*. That summer also saw the composition of her first piano sonata and the *Carmina Mariana*, a sacred work for two sopranos and piano. During the next two summers, Talma returned to MacDowell, completed *Terre*, and wrote “Letter to St. Peter.” The five songs of the cycle, each with a French text, and this stand-alone setting of a text by Elma Dean encapsulated Talma’s reaction to the Second World War as well as her own psychological process of bidding farewell to the France of her youth and her experiences there.

Talma’s compositional style was evolving during this period. While she continued to negotiate many of the aspects of neoclassicism as practiced in France and America, she also began to work with limited pitch sets as a method of creating melodic and harmonic constructs for her works. Although “Letter to St. Peter” is wholly tonal and clearly intended for easy audience understanding, the songs of *Terre de France* are quite sophisticated in terms of structure and motivic materials. It is apparent that Talma’s practice of dis/continuity drives many of the pieces.
Terre de France (1945)

*Terre de France* is highly autobiographical. In the program notes approved by the composer for a 1984 performance, Arthur Cohn provided the following background:

*Terre de France* was composed in 1945 at the MacDowell Colony. This work was written in homage to the much loved land of France. The unifying motif which dictated the choice of poems is the expression of love for this land, and nostalgic desire to return to it from afar; de Bellay [sic] from Rome where he was secretary to Cardinal du Bellay from 1553 to 1558, Charles d’Orleans from England where he was forced to remain for a quarter of a century after having been taken prisoner at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, Joan of Arc from that place from which she knew there would be no return.1

The France of this song cycle was the France of Talma’s past. Although she had returned to France in the 1930s to compose and teach at the Conservatoire Américain in Fontainebleau, where she had previously trained with Boulanger, she no longer felt at home there. After her initial visit to the MacDowell Colony, she decided that it was the ideal place for her to concentrate on creative work. Still, Talma missed France: writing to her friend John Kirkpatrick, a pianist and a fellow student of Boulanger, she mentioned certain works that “will always remain framed for me in [the Palais de Fontainebleau’s] overarching branches of the sycamores in the allée beside the Carp Pond.”2

The horrors of world war in France and elsewhere haunted the composer, who had sent money for French relief and aid throughout the conflict and had kept abreast of local news through the school’s newsletter and its network of New York-based alumni.3 Returning to Fontainebleau, Talma learned that the chateau that housed the Conservatoire Américain had been occupied by the Nazis and that citizens from the town had been imprisoned or executed as members of the resistance.4 *Terre de France* was her farewell to the pre-war world of the Conservatoire Américain and everything it represented for her personally and professionally.

In her manuscripts for *Terre*, Talma often left blank areas in the piano part that would normally contain rests; while I believe she did this to indicate the flow of lines between staves, I have added rests for clarity. I have also revoiced certain pitches between hands in the last three songs in those places where her original voicing rendered the manuscript unclear or nearly impossible to decipher. *Terre de France* took Talma two years to write; its first song takes text from a longer work by French Catholic mystic Charles Péguy (1873–1914). Péguy, a nationalist who died on the battlefield at the Marne, centered his writing on Joan of Arc, a lasting French symbol; the Virgin Mary; and Eve of the Old Testament. The bulk of his work contains religious references or explicates Biblical events. His epic poem *Ève* (1913), from which the song’s text comes, begins with the
statement that the words are those of Jesus to his followers; the poem quotes the
Beatitudes and other passages from the New Testament. Cited by Charles de
Gaulle in a 1942 speech recognizing the Free French, one that was widely
publicized in France and abroad, the poem likely captured Talma’s imagination
that year. A tribute to pre-war France, the text is also strongly anti-war, a position
she would take up again later in her musical reactions to the Cold War and
Vietnam.

“Mère, voici vos fils” (1943)

Mère, voici vos fils et leur immense armée.
Qu’ils ne soient pas jugés sur leur seule misère.
Que Dieu mette avec eux un peu de cette terre
Qui les a tant perdus et qu’ils ont tant aimée.
Que Dieu mette avec eux dans le juste plateau
Ce qu’ils ont tant aimé, quelques grammes de terre,
Un peu de cette vigne, un peu de ce coteau,
Un peu de ce ravin sauvage et solitaire.
Mère, voyez vos fils qui se sont tant battus.
Vous les voyez couchés parmi les nations.
Que Dieu ménage un peu ces êtres débattus.
Ces coeurs pleins de tristesse et d’hésitation.

Charles Péguy

Mother, behold your sons who with the host have perished.
O be their judgment not based on sorrows that tried them.
May God grant them a bit of that dear earth beside them
That wrought them so much woe and that so much they cherished.
May God grant them a bit of that earth that could fill
Their hearts with so much love, sev’ral grains of earth only,
A little of that vineyard, a little of that hill,
A little of that deep ravine so wild and lonely.
Mother, behold your sons who fought so hard a fight,
Whom lying now at rest among the tribes you see.

God grant a little mercy to their sorry plight,
Their hearts so filled with grief and with uncertainty.

Translation by E. Adelaide Hahn

Talma organized three stanzas from the poem in block form. The selected
passages address the deaths of young men and remember them through the
places they loved and fell: France’s hills and fields, ravines and mountains.
“Mère, voici vos fils” is similar to her early mournful songs: the text is treated
syllabically in a slow tempo, and the descending major or minor second “sigh”
motif indicates grief. Numerous examples of dis/continuity can be identified on several levels.

Beginning in E minor, “Mère, voici vos fils” moves to G major through the use of secondary dominants and returns the same way in a loose ternary form. In addition to its importance as a work through which Talma was working through her complicated relationship with France and her past, it is significant in that it is the first piece in which she employed rhythmical, metrical, or pitch-based elements to suggest extra-musical ideas, particularly ones associated with religion. The concept of French ground consecrated by blood and the loss of life lies at the heart of the text; in the text-setting, Talma identified pleas for God to bless the ground where soldiers had fallen and prayers to the Virgin Mary [“Mère”] with the pitch class set {0,2,7}. Seconds and sevenths are common throughout the song. The interval of a fifth is significant: in the first two chords of the song and as a descending fifth on “Mère” (m. 21), “leur” (m. 2), and “Dieu” (mm. 6 and 29) as well as on words signifying the earth, “terre” (mm. 8 and 16), “plateau” (m. 13), and “ravin” (m. 19). In addition, Talma approached the words so that these moments of consecration are also signified by note values of three units, connecting them to the Christian trinity. Both “juste plateau” (m. 13) and “grammes de terre” (m. 16) are expressed as eighth-note triplets followed, respectively, by a dotted quarter and a quarter-eighth formation on the same pitch.

Please see Example 3.1 on page 000.

“Sonnet” (1945)

Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage,
Ou comme cestuy-là qui conquist la Toison,
Et puis est retourné, plein d’usage et raison,
Vivre entre ses parents le reste de son age!
Quand revoiray-je, hélas! de mon petit village
Fumer la cheminée, et en quelle saison
Revoiray-je le clos de ma pauvre maison,
Qui m’est une province, et beaucoup d’avantage?
Plus me plaist le séjour qu’ont basty mes ayeux,
Que des palais romains le front audacieux,
Plus que le marbre dur me plaist l’ardoise fine;
Plus mon Loyre gaulois que le Tybre latin,
Plus mon petit Lyréé que le mont Palatin,
Et plus que l’air marin la douceur angevine.

Joachim du Bellay

O happy he who’s journeyed well as did of yore
Ulysses or the man who the Fleece bravely got,
And then returned to find mongst his kindred his lot
Through his remaining years enriched with wisdom’s store.
When shall I see again the smoke that rises o’er
The humble village roofs, the familiar old spot,
O and when shall I see my own poor little cot,
For me a great demesne, and vastly vastly more?
Home my forefathers built is the place I would bide,
Not haughty Roman halls with all their pomp and pride.
Far more than marble hard, thin slate my fancy pleases;
More my own Gallic Loire than the Tiber of Rome,
More than the Palatine my Lyré here at home,
And more than ocean air my Anjou’s gentle breezes.

Translation by E. Adelaide Hahn

For Terre’s second song, Talma chose a sonnet by Joachim du Bellay (ca. 1522–1560) that praises homecomings and compares the familiar and modest pleasures of home favorably to the experiences of travel. This song too unfolds in an ABA form, with each section growing increasingly complex and chromatic.

Each stanza of the song is based on the set \{0,2,5\} with the interpolation of open fifths that change it on alternating beats to \{0,3,5,8\}, often suggesting various minor key areas. Talma repeatedly established expectations for tonal key areas only to move away from them abruptly into unfamiliar pitch collections, possibly signifying the pain of leaving a beloved place behind and recognizing the changes that have taken place in it and that make it less familiar. The A section materials are marked by the frequent use of C, G, and A, and in the B section she created a pattern on octave Es that suggests movement toward a climax and resolution in C major. This expectation is subverted, however, when she began to make use of the Es as part of the interval cycle \{0,1,3,7\} with \{C—E—F sharp—G\} rather than as the third in C major. The continuity of the earlier centrality of C is further altered when the C climbs a semitone to C sharp and the G drops to F sharp, creating a \{0,2,5,7\} tetrachord (m. 19) with emphasis on dyads of \{B/C sharp\} and \{E/F sharp\} as the octave pattern ends.

The climax of the song, for which the text is the second syllable of “maison” [home], is treated similarly. Repeated C sharps in the vocal line and a set of \{F—G—D\} in the piano hint at an impending cadence in D, but the voice drops away from an eighth-note D, supported by Ds in the piano, to B, again undermining the tonal sound Talma had created while actually using axial centricity to propel the line. The voice returns to D, but the piano line contains \{F—G—B\}, rotating the tonal function of the D from tonic to mediant and illustrating that tonality is not, in fact, truly in play here. In the last fifteen measures of the song, marked “tranquil,” the text lists the things the narrator will not see again. The song ends calmly on an interval class that doubles as an A-minor seventh chord in first inversion.

Please see Example 3.2 on page 000.
“Ballade” (1945)

En regardant vers le païs de France,
Ung jour m’avint, à Dovre sur la mer,
Qu’il me souvint de la douce plaisance
Que je souloye où-dit païs trouver.
Si commençay de cuer à souspirer,
Combien certes que grant bien me faisoit
De veoir France, que mon cuer amer doit.
Je m’avisay que c’estoit non scavance
De tells soupirs dedens mon cuer garder,
Veu que je voy que la voye commence
De bonne paix, qui tous bien peut donner.
Pour ce tournay en confort mon penser:
Mais non pourtant mon cuer ne se lassoit
De veoir France, que mon cuer amer doit.
Alors chargeay en la nef d’espérance
Tous mes souhaitz, en les priant d’aler
Oultre la mer, san faire demourance,
Et à France de me recommander.
Or, mous doint Dieu bonne paix sans tarder;
Adonc auray loisir, mais qu’ainsi soit,
De veoir France, que mon cuer amer doit.
Paix est trésor qu’on ne peut trop louer;
Je hé guerre, point ne la doit priser;
Destourbé m’a longtemps, soit tort ou droit,
De veoir France, que mon cuer amer doit.
Charles D’Orléans

While toward the land of France my eyes were turning,
One day it chanced at Dover on the sea
That mem’ry fond those pleasures was discerning
Which I was wont to find in that countree.
Then I began to sigh most fervently,
How much truly it would bring me good cheer
To see France that to my heart is so dear.
Then I bethought myself to keep such yearning
Within my heart would surely nonsense be,
Since paths of peace open now, I am learning,
Of lovely peace, which makes all glad and free.
This turned my mind to a happier key,
But still my heart lost not its wish sincere
To see France that to my heart is so dear.
So then I loaded those wishes a-burning
All on the bark of hope, and bade them flee
Over the sea across the billows churning,
Straight to France, and convey regards from me.
Now that God give speedy peace is my plea,
And I’ll have leisure then, granted He hear,
To see France that to my heart is so dear.
Peace is a treasure of highest degree;
Who hates not war, truly a dolt is he;
War’s forbidden me now for many a year
To see France that to my heart is so dear.

Translation by E. Adelaide Hahn

For the third song in the cycle, Talma chose a ballade by Charles, Duke of Orléans (1394–1465). It, like the du Bellay text, examines France after time spent elsewhere. Unlike the music conceived for the du Bellay, however, “Ballade” is firmly tonal, conceived in E major. Rather than creating dis/continuity through shifting tonal centers or non-tonal elements, here she employed counterpoint as the song’s driving force. Much like her Toccata for Orchestra (1944) and Alleluia in Form of Toccata for piano (1945), Talma contrasted eighths in perpetual motion in the piano with long melodic lines in the voice. Indeed, the song’s primary rhythmic motif, a dotted eighth-sixteenth figure, is borrowed from the Toccata and the Alleluia. Talma singled it out for special attention in the vocal line, restricting it to just one word: “France.” Its recurrence five times (mm. 3 in augmented form, 15, 34, 50, and 62) further emphasizes its importance.

While “France” is undisputedly the most crucial word and the one given the longest melisma, a few others are specially treated as well. They are easy to identify: the remainder of the text is presented syllabically. “Dovre” [Dover] (m. 4) is designed to rhyme rhythmically with “France” (m. 3) but merits only three notes over two beats. The word “plaisance” [pleasure] (mm. 6–7) is drawn out and carries the highest pitch in the vocal line so far; Talma extended “voye” [path] and “commence” [begin] over rhythmic structures that augment the earlier dotted rhythm (mm. 25–26). “Recommander” [commend] (mm. 44–45) is also given this treatment.

The word that receives the most elaborate melismatic figure after “France,” however, is “cueur” [heart]. In its initial appearance, “cueur” is set syllabically, but later in the song, it is heard three times with the same melodic line: it starts on an E half note tied to an E eighth and is slurred to descending eighths on C sharp, A, and F sharp (m. 17). In the last occurrence of this melisma (m. 63), Talma changed the interval cycle slightly, so that the tied E moves up to an F-sharp before descending a fourth to a C sharp followed by a B in the next measure. In the piano, all four statements of “cueur” are supported in the same manner: a B-minor chord and F-sharp minor seventh chord sounding simultaneously. This “resolves” to [A—C—E—B] and functions as a dominant for E, which Talma made a clear tonic in the last four measures of the song.

This musical connection between “France” and “heart” indicates that Talma chose this text in order to make her own emotional relationship with the nation.
manifest. This poem, like “Mère, voici vos fils,” is an anti-war text. “I hate war,” the narrator proclaims, “none should prize it.” This dissonant passage, set over a G-diminished arpeggio in the voice and a cluster containing both G-minor, G-diminished, and E-minor triads in the piano, stresses the narrator’s—and the composer’s—feelings. The passage is also marked marcato to resonate with the military associations of “war”; the eighth notes that follow in the left hand retain this abruptness even as the voice and right hand of the piano shift back into a more elided and melancholic articulation for the final anguish of “France que mon cœur aimer doît.”

See Example 3.3 on page 000.

“Ode” (1945)

Dieu te gard l’honneur du printemps
Qui étens
Tes beaux trésors sur la branche,
Et qui découvres au soleil
Le vermeil
De ta beauté naïve et franche.
D’assez loin tu vois redoublé
Dans le blé
Ta face, de cinabre teinte,
Dans le blé qu’on voit réjouir
De joiur
De ton image en son verd peinte.
Près de toy, sentant ton odeur,
Plein d’ardeur
Je façonne un vers dont la grâce
Maugré les tristes Soeurs vivra,
Et suivra
Le long vol des ailes d’Horace.
Les uns chanteront les oeillets
Vermeillets,
Ou du lis la fleur argentée,
Ou celle qui s’est par les prez
Diaprez
Du sang des princes enfantée.
Mais moy, tant que chanter pourray,
Je louray
Toujours en mes Odes la rose,
Autant qu’elle porte le nom
De renom
De colle où ma vie est enclose.

Pierre de Ronsard
You are queen of spring as you spread
Ruby red
Treasures on view in their rareness,
And so unto the sun you show
The bright glow
Of your naïve and candid fairness.
You can see redoubled appear
Far and near
Your face with its vermilion flushes
Through the wheat joys in the scene
Midst its green
Of your fair image that bright blushes,
As I breathe your scent that’s distilled,
Passion-filled
Close at hand a song I am singing
To live, the Sisters grim despite,
And take flight
Where his course great Horace is winging.
Now some of carnations will write
Crimson bright,
Or the lily’s silvery flowers,
Or blossoms whose life had as springs
Blood of kings,
In meadows gay with varied bowers.
But I while I sing shall praise
All my days
No flow’r in my Odes save roses,
Because ’tis the rose bears the name
Of great fame
Of her who my being encloses.

Translation by E. Adelaide Hahn

Talma connected “Ode,” the fourth component of the cycle, with the previous three songs through a complexity of counterpoint that waxes and wanes over the course of its duration. The text by Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585) describes the beauties of France and compares the nation to a garden of roses. Talma set it primarily syllabically, with only occasional melismas to mark the ends of phrases. As in “Ballade” she chose, as a driving force in the work, counterpoint over chromaticism. “Ode” opens in A major, shifts to A-flat major, and returns to A major as part of the song’s three-part form.

In keeping with the earlier songs in the cycle, “Ode” is metrically fluid: it moves from one time signature to another in order to keep the text clear. Talma frequently introduced irregular time signatures to signify elements of difference; when these stabilize, they are marked by changes to regular meters at the ends of phrases. The ends of phrases, as noted above, are melismatic and designed to
stress the final words of each line, which are part of a rhyming couplet. The texture also thickens at these points, with the addition of voices in counterpoint, suggesting their importance. While Talma sometimes engaged in text-painting here, she more often signaled the increased importance of a word or phrase by repeating elements, by changing the syntax of the music, or by creating new levels of it. The word “peinte” [painted] (mm. 28–29) conveys the two-dimensional aspect of an image through an abrupt shift from constant quarter notes to long suspensions doubling the voice’s G natural; the religious meaning of “grace” (m. 35) is emphasized by a leap of an octave and a third in the piano, the highest pitch in the song.

The most evocative example of this practice begins at measure 37, where the vocalist sings of taking wing to follow Horace and sings to the flowers from which the princes of France spring. Talma conceived an entirely new texture to emphasize this imagery and its importance in the poem and song. Short ascending figures—two sixteenths and an eighth note—in the right hand emulate the singer rising and reaching for the sky, while the inner line provides a stable key area and the left hand plays a syncopated staccato figure from which the rising figures seem to lift. As the text moves away from the idea of flight and the narrator sings of the “blood of infant princes,” these quick figures change from an upward motion to a mordent-like figure that descends from one pitch and rises again but does not quite reach the original pitch on its return. See Example 5.4 on page 000.

“Adieux à la Meuse” (1945)

Adieu, Meuse endormeuse et douce à mon enfance,
Qui demeures aux prés, où tu coules tout bas.
Meuse, adieu: j’air déjà commencé ma partance
En des pays nouveaux où tu ne coules pas.

Voici que je m’en vais en des pays nouveaux:
Je ferai la bataille et passerais les fleuves,
Je m’en vais m’essayer à de nouveaux travaux,
Je m’en vais commencer là-bas les tâches neuves.

Et pendant ce temps-là, Meuse, ignorante et douce,
Tu couleras toujours, passante accoutumée,
Dans la vallée heureuse où l’herbe vive pousse,
O Meuse inépuisable et que j’avis aimée.

Un silence.

Tu couleras toujours dans l’heureuse vallée;
Où tu coulais hier, tu couleras demain.
Tu ne sauras jamais la bergère en allée,
Qui s’amusait, enfant, à creuser de sa main
Des canaux dans la terre,—à jamais écroulés.
La bergère s’en va, délaissant les moutons.
Et la fileuse va, délaissant les fuseaux.
Voici que je m’en vais loin de tes bonnes eaux,
Voici que je m’en vais bien loin de nos maisons.
Meuse qui ne sais rien de la souffrance humaine,
O Meuse inaltérable et douce à mon enfance,
O toi qui ne sais pas l’émoi de la partance,
Toi qui passes toujours et qui ne pars jamais,
O toi qui ne sais rien de nos mensonges faux,
O Meuse inaltérable, ô Meuse que j’aimais.

Un silence.

Quand reviendrai-je ici filer encor la laine?
Quand verrai-je tes flots qui passent par chez nous?
Quand nous reverrons-nous? et nous reverrons-nous?
Meus que j’aime encore, ô ma Meuse que j’aime.

Charles Péguy

Farewell, dreamy sweet stream, O Meuse in meadows flowing,
You that lulled me in youth with your murmurings low,
Meuse, farewell, I must leave, even now I am going
To countries new and strange where you will never flow.

Behold that now I go to countries new and strange,
I shall join in the fray, and cross full many rivers,
Now I go to essay new work and strange new change,
Now I go far away to enter new endeavors.

And throughout all that time, Meuse, you will still be lowing,
Still sweet and unaware, on your accustomed courses,
There in the happy vale where grass is greenly growing,
O my belovéd Meuse of never-falling sources.

A silence.

There in the happy vale, you will ever be lowing,
Flowing to-morrow still, where you flowed yesterday.
Shepherdess gone away—oh of her all unknowing,
Who as a child would scoop in the earth in her play
Little channels that now are demolished for aye.
Now the shepherdess goes, and her labs now she leaves,
Ay and the spinner goes, with her tasks incomplete.
See how I now must go, far from your waters sweet;
See how I now must go, far from my own dear eaves.
Meuse who know naught of man, of his sorrows and sinning,
O Meuse my childhood’s joy that naught can ever alter,
You know naught of how parting makes human heart falter,
You who ever will pass and never will depart,
You know naught of our lies and naught of our deceit,
O Meuse that, never changed, I love with all my heart.

A silence.

When shall I come again once more to do my spinning,
When once more see your waves that flow back home, O when?
When shall we meet again? And shall we meet again?
Meuse O my Meuse beloved still as in the beginning.

Translation by E. Adelaide Hahn

Talma ended Terre de France with another text by Péguy, “Adieux à la Meuse.” This is the longest and most complex component in the cycle and represents Talma’s final adieu to the France she had known before the War. The poem recounts the emotions of a narrator leaving France for “new lands, new works, and new endeavors.” Although the narrator knows that the river cannot understand the emotions of this parting, she, nonetheless, vows to love the river always. Talma composed “Adieux à la Meuse” as a rondo: A1 (mm. 1–37) B1 (mm. 38–68) A2 (mm. 69–85) B2 (mm. 86–98) A3 (mm. 99–125).

The initial A section is marked by a time signature of 12/8 over 4/4 in the right hand, which has eighth-note triplets, against 4/4 over 12/8 in the left hand, which has eighth-note duples. I have standardized the time signature here as 4/4 over 12/8. The vocal line moves between these two temporal frames, with text organized both in duple and triple units depending on the way a particular word divides into syllables. Talma employed traditional tonality in this section, casting it in C minor and occasionally suggesting C dorian. When the text speaks of leaving France, the underlying harmony—unexpectedly chromatic—signifies the upheaval of the departure and its consequences. The phrase “des pays nouveaux” [of a new country] (m. 16) is accompanied by an abrupt modulation to G major; as the singer continues, the chords in the piano move to G minor and then G diminished before stabilizing in A-flat major as the narrator embraces the “new work” she will undertake there.

Talma changed meters in the B section, alternating between 9/8 and 6/8 frequently. A running sixteenth-note motif in the right hand is accompanied by syncopations in the left that provide continuity with the right hand in the A section. The B section is less tonal than the previous one but contains interval cycles that create pitch centricity. Connecting this song with “Ballade,” she selected major seconds for the syncopations that open to augmented fifths and brought in the {0,2,7} cycle (m. 49) as the narrator sings of a shepherdess leaving
the river’s banks and the narrator’s own days of playing by the river, never to be captured again. When the narrator sings of leaving her home (mm. 64–65), the vocal line is centered on B and F sharp, and the piano has clusters of dyads, fourths, and fifths destabilizing the centrality of any pitch in this passage.

Talma composed the climax of the song as a moment of centric surprise, preparing the ear for one tonal center but resolving to a different one instead. The vocal line slowly rises in pitch from measure 76, where it tops the previous high note, an E, by moving to F sharp and then, five measures later, arriving on G (m. 84). The interval cycle of {0,2,7} with an initial pitch center of C sharp shifts to centers on D and F sharp, seemingly preparing for traditional diatonic voice-leading (m. 83). Here, as the narrator sings of the river never knowing the deceit of the human heart, Talma established D as an ambiguous dominant by indicating both a major and minor third. At the moment listeners expect a solid arrival in G, however, she placed both F and G in the piano line, positioned as accented major seconds, creating dissonance on the word “faux” [false]. In doing this, she subverted expectations and revealed that, in her mind, France itself cannot be false, but the human heart can be.

The final A section is comprised chiefly of a stanza of questions addressed to the silent river. When shall I sit beside you to spin again? When will I see your waves? When will I see you again? Returning to tonality, Talma cast these questions in E major. They are rather like the questions of the Three Madrigals, but, instead of pleading with Boulanger for her love, Talma pleaded her own psyche and memory to allow herself to separate her love of France from the experiences she had there—both positive and negative, nurturing and abusive. By ending the song cycle in a major key, she indicated that she had moved past her trauma and was seeking ways of accepting her past that are psychologically sound and that leave her in a solid, grounded state.

Talma’s composition of Terre de France marked a turning point in her life. In composing about her love for the country, its land, and culture, she addressed a large part of her understanding of herself. Through the song cycle, she acknowledged her relationship with France and her French training while breaking away from it. Her decisions to add limited axial centricity to traditional tonality—or instead of it—and her employment of interval cycles in creating structure speak to this deliberate separation in strictly musical terms. Choosing poems that bid farewell to France, Talma sought to move forward from her past there.

Terre de France, which has received multiple performances, notably one in 1952 by highly regarded French tenor Hughes Cuénod (1902–2010), was well-received by the critics. The cycle was an important work both for Talma’s portfolio and her confidence. In response to a 1948 performance by Ina Holtzscheiter, critic Paul Hume wrote that “the Ode was a better setting of the poetry than [Darius] Milhaud’s” and observed that “the Farewell to the Meuse, delivered as if by Jeanne d’Arc, has great passages.” A 1949 review in The New York Times cited the work as “melodically persuasive” and delivered the following appreciation of her craft:
Miss Talma’s style achieves harmonic depth by frequent use of common triads and other garden-variety sonorities. These she embellishes with mild, recurring dissonances or with busy counterpoint of percussive rhythmic ingenuity.9

While The Times reviewer appears to have missed a number of the pitch-related subtleties employed in the work, he certainly understood Talma’s gift for counterpoint and rhythm as a driving element of her compositional process. See Example 3.5 on page 000.

“Letter to St. Peter” (1945)

Let them in, Peter, they are very tired
Give them the couches where angels sleep.
Let them wake whole again to new dawns fired,
With sun not war. And may their peace be deep.
Remember where the broken bodies lie. . . .
And give them things they like. Let them make noise.
God knows how young they were to have to die!
Give swing bands, not gold harps, to these, our boys.
Let them love, Peter, they have had no time—
Girls sweet as meadowwind, with flowering hair.
They should have trees and birds song, hills to climb,
The taste of summer in a ripened pear.

Tell them how they are missed. Say not to fear,
It’s going to be all right with us down here.

Elma Dean

Despite Talma’s forays into limited pitch-class sets and other non-tonal techniques in Terre de France, she had not abandoned tonality altogether. In 1945, after or while completing Terre, she set a poem by Elma Dean called “Letter to St. Peter” and dedicated the song to Alice Mary and Robert Hufstader. Alice Mary Hufstader, a soprano, and her husband Robert, an organist, had long been friends of Talma’s. Dean, a popular poet, had written her poem, which implores St. Peter to let young soldiers into heaven and allow them the happiness and experience they had missed in life, in 1942. Dean later remarked of the poem that “It was a maybe a little sentimental, and it isn’t the best poem I’ve done, but it was what the public liked the best.”10 Indeed, according to journalist Kay Wahl, the poem was “inscribed on the wall of an American cemetery in England, was read by a United States senator at another cemetery in Europe, and found its way even into the National Geographic and the Congressional Record.”11

Talma’s setting of “Letter to St. Peter” is equally audience-friendly. In ABA form, it begins in D major, modulates to F-sharp minor by way of A dorian, and returns to D. The A section is sparse and ethereal, suggesting the reaches of
heaven to which the narrator pleads. The composer introduced chromatic elements (m. 9), which gradually lead the key area to A dorian at the pick-up to measure 19 and thence to F-sharp minor in the second half of measure 25. A chain of secondary dominants leads back to D major at the end of the work, complementing Dean’s words that “It’s going to be all right with us down here.” While there is some word-painting, the piece is mostly as straightforward musically as it is textually, a memorial to those who died and a bittersweet hope for what they might find in an afterlife.

See Example 3.6 on page 000.

**Vocal Range**

As in her earlier songs, Talma again limited the vocal range in many of these songs. She described *Terre de France* as a work for “either soprano or tenor,” but the highest note in the cycle is an A5. The vast majority of her songs are placed in the mezzo-soprano range, the “in-between” bridging the distance between the high, feminine soprano of, for example, Salomé in Strauss’s Salomé or Ariadne in Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos* and the low, often older, unsexed, or more masculine female roles such as Erda in Wagner’s *Ring* or Olga in Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin*. Talma, whose own singing voice was low, was obviously fascinated by this middle path of vocal range. A number of writers, notably Terry Castle, Wayne Koestenbaum, and Paul Robinson, have written about the often-shared appreciation of gay men for sopranos and its lesbian parallel, the shared aesthetic appeal of the mezzo-soprano. It would be absurd to try to pinpoint anyone’s sexuality solely on their preference of *fach* for singers, but in conjunction with Talma’s earlier passion for Boulanger and her later interest in other women, especially contralto Kathleen Ferrier (1912–1953) and mezzo-soprano Inge Borkh (born 1921), her desire to work with and manipulate the mezzo voice can certainly be read as one signifier of her sexual identity.

The mezzo-soprano and alto voices are the most capable of what Judith A. Peraino calls “confound[ing] the gender binary” and in doing so, can “offer an escape from that [binary] system.” Talma’s songs in *Terre de France* are intended for dual interpretation by both male and female singers and privilege text that is gender-neutral, taking gender out of the equation and presenting music in which one’s gender or sexual identity is not important. While in earlier works Talma was adamantly expressing same-sex desire, in *Terre* she restricted the “and/between” of relationships and created an “or,” in which gender ambiguity and non-binary concepts of gender are given free rein.

Castle suggested that cross-gender performances and appropriations, such as the ones Talma explicitly composed for in the *Three Madrigals* and allowed open interpretations for in *Terre de France*, can be “galvanizing” in terms of articulating or understanding desire in oneself. In addition, Castle noted that “there is a long tradition of sapphic ‘diva-worship’ in the world of opera: a history of female-to-female ‘fan’ attachments as intense, fantastical, and sentimental as any ever enacted on the fabled isle of Lesbos.” She continued:
the opera house—and this would seemingly extend to any concert stage—(along with the theater) was one of only a few public spaces in which a woman could openly admire another woman’s body, resonate to the penetrating tones of her voice, and even imagine (from a distance) the blood-warmth of her flesh—all in an atmosphere of heightened emotion and powerful sensual arousal.17

This kind of desire of one professional musician for another was certainly not unusual: the infatuations of British composer Ethel Smyth (1858–1944) with sopranos Jenny Lind (1820–1887) and Marie Geistinger (1836–1903) were highly publicized, and Talma would have been aware of this phenomenon from both her mother’s activities as a singer and critic in the operatic realm and through her own experiences in the music world.

None of Talma’s letters during the 1940s address this matter directly, but her correspondence from the 1950s makes it clear that she developed attractions to several female singers. Indeed, sometime before or around 1945, Talma seems to have become romantically interested in soprano Geraldine Marwick (born 1893). Marwick, a singer and choral/orchestral director who had studied at Hunter College, collaborated with the composer in performances (and later recordings) of her songs. Terre de France may have been written with Marwick in mind; certainly, at least one of the songs covered in the next chapter was dedicated to Marwick and conveys a wooer’s stance.
Example 3.1. continued

mê - e. Que Dieu mette a-vec eux dans le jus-te pla-teau Ce

cresc.

qu’ils ont tant ai - mé, quel - ques gram-mes de ter - re, un

dim.

peu de cet-te vig - ne, un peu de ce co-teau, un peu de ce ravin sau - vage et so-li-

dim.
Example 3.1. continued

\[\text{Example 3.1. continued}\]

\[\begin{align*}
&\text{tai-re.} \\
&\text{Mère, voyez vos fils qui se sont tant bâti-} \\
&\text{tus. Vous les voyez couchés parmi les na-} \\
&\text{tions} \\
&\text{Que} \\
\end{align*}\]
Example 3.1. continued

28 sans nuances jusqu’à la fin

Dieu mène-nage un peu ces êtres débauchés, Ces coeurs pleins de tristesse et

legato sans nuances

31 sans

d’hésitation.

a tempo poco rit

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New York: Carl

Nonchalant $\frac{d}{=} 69$

Heu-reux qui, comme U-lysse, a fait un beau voy-age, Ou com-me

p souple

ces-tuy là qui con-quist la Toi-son, Et puis est re-tour-

né, plein d’us-age et rais-on Vivre en-tre ses pa-
Example 3.2. continued

10

céder  a tempo

rents le resté de son âge!

Quand revoi-

15

ray-je, hésa! de mon petit village

Fumer la chemi-née,

20

et en quelle saison Re-voi ray-je le
Example 3.2. continued
Example 3.2. continued

38

lais Ro-mains le front au-da-ci-eux:

più cresc.

41

tranquil

Plus que le mar-bre dur me plaist lâr-doï-se fi-ne.

p pp souple

45

expressè

Poco rit

poco cresc.

Plus mon Loy-re-gau-lois que le Ty-bre-la-tin, Plus mon pe-

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1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 3.2. continued

\begin{music}
\begin{align*}
\text{a tempo} & \quad \text{tit Ly-ré que le mont Pa-la-tin,} \\
\text{la double croche courte comme avant} & \\
\text{clair} & \quad \text{calando} & \quad \text{molto rit.} \\
\text{plus que l-air ma-rin} & \quad \text{la doule-ceur an-ge-vine} & \\
\text{calando} & \\
\text{molto rit.} & \quad \text{pp} & \quad \text{sostenuto pedal}
\end{align*}
\end{music}
Example 3.3. continued

Farewell to Youth

9

*trouver.

Si començay de cier a sous-plier

poco cresc.

12

Com-bien cer tes que grant bien me vai soit De voir

15

Fran ce, que mon

legato poco cresc.
Example 3.3. continued

\[
\begin{align*}
17 & \quad \text{cœur - aimer doit.} \\
19 & \quad \text{Je m'a-vi-say que c'est-toit non sça-van - ce De} \\
22 & \quad \text{tels sou-pris de-dens mon cœur gar-der,} \\
\end{align*}
\]
Example 3.3. continued

voya commen ce De bon-ne paix, qui tous

bien peut donner. Pour ce tour nay en con-fort mon pen-

ser: Mais non pour tan mon cœu ne se las soit De veoir
Example 3.3. continued

Fran - cequemon  cueur  ai-mer

legato

poco cresc.

m.d.

doit.

legato

A-lors changeay  en la nef  d'espère - ram - ce  Tous mes sou -

avec élan
Example 3.3. continued

haitz, en les pri-ant d’a-ler oul- tre la mer, sans lai-re de-mou-

rance, et à France de me re-com-man-der

Or, nous doint Dieu bonne paix sans tar-der A-donc au-
Example 3.3. continued

\begin{align*}
\text{ray loî-sir, mais quain-si} & \quad \text{soit, De veoir Fran.} \\
\text{ce que mon cueur} & \quad \text{ai-mer doit.}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
Poco meno \quad \frac{\dot{}}{\ddot{}} & = 60 \\
\text{Paix est tré-sor qu'on ne}
\end{align*}
Example 3.3. *continued*

peut trop lou-

si

très sec

ers sans pédale

bé m’al-

ou
devoit Fr

ce que mon

cœur

ai-

mer

poco cresc.
Example 3.3. continued
Example 3.4. continued

meil De ta beau-té na-ive et fran-che. D’as sez

lointu vois re-dou-blé Dans le blé Ta fa-ce, de ci-na-ble-

tein-te, Dans le blé qu’on voit ré-jou-ir De jou-
Example 3.4. continued
Example 3.4. continued

gré les tris-tes Soeurs vi-vra, Et sui-vra le long

vol-des ailes d’Ho-ra-cie. Les

uns chan-te-ront les oeil-lets Ver-meil-lets, Ou du lis la fleur ar-gen-

1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 3.4. continued

tê - e. Ou cel-le qui s’est par-les prez Di-a-pres Du

sang des prin-ces en-lan-tê - e. Mais

moy, tant que chan-ter pour-ray, Je lou- ray Tou-jours en mes O-des la

a tempo
Example 3.4. continued
Example 3.4. continued
Example 3.5. *continued*

fan - ce, Qui de - meu - res aux prés, où tu
cou - les tout bas. Meuse, a -
dieu: j’ai dé - ja com - men - cé ma par - tance En des pa -
Example 3.5. continued

13

\[ \text{\textit{vos nouveaux ou tu ne coules pas.}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Voi-ci que m'en vais en des pays nouveaux:}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{poco a poco cresc.}} \]

17

\[ \text{\textit{Je ferai la ba-}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{}} \]
Example 3.5. continued

taille et pas-se-rai les fleu- ves Je m’en
vais m’es say-er à de nou-
sempre cresc.
veaux tra-vaux Je m’en
Example 3.5. continued
Example 3.5. continued

mé - e, Dans la val-lée heureuse où l’herbe vi-ve pous -

se, O Meuse in - é-pui - sable et que j’a vais ai -

mé - e.

Un si -
Example 3.5. continued

Poco più mosso

len-ce-

pp murmuran

to cou-le-ras tou-jours____ dans l’heu reu-se val-

lé-e; Où tu cou-lais hi-er____ tu
Example 3.5. continued

cou - le - ras de - main.

Tu ne sau-ras ja - mais la ber-

gère-en al-lé-e, Qui s’a mu-sait en-

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1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 3.5. continued
Example 3.5. continued

dé - lais-sant les mou - tons,
Et la fi - leu - se

va, dé lais-sant les fu-seaux.
Voi-ci-que

je m’en vais loin de tes bon-nes eaux,
Example 3.5. continued

```
\[\text{music notation}\]
```

```
\[\text{music notation}\]
```

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\[\text{music notation}\]
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\[\text{music notation}\]
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\[\text{music notation}\]
```

```
\[\text{music notation}\]
```

Example 3.5. continued

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]

\[ \text{Example 3.5. continued} \]
Example 3.5. continued
Example 3.5. continued
Example 3.5. continued

Tempo I

99

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{\textit{p} molto tranquillo}
\end{align*} \]

O Meuse in-al-té-rable...

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{ð Meu-se que j'ai mais,}
\end{align*} \]
Example 3.5. continued

Poco più mosso

Un silen-ce.

Quand re-vien-drai je i-ci

fi-lé en-cor la lai-net!

mp
Example 3.5. continued

mp intense

Quand ver- rai - je tes flots

qui pas - sent par chez nous?

mf intense

Quand nous re-verrons nous? et nous re-

1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 3.5. *continued*

```
118  \(a \text{ tempo}\)  \(mp \text{ diminuendo}\)

ver-rons nous?

Meu - se que

120  \(a \text{ tempo}\)  \(mp\)

j’aime en - core

ô ma Meu -

122  \(\text{dim.}\)  \(\text{se que}\)  \(j’ai\)
```

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1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 3.5. continued

Let them in, Peter they are very tired.

Give them the couch-ess where the angels sleep. Let them wake whole a-

gain to newdawns fired with sun, not war. And may their peace be
Example 3.6. continued

deep. Remember where the broken bodies lie... And give them

things they like. Let them make noise.

intense

God knows how young they were... to have to die! Give
Example 3.6. continued

swing bands, not gold harps, to these our boys. Let them

pp very distant in a blur of pedal

love, Peter, they have had no time.

Girls sweet as meadow wind,
Example 3.6. continued

25

\[\text{with flowing hair. They should have trees and} \]

27

\[\text{bird song, hills to climb. The taste of} \]

29

\[\text{summer in a ripe pear. Tell} \]

\[\text{(music notation)}\]
Example 3.6. continued

31

them how they are missed. Say not to fear; It's

34

go-ing to be all right with us down here.

36

dim. pp
Notes

1 Notes included with Louise Talma, *Voices of Peace* [score], 1973, Louise Talma Collection (Library of Congress).
2 Louise Talma, letter (late 1940s) to John Kirkpatrick, John Kirkpatrick Papers (Gilmore Music Library, Yale University).
3 Louise Talma, letter (May 23, 1942) to Nadia Boulanger, Louise Talma Collection (Library of Congress).
5 Du Bellay, a kinsman of Count Jean du Bellay and a prominent poet during the French Renaissance, championed the sonnet, especially around the time of his residence in Rome in the 1550s.
6 After Charles d’Orléans was captured on the battlefield, he was held prisoner in England for the next twenty-four years because of his status as a potential heir to the French crown. He wrote the majority of his poems during his captivity.
7 Talma used the original French spellings in these settings; this text dates from ca. 1500.
12 See, for example, Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
13 Louise Talma, letter (June 13, 1956) and letter (March 29, 1961) to Thornton Wilder, Thornton Wilder Collection (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University).
17 Ibid, 203.
Seven Songs, published as a set collected and ordered by Talma herself in 1986, comprises songs written between 1941 and 1973, spanning a large part of her working life. The majority of them were composed during the late 1940s and 1950, with the single outlier being the 1973 “Rain Song” by Jean Garrigue (1914–1972). It was written shortly after the death of the poet, whose relationship to Talma’s mother’s family is unclear. The earliest of the songs is “One Need Not Be a Chamber to Be Haunted,” a setting of an Emily Dickinson poem. Talma composed “Chamber” in 1941, between the Five Sonnets and Terre; it was one of the last songs she composed before her mother’s death in 1942. Like her previous efforts in the genre and like those gathered in this collection, these are autobiographical, reflecting events and emotions Talma was experiencing as she wrote them. “Chamber,” like her earliest songs, may reflect the death of Laura Talma; “Leap before You look,” a setting of a poem of the same name by W. H. Auden (1907–1973), is dedicated to Geraldine Marwick and appears to serve as a love song to her. Marwick, with the composer at the keyboard, recorded several Talma songs in 1946. The four settings of poetry by Gerald Manley Hopkins mirror Talma’s own despair at loneliness and the comfort she took in her Catholicism. “Rain Song” appears to be simple homage to the poet and a rare expression of whimsical fun found in the poem’s onomatopoeic language.

Seven Songs (1986)

“One Need Not Be a Chamber to Be Haunted” (1941)

One need not be a chamber to be haunted,  
One need not be a house;  
The brain has corridors surpassing  
Material place.  
Far safer, of a midnight meeting  
External ghost,  
Than an interior confronting  
That whiter host.  
Far safer through an Abbey gallop,  
The stones achase,  
Than, moonless, one’s own self encounter  
In lonesome place.
Ourself, behind ourself concealed,
Should startle most;
Assassin, hid in our apartment,
Be horror’s least.

The prudent carries a revolver,
He bolts the door,
O’erlooking a superior spectre
More near.

Emily Dickinson

The songs are not ordered chronologically in the collection. The first is “One Need Not Be a Chamber to Be Haunted,” composed during the final stages of Talma’s mother’s last illness. Prior to setting this poem by Dickinson, Talma apparently set the same poet’s “I Fear a Man of Scanty Speech,” but the score for this is now lost. As Luanne Dragone has written, this song has a more structured form than most of Talma’s earlier works for voice and piano, but, in keeping with earlier songs, does not repeat either text or melody. Composed in four sections with a piano-only coda that returns the material of the A section, each stanza of the poem is conceived in its own block, for which Talma created individual characteristics and textures. In some sections I have revoiced materials between the piano staves for clarity. Talma selected two pentatonic scales to create a multitude of tritones as well as major and minor seconds, which create tonal centers that shift with each section. The presence of these intervals in the vocal line emphasizes them; they are obviously connected with her previous treatment of such intervals to signify sadness and grief. Talma also used pitches from limited pitch-class sets as pivot points to rotate from the pentatonicism or from sections featuring quartal harmony to more traditional tonality by turning them into a functional part of a simple triad or seventh chord. The set \{0,2,5\} appears in all sections of the structure (see Example 4.1).

Dragone suggested that Dickinson tells us that one’s psyche has corridors that are haunted with a ghost that is more to be feared than any assassin. In other words, the unconscious may threaten to overflow into consciousness in paranoia, bringing with it a feeling of terror and possible imminent dissolution. Talma’s solution to the myriad of emotions present in the text is to compartmentalize them into individual musical sections.4

The same commentator noted that the song can be parsed as an ABCDA1 with coda structure.5 While the form does fit the song, I would propose that, with its light texture and gentle syncopations, the song is, as I have proposed elsewhere regarding some of Talma’s earlier melancholy songs, another musical memorial to her sister, one created as the composer’s mother began to become more ill and Talma prepared for her death.6

As in the previous songs, the vocal line is limited in range, but Talma did employ a wider range in the piano part than usual, spanning A1 through A6. There is in the work a clear rhythmic development, which begins with steady eighth notes and introduces smaller values and increasing use of counterpoint as it comes to a climax (m. 19), mirroring both the narrator’s rising heartbeat and the “Abbey gallop.” The rhythms then slow, falling away to half notes before gradually returning to eighths and a brief moment of stuttering sixteenths for the last part of the song. This short interruption of sixteenth notes, marked staccato, preface the poem’s final line (mm. 43–44): “Oerlooking a superior spectre more near.” This line is singled out: no other part of the text is approached with this prefatory change in rhythm; the text is also given a prelude of six measures for piano; and at the beginning of the measure in which the voice returns, the pitches abruptly move from {C—D flat—E flat—F natural} to {C sharp—E natural—F natural}, with the F natural as a pivot tone.

Illustration 4.1.
Louise Talma with One of Her Scores (ca. 1940)

Reproduced through the courtesy of the Digital Department of the Library of Congress, Duplication Services Division, and with the permission of The MacDowell Colony
The text itself is set solely on E, marked *parlando*, yet another little whisper from Talma’s earliest songs and her past.

See Example 4.2 on page 000.

“The Rain Song” (1973)

My sad-bad rain that falls
In lisp and dribble-dabble
On the porch and under stairs
And puddles in the driveway brimmed
And dolloped by the slow loitering
Of the not-quite clapping hands
So slight they are on primrose
Leaves and the periwinkle
And keeps such babble going through the day.

Cats in beds sleep long
And I, I’d do the same
Or sing
If all the birds weren’t gone.
It’s silk under the elm leaves
It’s slip into the streams
That clasp the globe around,
It’s in the stealth to steal
Another tongue than bell
That does not strike but holds
All in its spell
So fresh and so small.

Jean Garrique

The next song in the collection is “Rain Song,” which Talma created in 1973 as a memorial to poet Jean Garrigue. Although the relationship between the two women is unknown, they were both alumnae of the MacDowell Colony and likely first met in Peterborough, New Hampshire. In terms of text, “Rain Song” is the most avant-garde that Talma set: an onomatopoeic poem with repetitions, nonsense words, and alternating fast and slow rhythms. All of these propel both the poem and song.

Talma returned to her standard signifiers of melancholy, the minor/major second and tritone, in “Rain Song,” where they are employed as text-painting devices for the words “sad, bad” rain, just as “long” (m. 33) is a long-held note, and “sing” (mm. 40–45) is an extended melisma. Rather than adding extra meaning, as they do in so many of her other works, here these markers directly mirror the details of the verse. Despite the fun the poet had with her onomatopoeicisms, like “dibble-dabble” and repeated “babbles,” the poetry
captures the melancholy of a rainy day and the feelings of darkness and ineffectuality that such a day can bring on. Talma’s setting adheres closely to these emotions.

See Example 4.3 on page 000.

“Glory Be to God for Dappled Things” (1946)

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

Gerald Manley Hopkins

“Rain Song” is followed by settings of four poems by Gerald Manley Hopkins. Like Talma and Wallace Stevens, Victorian poet Hopkins was an adult convert to Roman Catholicism. Also like Talma, his early forays into same-sex romantic relationships were not successful, and he turned to the priesthood in part because he felt it would give him the strength and logistics to be celibate rather than express his homosexuality physically. Biographer Julia Saville has proposed that Hopkins’s religious poems, like Talma’s compositions, were tools for sublimating same-sex desire in a socially appropriate way. In addition, Hopkins worked as a teacher but, like Talma, longed for solitude in which he could concentrate on his creative output. Many of his poems were autobiographical, particularly his sonnets “I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark” and “Carrion Comfort.” It is unsurprising that Talma developed an affinity with Hopkins.

The four Hopkins poems that Talma selected—“Glory Be to God for Dappled Things” (1946) a paean to the beauties of nature; “Spring and Fall: To a Young Child” (1946), a meditation on the fleetness of time and the short span of life and time with a loved one; “I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark” (1946), a reflection about isolation and separation from a beloved; and “Carrion Comfort” (1950), which addresses despair and desperation and the struggle against suicide—represent emotions Talma herself had dealt with, as documented in her letters and earlier works. Her approaches to this quartet of songs can be traced directly to Terre de France, with many of the same harmonic and rhythmic devices and mannerisms reconsidered here. All four songs exhibit axial centricity rather than true tonality, employ textures and
patterns associated with the neoclassical, and display long vocal lines with piano accompaniments that move at a much quicker pace. In addition, Talma resorted to syncopation to skew the sense of beat and meter just as she did in other works and, where Hopkins mentions God, Talma signified this through the contrast of the triple subdivision of the Trinity to the duple subdivision of the human heartbeat.

“Glory Be to God for Dappled Things” appears first in Seven Songs, although it was the third song Talma composed on Hopkins’s texts. Here Hopkins and Talma celebrated the beauty found in all things and attributed that beauty to God: cows, fish, the land itself. The texture is light. The piece is full of syncopated rhythms, echoing Hopkins’s use of “sprung rhythm,” which mimics the natural accents in speaking: accenting the first syllable of a word or line and being primarily open to different accent points thereafter. The song lacks a traditional form. While there are textural changes, the sense of continuity from each phrase to the next is strong enough to overcome distinct divisions or sections. The composer indicated that the piano line should be played “liltingly,” and this lil, a constant emphasis on off-beats and other unexpected places, keeps the song moving forward even as the vocal line moves from long legato passages to more heavily accented areas and back again several times throughout the work.

The primary motives of the song also help create the lil: pairs of ascending eighth notes (established in m. 6), often off the beat, and short articulations maintain a light and happy outlook. This lightness from both the piano and singer allows for great contrast in the places in which Talma engaged in deeper text-painting. Following “finches’ wings” (m. 30), a passage of sixteenth-note septuplets begins a short section that captures the beating wings and short glides of the bird, while in discussing “all things counter” (m. 48), Talma underlaid “spare” with a single dyad and “strange” with a four-measure chromatic passage to be played una corda. The return to the original texture and harmonic approach (the pickup to m. 62) assures the listener that even such anomalies are the work of a divine creator, and this comforting claim finds Talma at her most tonal, eventually bringing the song to a calm and stable end in B minor.

See Example 4.4 on page 000.

“Spring and Fall: To a Young Child” (1946)

Márgarét, áre you gríeving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Áh! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you wíll weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow’s springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

Gerald Manley Hopkins

“Spring and Fall: To a Young Child” was composed in 1946 and sets Hopkins’s well-known poem that begins, “Margaret, are you grieving over Goldengrove unleaving?” Hopkins’s sprung rhythm here again provides an ideal rhythmic impulse for Talma to continue the syncopation of “Glory Be” while positioning that syncopation against a perpetual motion of straight sixteenths rendered off-kilter by frequent changes from duple to triple meter. Like “Glory Be,” “Spring and Fall” also suggests a B-minor tonal or axial center at the beginning.

The text’s dreary message, that, as one ages, life is filled more and more with sorrow, is set syllabically and sparely for the voice. The vocal range is limited to just over an octave, remaining mostly within the staff throughout. The exceptions to this are notable, however. The singer is asked to reach an F4—the topmost pitch heard in the vocal line—four times in the song. The first instance is quite short: a sixteenth note on “of” in the phrase “the things of men” (m. 16). It is placed here as the first pitch in a descending fourth, perhaps an augmented version of the sigh gesture heard so often in Talma’s work, as the text wearily explains to the young Margaret that while she cannot understand the emotions associated with loss in her youth, she will soon. The second F is a dotted eighth, to which Talma sets “care” (m. 18) as part of the same line as the first; here it is approached by an octave, descends to a B, and also signifies a lethargy that time has forced on the narrator. The third F is also the upper pitch of a descending fourth (m. 36); here too it is part of the narrator’s sad predictions for Margaret’s future melancholy: it falls on the “will” of “And yet you will weep.” The climax of the piece (m. 48), comes where Talma sets an F pianissimo on the word “no” in a line firmly declaring that the human heart is ever-destined for breaking. This tiny, whispered “no”—no matter how faint—is the apotheosis of heartbreak and emotional collapse, a near-silent squeaking admittance of unhappiness and loneliness.

While the vocal line moves relatively slowly, the right hand of the piano maintains a steady sixteenth-note accompaniment for almost the entire song, creating a sense of anxiety that is further emphasized by the left hand’s constant syncopations and repetitions of phrases that begin, break off, are begun again, continue, and are fragmented. Thus, while the narrator’s text and Talma’s text-setting suggest a fatal lassitude, the piano reveals the never-ending near-panic that underscores and propels the narrative on, perhaps beyond desire.

See Example 4.5 on page 152.
“Sonnet: Carrion Comfort” (1950)

Not, I’ll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.
But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruiséd bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee
and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me,
foot tród
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one?
That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

Gerald Manley Hopkins

Talma’s setting of Hopkins’s sonnet known as “Carrion Comfort,” the fifth song in the collection, is similar in many ways to “Spring and Fall.” Although the opening and closing A sections are slow, there is an undercurrent of syncopation in the lowest voice, and the B section, marked più mosso, contains a syncopated moto perpetuo in the piano part consisting solely of melodic major seconds in octaves. Again, Talma juxtaposed rather slow rhythmic progressions with those associated with nervous behavior, capturing the text’s meaning as well as engaging in text painting. Each section begins and ends abruptly, with little or no transition, and the song ultimately fades away as the narrator expires into unconsciousness or death after “wrestling” in long hours or days of darkness with “my God.”

The final Hopkins sonnet Talma chose functions as an epilogue to the first two, as its narrator wakes “and feel[x] the fell of dark.” Here too she harnessed rhythm to propel the work, once again relying on her familiar tools of syncopation and passages of perpetual motion in the piano. The performance instructions—”very intense,” “agitated,” and “very marked”—all indicate the composer’s anxiety and desire to communicate through the setting of Hopkins’s words.

See Example 4.6 on page 000.
“Sonnet: I Wake and Feel the Fell of the Dark” (1946)

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hours we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light’s delay.
With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God’s most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

Gerald Manley Hoplins

“I Wake and Feel” is cast in an ABA form. The A sections juxtapose sustained chords and inner-voice syncopations in the piano with an active if quiet vocal line, which describes the horror of the “black hours” spent by the narrator in the night. The rising panic—a kind of claustrophobia, perhaps—suggested by this section breaks (mm. 10–11), where the piano part transitions into the “agitated” B section through increasingly short note values. In the B section, however, the voice is now the more languorous of the pair, stretching out even one-syllable words over multiple beats. Beneath these wrenchingly drawn out passages, the piano part moves from mere sixteenths per beat to sextuplets to divisions of twelve thirty-second notes, divided into three groupings of four pitches. This frantic running of the piano part drops away (m. 27), where it falls to broader triplet figures and eventually to three simple quarter notes a measure. The vocal line swaps back to a more restless kind of movement, full of syncopations, repeated pitches, and half-and whole-step movements. The song comes to rest somewhat, where the lull of a false cadence leads to a quasi-coda (m. 38) in which the voice and piano seem to find a compromise between the textures they have maintained in opposition throughout the majority of the song. Steady eighths in the piano support a gradually slowing line in the voice as the text comes to its eventual dark conclusion: the narrator has not been redeemed through religion or action but remains “lost” and “scour[d].” The final measures of the song present stacked major and minor seconds and sevenths, Talma’s trademarks for sorrow, now representing the guilt and self-hatred of Hopkins’s words.

See Example 4.7 on page 000.
“Leap before You Look” (1945)

The sense of danger must not disappear:
The way is certainly both short and steep,  
However gradual it looks from here;  
Look if you like, but you will have to leap.

Tough-minded men get mushy in their sleep  
And break the by-laws any fool can keep;  
It is not the convention but the fear  
That has a tendency to disappear.

The worried efforts of the busy heap,  
The dirt, the imprecision, and the beer  
Produce a few smart wisecrack every year;  
Laugh if you can, but you will have to leap.

The clothes that are considered right to wear  
Will not be either sensible or cheap,  
So long as we consent to live like sheep  
And never mention those who disappear.

Much can be said for social savior-faire,  
But to rejoice when no one else is there  
Is even harder than it is to weep;  
No one is watching, but you have to leap.

A solitude ten thousand fathoms deep  
Sustains the bed on which we lie, my dear:  
Although I love you, you will have to leap;  
Our dream of safety has to disappear.

W. H. Auden

“Leap before You Look,” the final song in the collection, appears to be one of Talma’s compositional declarations of love. During the mid-1940s she seems to have become romantically interested in soprano Geraldine Marwick. A professional singer as well as choral and orchestral director, Marwick had studied at Hunter College, where she came to know Talma. They two collaborated on performances of Talma’s songs on New York radio in 1946 to perform for an “American Music Festival” in February and recorded “Leap before You Look,” “One Need Not Be a Chamber to Be Haunted,” and “Letter to S. Peter.” Terre de France may have been written with Marwick in mind, and “Leap before You Look,” addressing as it does a hesitant same-sex lover and hoping to coax the listener into a relationship despite the possible social implications, is dedicated to Marwick. The last final stanza sums up the lover’s perspective: solitude supports
the lovers’ bed, and the lovers must risk their reputations and relationship if they
want to live openly.

In addition to being dedicated to Marwick, “Leap before You Look” contains
a device not previously seen in Talma’s works but common enough in art music:
the tradition of the musical cryptogram that grew out of the Renaissance
technique of soggetto cavato. Here the composer updated the tradition by creating
a pitch class set from the letter notes in Marwick’s name for use throughout the
work. Simply drawing note names from Marwick’s name, in order and omitting
repeated letters, results in \{G—E—A—D—C\}. Talma altered this result slightly to
reach \{G♭—E—A—D—C♯\}/\{C♯—D—E—G♭—A\}, a \{0,1,5,6,8\} set. The raised pitches are the first notatable pitches in Marwick’s first and last
names—her musical monogram, so to speak.

“Leap,” characteristically, is composed in block form, and in each large block
this pitch class is treated in a slightly different way. In the first (mm. 1–74), Talma
uses the set on the first two beats of each measure, spread over two quarter notes.
In the second block (mm. 75–97), the pitches are spread out on half or dotted
half notes that are syncopated across the measure lines; at the end of the song,
they return to being sounded on the first two beats of each measure. The first
high point of the song (mm. 37 and 38) contains all of the pitches except D. The
next phrasal climax (m. 96) is both approached and accompanied by this same
configuration; the highest note in the song, an A5 (m. 117), is also approached
by these pitches. Talma also creates smaller sets drawn from this primary set,
particularly in the vocal line or spread between the vocal and piano lines: this
occurs where the text is “Look if you like,” (m. 37) and is repeated with “but you
will have to leap” (m. 40), among other places. Finally, Talma restated the row in
various orders and placed the pitches in phrases so that every other beat or note
contains pitches drawn from Marwick’s name, obscuring the row. (This is a
technique Talma also employed in The Alcestiad to create variations on a row.) Here it is most obvious, where the text is “I love you” (mm. 183–89) and where
Talma sharpened almost all of the pitches in the set, as though to enhance their
intensity. The vocal line here is \{C♯—G♯—E—D♯—A\}, with a D
sharp in the piano line simultaneously with the A. The last pitches of the row,
\{E—C♯\}, are repeated, and the underlying piano line is exclusively
drawn from both the sharpened and unsharpened rows. Talma’s intentions are
quite clear in this work: like the Sonnets from the Portuguese, it is a public
declaration of love. And like the Sonnets, it represents Talma’s embrace of
Auden’s poem—an “outlaw manifesto” if ever there was one—as her own.

See Example 4.8 on page 000.

Andante $\frac{d}{=60}$

\[ \text{One need not be a chamber to be} \]

\[ p \text{ molto legato senza pedale} \]

\[ \text{haunted, One need not be a house; The brain has corridors sur-} \]

\[ \text{Passing Material place. Far} \]
Example 4.2. continued

safer, of a midnight, meeting external

ghost, than an interior confronting that whiter host.

Far safer through an
Example 4.2. continued

Ab - bey gal - lop. The stones a - chase,

Strict in time, without expression, like a Dali painting of bones in a desert.

Than, moon-less, One's own self en - coun - ter in lone-some place. Our-

A HAUNTED PSYCHE

150 1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 4.2. continued

self, behind our self concealed, should startle most; As-

sassin, hid in our apartment, be horror’s least.

The prudent carries a revolver he bolts the

il basso sempre molto staccato
Example 4.2. continued

36

39

42

O'er looking a superior
Example 4.2. continued

spec-tre More near.
sans nuances

smorzando senza rit. ppp
Example 4.3. continued

__and under stairs__

And puddles in the drive-way

__brimmed and doll-oped by the slow loiter-ing__

Of the

__not-quite clapping hands__

So slight they are__
Example 4.3. continued

on the prim-rose leaves and the pe-ri-win-kle And keeps such

bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble bab-ble

crescendo
crescendo
Example 4.3. continued

 babble babble babble going through the day.

 Cats in beds sleep

 long And
Example 4.3. continued
Example 4.3. continued

If all the birds weren’t gone.

It’s silk under the

elm leaves It’s slip into the streams that clasp the globe a-
Example 4.3. continued

round It's in the stealth to steal an-other tongue than

bell that does not strike but holds All in its spell holds All in its

spell So fresh and so small. So fresh so
Example 4.3. continued

(Musical notation image)

small——— small———

2 3 3 5

1 5 1 3 1 3 2 5 3 2 1 3

a tempo dim.

and so small———

1 4 2

a tempo dim.

ppp senza rit.
Example 4.4, continued

stipple up - on trout that swim;

Fresh - fire
c

coal chest - nut falls;

fin - ches’ wings;

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1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 4.4. continued

Land scape plot- ted out pieced fold, fal-low and plough;

And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter or- ig-in- al spare,
Example 4.4. continued

52

\( p \) without vibration

\[ \text{strange, } \]

\[ \text{What-ev-er is } \]

57

\[ \text{fick-le, freck-led, } \]

\( (\text{who knows how?}) \)

60

\( p \) With

\[ \text{swift, slow; sweet, sour;} \]
Example 4.4. continued

64
\[ \text{a-dazzle dim;} \]

69
\[ \text{beauty is past change:} \]

72
\[ \text{Praise him.} \]
Example 4.5. continued

Leaves, like the things.

of man, you with your fresh thoughts care for can

you? Ah!

A haunted psyche
Example 4.5. continued

\[ \text{as the heart grows older} \]

\[ \text{It will come to such sights cold} \]

\[ \text{By and by, nor spare a} \]
Example 4.5. *continued*

33

\[\text{\textit{sigh though worlds of wan-wood leaf-meal lie; And yet you}}\]

36

\[\text{\textit{will weep and know why.}}\]

40

\[\text{\textit{Now no matter, child, the name: Sorrow’s springs}}\]
Example 4.5. continued

are the same.

Nor mouth bad, no nor mind, expressed What heart

heard of ghost guessed: It is the diminish to the end
Example 4.5. continued

Blight man was born for,

Slower

It is Margaret you mourn for.
Example 4.6. continued

me or most wea-ry cry I can no more, I

can no more.

can some-thing, hope, wish day._
Example 4.6. *continued*

19

come, not choose not to

21 Più mosso $\frac{4}{4}$ = 76

be. But ah, but O thou

$\text{murmurando molto legato}$

23

ter-rible why wouldst thou
Example 4.6. \textit{continued}

\begin{music}
\begin{multicols}{2}
\begin{musicstaff}
\begin{musicnote}24\end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote}25\end{musicnote}
\begin{musicnote}27\end{musicnote}
\end{musicstaff}
\end{multicols}
\end{music}

\textit{rude on me} Thy

\textit{wring - world right foot rock? lay a}

\textit{poco a poco cresc.}

\textit{li - on limb a-against me? Scan__}
Example 4.6. continued

28

with dark - some de - vour - ing eyes my bru - is - èd

30

bones? and fan, O in turns of tem-pest, me_

32

heap-ed there, me fran-tic to a-void thee and
Example 4.6. continued

flee

Why?

That my chaff might fly:

my grain lie sheer

and clear.

Tempo \( \frac{4}{4} = 50 \)
Example 4.6. continued

Nay in all that toil, that coil since (seems) I kissed the

rod, Hand ra- ther, my heart, lol

lap-ped strength, stole joy, would laugh.
Example 4.6. continued

47

p a tempo

cheer

Cheer

49

whom, thought The hero whose heaven-handling flung me, foot

p

52

ritenuto

trod me? or me that fought him?

mf sì

rit.
Example 4.6. continued

54

\[ \textit{a tempo} \]

\[ \text{O which one? is it each one That} \]

57

\[ \text{night, that year of now done darkness} \]

60

\[ \text{wretch lay wrestling with (my God!)} \]

\[ \text{sub. pp parlando} \]

\[ \text{sub. p} \]
Example 4.6. continued

62

mp cantando

my

God,

f

sf
Example 4.7. continued

hours, O very intense spent this night!

what sights you, heart, saw;

\[ (5 + 3 + 4) \]
Example 4.7. continued

13

14

15

ways you

went! And

more must,
Example 4.7. continued

15 (cont.)

16 cresc.

17 \textit{very marked}

lay. With wit-ness I speak
Example 4.7. continued

this.

But where I say

Hours

I mean

years,

mean

life.

And my la -
Example 4.7. continued

22

\[ \text{ment is cries} \quad \text{count - less,} \]

23

\[ \text{cries like dead letters sent to dearest} \]

24

\[ \text{him that lives alas! alas! alas!} \]
Example 4.7. continued

[Musical notation image]

26 (cont.)

dim. poco a poco
Example 4.7. continued

I am gall, I am heart-burn. God’s most deep de-cree

Bitter would have me taste: my taste was
Example 4.7. continued

35  

\[ f \]

me;

Bones build in me,

37  

\[ f \]

flesh filled,

blood brimmed the curse.

39  

\[ mp legato \]

Self - yeast of spirit dull dough sours.
Example 4.7. continued

I see the lost are like this, and their

p molto legato

scourge to be As I am mine, their sweat-ing selves; but

worse.

dim. al fine

pp

![Music notation of “Leap before You Look”](image-url)
Example 4.8. continued

certainly both short and steep, However

gradual it

looks from here;
Example 4.8. continued

Look if you like,

but you will have to leap.

Tough minded men get mushy in their

cresc.
Example 4.8. continued

sleep

And break the

by - laws a - ny fool can keep;

It is not the con - ven - tion
Example 4.8. *continued*

but the fear that has a
tendency to disappear.

The worried
Example 4.8. continued

\[ \text{efforts of the busy heap,} \]

\[ \text{The dirt, the imprecision,} \]

\[ \text{poco a poco cresc.} \]

\[ \text{and the beer produce a} \]

\[ \text{poco a poco cresc.} \]
Example 4.8. continued

few smart wise-cracks every year;

Laugh if you can, but you will have to leap.

The clothes that

very short, no pedal
Example 4.8. continued

are considered right to wear Will not be

either sensible or cheap, So

long as we consent to
Example 4.8. continued

live like sheep And nev

sempre p

er men-tion those who dis

dim. P

ap pear;

dim. p molto stacc.

no pedal
Example 4.8. continued

Much can be said for social savoir faire, but to rejoice

when

no one else is there is even even harder

brilliant
Example 4.8. continued

than it is to weep;  
No

one is watching, but you have to leap.

A solitude ten

very short
Example 4.8. continued

thous - and fath - oms deep______ Sus - tains the bed____ on which we

lie, my dear:

Al - though I____ love____

cresc.
Example 4.8. continued

you,

you will have to leap;

you will have to leap; Our

A HAUNTED PSYCHE

205
Example 4.8. continued

dream

eeae

of safety has to disapper

pear. Our dream of

più f
Example 4.8. continued

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
safety has to disappear.
\end{center}
\end{quote}
Notes

1 Garrigue was an Indiana-born poet who spent much time in Europe and taught at various colleges, including Queens College and Smith College. She enjoyed intimate relationships with both men and women in the Greenwich Village literary world.

2 See footnote 9 on page 135 of this chapter.


4 Ibid, 27. Italics in original.

5 Ibid.


METAPHORS IN MUSIC

Although Talma continued to compose into her eighties, her output slowed, and the texts she selected made it clear that she was viewing her own mortality and feeling it intensely. She completed a number of choral and instrumental works prior to 1990, but her final finished scores were her settings of Stevens’s *Infanta Marina* and of the song “Finis” with text by the English literary figure Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864). At the beginning of her compositional career, Talma had set “On the Surface of Things” from Stevens’s *Harmonium*, his first book of poetry; in 1988, she chose nine more poems from the same collection for a new song cycle for soprano and piano, naming it for the first of the poems, “Infanta Marina.” She also chose “The Brave Man,” “Domination of Black,” “Ploughing on Sunday,” “Lunar Paraphrase,” “Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores,” “The Load of Sugar-cane,” “Re-Statement of Romance,” and “The Pleasures of Merely Circulating.” Like the majority of Talma’s other songs, these are brief compositions with no repeated text. They can be musically distinguished from one another through her exploration of significantly differing textures.

**Infanta Marina (1988)**

“**Infanta Marina**” (1988)

Her terrace was the sand
And the palms and the twilight.
She made of the motions of her wrist
The grandiose gestures
Of her thought.

The rumpling of the plumes
Of this creature of the evening
Came to be sleights of sails
Over the sea.

And thus she roamed
In the roamings of her fan,
Partaking of the sea,
And of the evening,
As they flowed around
And uttered their subsiding sound.

Wallace Stevens

1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Illustration 5.1
Louise Talma at Work at the MacDowell Colony

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“Infanta Marina,” which lists the sensations of living at the sea, is defined by Talma’s fusing a mostly simple and spare accompaniment to a slightly more active vocal line, one that reveals text-painting. Marked “Languidly,” “Infanta Marina” is through-composed without sectional distinctions save for pianistic flourishes between lines of the text. Major seconds, both melodic and harmonic, are constant throughout the song, giving it a representative Talma sound; the presence of fifths often hints at tonal centers, but these are never fully confirmed through traditional diatonic harmony. A dichotomy of B flat and C flat at the beginning eventually gives way to a dominance of B natural through the semitone movement of B flat to B natural and the re-spelling of C flat as well as a recurrence of F sharps. While the text is not particularly sad, its tone communicates a kind of languor and resignation in its description of a sole sailboat on the evening sea—a metaphor for an elegant mermaid or other female sea-creature. Vocal glissandi (mm. 24–25) add to the air of softly floating or falling light and water.

See Example 5.1 on page 000.

“The Brave Man” (1988)

The sun, that brave man,
Comes through boughs that lie in wait,
That brave man.

Green and gloomy eyes
In dark forms of the grass
Run away.

The good stars,
Pale helms and spiky spurs,
Run away.
Fears of my bed,
Fears of life and fears of death,
Run away.
That brave man comes up
From below and walks without meditation,
That brave man.

Wallace Stevens

“The Brave Man,” Stevens’s moniker for the sun, also provides an embodiment for a non-human. Writing of how he “comes through boughs” and “walks without meditation,” the poet cites the sun as chasing away the dark and death. As in the previous song, Talma structured the piece as a through-composed work in which solo piano passages mark the divisions between lines. Both the vocal and piano parts mimic the rise and fall of the phrases of the text. The composer engaged in text-painting throughout the song. “Runaway”
(mm. 11, 18, 27) rises to a higher pitch in each iteration and is underlaid with *animato* sixteenths falling away from the top of the piano, while “the good stars” (mm. 14–16) is set to high-tessitura, twinkling piano sounds, and, as the narrator banishes “fears of death” (mm. 25–29), a long rising and accelerating passage depicts the rising sunlight of a new day.

See Example 5.2 on page 000.

**“Domination of Black” (1988)**

At night, by the fire,
The colors of the bushes
And of the fallen leaves,
Repeating themselves,
Turned in the room,
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
Came striding.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails
Were like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
In the twilight wind.
They swept over the room,
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks
Down to the ground.
I heard them cry—the peacocks.
Was it a cry against the twilight

Or against the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind,
Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,
Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire,
Loud as the hemlocks
Full of the cry of the peacocks?
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?
Out of the window,
I saw how the planets gathered
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind.
I saw how the night came,
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks
I felt afraid.
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

Wallace Stevens

The third song, “Domination of Black,” is one of the more analytically interesting works in the collection. Starting quietly, the composition moves from a sparse texture to a denser one, reflecting the layers of memory and action that the narrator recounts. The poetry invokes the images of dark leaves and branches and ominous trees swaying in the wind, crying peacocks, the ordering of the heavens, and a bonfire resisting the “striding” night. The narrator, watching night descend through the “twilight wind,” feels afraid and “remembers the cry of the peacocks.” The movement described in the poem—turning and striding and crying—all allowed for ample text-painting opportunities for Talma, and the heavy use of repetition throughout the poem provided for the creation and application of multiple individual motifs in the vocal setting. The text is full of symbolism of both death and life. This sometimes occurs in the same image: the hemlock, famous for its deadly properties, is also an evergreen; the peacock is interpreted in many religions as a symbol of immortality: early Christians, for example, believed that its flesh did not decay after death. For Talma, the peacock motif may have also reminded her of the Conservatoire Américain at the Palais de Fontainebleau, where these spectacular birds roamed freely through the gardens. Indeed, she set the word “peacock” in such a way that matches the French for it, **paon**, which itself mimics the short/long, high/low vocalization of the bird.

Talma fixed the tempo as “Leisurely (sixteenth note = 66)” and began with two quarter-note tetrachords in the piano: {D—F—G—B} and {C sharp—E—F sharp—G sharp}. Repeated for emphasis in the second measure, these are quickly established as the motif for “turning” and “turned” in the work. These chords, with the multitudes of minor seconds between them, create a sonically familiar yet dissonant atmosphere, welcoming the listener with what initially sound like tonal structures but hinting at the darkness to come in the song with the non-traditional progression. Talma repeated these tetrachords regularly during the song, and although the vocal line contains pitches that affirm the tonal status of the G-major seventh of the first tetrachord, the second tetrachord is also heard in the voice, suggesting bitonality or atonality. In creating these dichotomous sonorities, Talma mirrored the poem’s own ambiguity about the impending dark: the narrator is afraid but also sees warmth and color in the fire and beauty in the coming of the night and all that it entails.

Talma established the song’s primary melodic motif as a movement from one pitch to a lower one—often a whole step or minor third away—and back again. This motif, which signified for the composer the falling leaves and their repetition as they spin through the wind, becomes the constant, both in the vocal and piano lines, against which she juxtaposed discontinuous materials.
The first of these disruptive elements comes with the first mention of the peacocks (m. 20). Here Talma departed from the close, mostly stepwise motion of the vocal line up to this point and introduced an approximation of the peacock’s sound: an abrupt leap of an octave followed by a descending minor third that falls further before jumping a fifth and dropping an octave to complete the motif. Underneath the vocal cry of the peacock, the piano continues the motif of the falling leaves, bringing together the dissimilar parts of the poem: the memory of the peacocks and the immediacy of the impending nightfall, the sound of the peacocks and the fall of leaves. But just as Stevens then compares the peacocks’ tails to the leaves turning in the wind, so does Talma then return to the three-pitch melodic motif that marked the fallen leaves in the vocal line at the beginning of the song, with additional iterations and inversions in the piano.

Talma continued to use the two tetrachords in order and the turning motif frequently, suggesting the circularity of the poem’s images: after the leaves fall and turn, the peacocks turn repeatedly; once they stop, the planets begin, “like the leaves, turning in the wind.” The tetrachords alternate in dominance: after several bars that employ pitches primarily from one, Talma shifted to the other. As she did in earlier songs, she often altered the tetrachords by raising or lowering most or all of the pitches a half-step to create a new pitch class set a minor second away from the original. In general, the song’s ABA form is constructed in part by the same movement of the turning motif from the first set to the second and back again, as well as changes in tempo from slow to somewhat faster and back to slow.

The turning motif begins to stand for memory as well, as its structure implies: the experience of a pitch, moving horizontally (in time) and vertically (in space) away from that experience and returning to it through recall. Some memories, more intense than others, are represented musically by closer pitches. At the beginning of the song, “peacocks” is set to octave Es and E sharps, but in the middle section of the song, which is faster both in tempo indication and in text setting with quicker note values (more words in fewer measures), the cry of the peacock shifts to D flat–B flat, opening to octave E flats at the coda, when the text becomes calm again and Talma slowed the tempo by a third.

The repeated turnings also hint at a sense of dizziness experienced by the narrator. This is signified by the piano’s repeated turning motif and the thirty-second notes that melodically oscillate between major and minor thirds and minor seconds (beginning in m. 40). Only when the singer remembers the peacocks for the final time (m. 63) do the earth, fire, leaves, and planets halt their spinning; the sound of the peacock grounds the narrator. There is a brief silence before the coda begins. Talma concluded the song with an augmented version of the turning motif, referencing the two tetrachords from the song’s beginning and finally ending with a sustained statement of the first set {D—F—G—B}.

See Example 5.3 on page 000.
“Ploughing on Sunday” (1988)

The white cock’s tail
Tosses in the wind.
The turkey-cock’s tail
Glitters in the sun.

Water in the fields.
The wind pours down.
The feathers flare
And bluster in the wind.

Remus, blow your horn!
I’m ploughing on Sunday.
Ploughing North America.
Blow your horn!

Tum-ti-tum,
Ti-tum-tum-tum!
The turkey-cock’s tail
Spreads to the sun.

Wallace Stevens

“Ploughing on Sunday” is another of the more complex songs in the cycle. One of Stevens’s most celebrated, the poem carries several meanings. On the surface, the poem’s narrator describes how his neighbors all go off to church on Sunday, but he, a freethinker, stays home to plow his fields. Critic Helen Vendler reads this as the poet’s celebration of his own art.2 As Robert Buttel pointed out, however, Stevens could also be using “ploughing” as a metaphor for sex (particularly with his repetition of the words “cock” and “tail” as well), another behavior his neighbors might refrain from doing on what they consider a holy day.3

Either way, Talma captured the rumbustious pleasure expressed in the text, presenting the poem “Joyfully” and at a quick tempo. The song unfolds in a steady 4/4 time throughout, and triplets spanning large intervals are interrupted by rests to create an aural environment of skipping and leaping with glee. Talma established continuity with “Domination of Black” by both the turning motif to underscore mentions of wind in the text and through the continued stress on minor and major seconds. That she maintains the same meter for the entire song is a rarity and speaks to the constant, even pace of the words, which contain multiple repetitions. Talma employed triplets throughout to suggest the holiness of the day and the ways in which Stevens writes of circumventing religious tradition: at the beginning of the song, she introduced a leaping motif that consists of an eighth-note triplet followed by a rest of the same length, which is then followed by an eighth-note triplet slurred to a duple
eighth note. The interval between the first eighth note in the triplet and the second is usually an octave, moving up in the right hand and down in the left. The duple eighth note is then a step—higher or lower—in the same direction as the octave motion in each hand. The space of the middle triplet eighth note on beats one and three, combined with the octaves, invokes breathless pleasure that mirrors the text’s phrasing and exuberance. The vocal line is also full of leaps, usually rising fifths from A to E that occur at the end of each short line of text, although a few close with descending leaps of the same or similar interval. By setting the end of lines on higher and lower pitches than the more static pitches for the preceding words, Talma emphasized the words that fall there. Repetitions of “tail” and “wind” are found at the top of rising intervals, while “fields” and “down” are placed on the bottom pitch of descending intervals.

Talma incorporated some of her favorite intervals and pitch-class sets in “Ploughing on Sunday.” The major fifth represents her sense of existence and awareness, a signification that dates from her work for voice and orchestra The Tolling Bell (1969), while the incorporation of rising and falling minor and major seconds suggests both completion and wistfulness as established in so many of Talma’s previous works. Fleeting moments of tonality (e.g., m. 7), where beats three and four suggest traditional triadic harmony, are rare, but the appearance of perfect fifth-minor/major second combinations, {0,1,6} sets, are more common and are quite typical of her compositions.

See Example 5.4 on page 000.

“Lunar Paraphrase” (1988)

The moon is the mother of pathos and pity.
When, at the wearier end of November,
Her old light moves along the branches,
Feebly, slowly, depending upon them;
When the body of Jesus hangs in a pallor,
Humanly near, and the figure of Mary,
Touched on by hoar-frost, shrinks in a shelter
Made by the leaves, that have rotted and fallen;
When over the houses, a golden illusion
Brings back an earlier season of quiet
And quieting dreams in the sleepers in darkness—

The moon is the mother of pathos and pity.

Wallace Stevens

“Lunar Paraphrase,” composed in memory of Frederic Ewen (1899–1988), composer Miriam Gideon’s husband, is rhythmically complex and changeable. With short phrases, its quick-moving vocal line is laid over a slower, sober, and dissonant piano part that is often several voices thick with counterpoint. It offers
a study of an elegiac piece composed in Talma’s last years, as compared with her earliest songs. The closeness of approaches is remarkable here. Just as she did in her first melancholy works, here Talma employed concurrent fifth-minor/major second combinations, \((0,1,6)\) sets, and near-constant minor or major seconds in both the vocal and piano lines. At the same time, she suggested fleeting tonal centers; in fact, the song opens with a D-minor triad, although this gives way in the second measure to an F-sharp augmented triad and extinguishes the idea of standard tonality. Throughout, Talma moved in minor or major seconds from one unit to another: the set of \(\{A_{\natural}, D, F, G\}\) (mm. 4–5) shifts to \(\{A_{\natural}, C_{\natural}, F_{\natural}, G_{\natural}\}\) (m. 6). This incremental movement is constant, although, given the rhythms she chose for each measure, it moves at different speeds. In the voice, she usually retained at least one of the pitches from the piano’s simultaneous sets and frequently moved in fifths and minor or major seconds, occasionally encountering passing tones on the way.

“Lunar Paraphrase” is cast in a ternary form like the two songs before it in the collection. The A section, where the quarter note = 60, moves to a \textit{Meno Mosso} (m. 16) with the quarter note set at 46. A short interlude of a single phrase at eighth note = 92 returns the textures and rhythms to the A section (m. 35), where it continues for twelve measures to the end of the song. In the A section the piano part is mostly sustained or steady, while the vocal line begins with rhythmic patterns that match speech rhythms and then becomes more erratic, involving complex syncopations, tuplets, and unexpected pauses, just as a distraught speaker might become overwhelmed by emotion and unable to speak in a steady manner. This becomes even more obvious in the B section, where ties across beats and into and out of tuplets and repeated short crescendos and decrescendos turn each phrase into a barely controlled expulsion of breath and words. The piano here mirrors the gasping of the vocal line in the right hand and initially provides a steady pace before becoming itself disoriented as to the beat.

The piano and voice together appear to reach a rupture point (m. 29), where the voice reaches its highest pitch of the song and the piano delivers a quick and relatively loud roll of quintuplets inside a larger triplet. This accompanies the text “golden illusion,” a reference to either religious peace and blessing or the release of a soul. It is followed by a faster section with the text “quieting dreams in the sleepers in the darkness.” For this passage (beginning at m. 31), Talma directed that the tempo shift abruptly to eighth note = 92. The dynamic drops from mezzo-forte to piano, and a simple, sparse texture takes over, leading to the return of the A section proper at the \textit{Tempo I} (m. 35). In the opening of the song, Talma hinted here at traditional tonality before shifting pitches by half-steps to avoid it. Nonetheless, she wended her way through several axial centers to land ultimately on two sets of perfect fifths (E-flat/B-flat and D-flat/A-flat) in the final measure, her musical gesture of life and being.

See Example 5.5 on page 000.
“Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores” (1988)

I say now, Fernando, that on that day
The mind roamed as a moth roams,
Among the blooms beyond the open sand;
And that whatever noise the motion of the waves
Made on the seaweeds and the covered stones
Disturbed not even the most idle ear.

Then it was that that monstered moth
Which had lain folded against the blue
And the colored purple of the lazy sea,
And which had drowsed along the bony shores,
Shut to the blather that the water made,
Rose up besprent and sought the flaming red
Dabbled with yellow pollen—red as red
As the flag above the old café—
And roamed there all the stupid afternoon

Wallace Stevens

“Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores,” the sixth component in the cycle, presents a rhythmically unpredictable, staccato line in the right hand of the piano accompanied by downbeats in left hand and syncopated, cross-metrical, lyrical writing in the voice. Frequently identifiably bitonal, the song’s frequent changes in key areas mimics Stevens’s changes of mood and colors to create abrupt changes in its imagery. One of the more striking features of this song is that it is the last time Talma asked the singer for a non-standard practice. Earlier in her career, she had occasionally requested that singers enunciate consonants rather than vowels or sound hard consonants at the ends of words. In *A Time to Remember* (1967), the members of the chorus were instructed not only to hum on certain sounds but also to shuffle their feet and make stamping noises. Here Talma asked the singer to “hum with closed lips” an “M” sound (mm. 71–77), as if creating a radio fade-out on the vocal line, leaving the piano with a brief coda quite unlike the rest of the song in texture to bring it to an end with a sense of smoothness and gentleness not heard before in the piece.

See Example 5.6 on page 000.

“A Load of Sugar-cane” (1988)

The going of the glade-boat
Is like water flowing;
Like water flowing
Through the green saw-grass
Under the rainbows;

Under the rainbows
That are like birds,
Turning, bedizened,

While the wind still whistles
As kildeer do,

When they rise
At the red turban
Of the boatman.

Wallace Stevens

The through-composed “A Load of Sugar-cane” presents a perpetual motion motif of sixteenths in the piano, referencing the constant movement described in the text, while the vocal line remains mostly steady, chanting the sights of nature surrounding the narrator. A single syncopation comes in a comparison of rainbows to birds. The song is much like parts of “Adieux à la Meuse” (1945), in which Talma employed running sixteenths to mirror the motion of running water. And in providing continuity with “Hibiscus,” “The Load of Sugar-cane” also contains suggestions of bitonality and an emphasis on staccato articulation. See Example 5.7 on page 000.

“Re-statement of Romance” (1990)

The night knows nothing of the chants of night.
It is what it is as I am what I am:
And in perceiving this I best perceive myself

And you. Only we two may interchange
Each in the other what each has to give.
Only we two are one, not you and night,
Nor night and I, but you and I, alone,
So much alone, so deeply by ourselves,
So far beyond the casual solitudes,

That night is only the background of our selves,
Supremely true each to its separate self,
In the pale light that each upon the other throws.

Wallace Stevens
“Re-statement of Romance,” in contrast, is marked by syncopations and unexpected rhythmic movements between the voice and piano, perhaps representing the “two selves” of the text. Talma employed text-painting heavily throughout the song, such as parallel rhythms and intervals in the piano line as the text states that “Only we two are one,” the central theme of the poem; melodically, the outer voices move inwards from beat to beat to suggest further togetherness. Despite these corresponding elements, however, the vocal line is never parallel with the piano and is, in fact, often highly dissonant in relation to it. Talma placed the voice half and whole steps or tritones away from the piano, creating harmonic tensions that are not resolved until the voice’s final note (m. 44). Thus, instead of setting the poem as an assuring statement from one lover to another that they are bound to one another and not the night, Talma created a way of setting it so that it tells another story: one suggesting conflict, melancholy, and the possibility of solitude even when surrounded by others.

See Example 5.8 on page 000.

“The Pleasures of Merely Circulating” (1990)

The garden flew round with the angel,
The angel flew round with the clouds,
And the clouds flew round and the clouds flew round
And the clouds flew round with the clouds.

Is there any secret in skulls,
The cattle skulls in the woods?
Do the drummers in black hoods
Rumble anything out of their drums?

Mrs. Anderson’s Swedish baby
Might well have been German or Spanish,
Yet that things go round and again go round
Has rather a classical sound.

Wallace Stevens

Finally, “The Pleasures of Merely Circulating” is a fine example of melodic and axial text-painting to signify all of the references to “turning” and “circling” in the text. Here close intervals escape to larger ones, and the song has a solidly bitonal ending that both mocks and references the text’s citation of a “classical sound.” Ascending arpeggios on the keyboard initially suggest tonal centers of F major and C major, but, as in so many of her works, Talma slowly moved away, half-step by half-step, from these centers. As axes, however, C and F are present throughout, providing the composer with multiple ways to spin the centricity of the song from one area to another. Both the voice and piano have fairly regular textures and rhythms. The staccato of the A section is elongated into a legato

_meno mosso_ B section (m. 18) and returns again at the Tempo I (m. 41). As the
song comes to an end, Talma found a familiar set in \{0,1,2,4\}, which she used in the form of \{A flat—D—E—F\}.

See Example 5.9 on page 000.

**“Finis” (1993)**

The leaves are falling, and so am I.
Nature I loved, and next to Nature Art.

I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Walter Savage Landor

Such preferred sets also appear in Talma’s last complete work, “Finis,” begun in 1992 and completed just over a year later in October 1993 (see Illustrations 5.2 and 5.3 on pages 200 and 201, respectively). Her early treatment (1934) of Landor’s “Late Leaves” now seems lost, but for this final composition Talma returned to this text and combined it with material from Landor’s 1849 epitaph for himself. She apparently abandoned work on Landor’s entire epitaph around the same time, salvaging only two of its lines. As a result, the first two lines of her last song are taken from the Landor poem; the last two, from his epitaph. It is a quintessentially Talma piece: the texture is sparse, the range of the vocal line is quite limited, the meter changes frequently, there are hints of tonal materials as well as suggestions that a row is involved as the basis for both the horizontal and vertical pitches, and—even within these few measures—dis/continuity.

The vocal line for the first two lines is tonally centered on G with a major third hinting at the major modality, while the piano part establishes a centricity of A♭. A brief transition section of two measures between text sources is highly chromatic, with sevenths and tritones; the tonal center that emerges from this at the beginning of the last two lines in the vocal line is again centered on G, but with minor thirds, and the piano part now outlines E-flat natural minor. Another rather brief transition or coda follows the end of the vocal line and brings the center firmly to G major, albeit in a roundabout way through C minor and G minor. The presence of C sharps falling on non-stressed beats in the first part is continued into the second, providing additional pitch-based continuity. The vocal line of the first section is straightforward but is varied slightly in the second, although the basic contours of the lines are similar except for cadence points. “Nature Art” at the end of the first line rises on “Art,” but “depart” drops a major fifth from “de” to “part.” The second half boasts a slightly more active left hand in the piano than the first, but the transition measures and coda contain the most movement and variety in terms of rhythm and pitch.

In many ways, “Finis” is the perfect final work for Talma, exhibiting all of her trademark compositional techniques and preferences. It speaks autobiographically in both text and music: Talma had come to the end of her life. She was ready for the last transition, the traverse of her career depicted by
her favorite intervals, standing for distances and experiences, and a resolution that is unambiguously tonal and final, even as those measures leading up to it continue to explore various possibilities for axial centricity. This song displays, without question, elements from her works throughout her career. It stands as a monument to her career’s through-position—constantly developing, changing, altering the circle ever so slightly to keep listeners attentive, never being predictable.

See Example 5.10 on page 000.
Illustration 5.2.
Manuscript of “Finis,” Page 1

Reproduced through the courtesy of the Digital Department of the Library of Congress, Duplication Services Division, and with the permission of The MacDowell Colony.
Illustration 5.3.
Manuscript of “Finis,” Page 2

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Example 5.1. continued

rump-plings of the plumes Of this creature of the evening Came to be sleights of

sails Over the sea. And

thus she roamed In the roamings of her fan Partaking of the sea, And of the
Example 5.1. continued

evening

As they flowed a-round And ut-tered their sub-

poco rit.

ting sound.

poco rit. a tempo dim. rit ppp

Majestically $\frac{3}{4} = 58$

The sun, that brave man, Comes through

boughs that lie in wait, that brave man.

Poco più mosso $\frac{3}{4} = 63$

green and gloomy eyes In dark forms of the

cresc.
Example 5.2. continued

\[ \text{Example 5.2. continued} \]
Example 5.2. *continued*

Fears of my bed,

Fears of life and fears of death, Run a-way.

accol.
Example 5.2. continued

The brave man comes up from below and

walks without mediation, That brave man.

Example 5.3. continued

wind.  Yes:___ but the col-or of the hea-vy

hem-locks came strid-ing And I re-mem-bered the cry of the
cresc.  f >>

pea-cocks. The col-ors of their tails Were like the
Example 5.3. continued

leaves them-selves Turning in the wind, In the twi-light wind. They

swept o-ver the room, Just as they flew from the boughs of the

hem-locks Down. to the ground. I heard them
Example 5.3. continued

33 \textit{mf} >
\begin{align*}
&\text{cry... the pea-cocks.} \\
&\text{Was it a cry a-against the}
\end{align*}

37 \textit{poco a poco crescendo e accelerando}

\begin{align*}
&\text{twi-light Or a-against the leaves them-selves Turn-ing in the} \\
&\text{poco a poco crescendo e accelerando}
\end{align*}

40
\begin{align*}
&\text{wind, Turn-ing as the}
\end{align*}
Example 5.3. continued

41

flames    Turned    in    the

42

fire,      Turn    ing    as    the

tails   of   the    pea    -    cocks    Turned__

43
Example 5.3. continued

\[ \text{Example 5.3. continued} \]
Example 5.3. continued

Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window I saw how the planets gathered like the

leaves themselves turning in the wind. I saw how the night came, Came
Example 5.3. continued

58

strid-ing like the col-or-s of the hea-vy hem-locks I felt a-fraid And I re-

61

mem-bered the cry of the pea-cocks.

64 Tempo \( \frac{3}{4} = 66 \)
Example 5.4. continued

8
wind pours down. The feath-ers flare

10
And blur-ter in the wind.

12
Re-mus, blow your horn! I’m plough-ing on Sun-day.
Example 5.4. continued

Ploughing North America

Blow your horn!

Tum-ti-tum

Tum-tum
Example 5.4. continued

Example 5.4. continued
Example 5.4. *continued*

Wearily \( \text{\textit{p}} \) 

\[ \text{\textit{p legato}} \]

The moon is the mother of

pa-thos and pi-ty. When,____ at the, wear-i-er end of No-

vem-ber, Her old light moves a-long the bran-ches, Feeb-ly,
Example 5.5. continued

slowly, depending upon them; When the body of

Jesus hangs in a palor, Humanly near,

and the figure of Mary, Touched on by hoar-frost, shrinks in a
Example 5.5. continued

Example 5.5. continued
Example 5.5. continued

Tempo I
\[ \text{at end of rit.} = \text{j = 60} \]

34

\[ \text{darkness.} \]

The moon is the mother of pathos and

40

\[ \text{pity.} \]

44

\[ \text{dim.} \]

\[ \text{rit.} \]

\[ \text{pp} \]
Example 5.6. continued

say now, Fer-nan-do, that on that day The mind

sempre staccato

roamed as a moth roams, A-mong the blooms

be-yond the op-en sand. And that what-

mp
Example 5.6. *continued*

```
24
[Music notation]
ever noise________ the motion of the

27
[Music notation]
waves Made___ on the sea - weeds___ and the

31
[Music notation]
covered stones Disturbed not ev en the most i - dle ear____
```

METAPHORS IN MUSIC 251

1ST PROOFS: NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION
Example 5.6. *continued*

35

\[ \text{\( \text{\( \text{\( \text{\( j = 104 \) p misterioso} \) \)}} \) \) \) \) \) \} \]

41

\[ \text{\( \text{\( \text{\( \text{\( \text{that that} \) monst - ered moth} \) Which had lain fold - ed a -} \) \)}} \) \) \) \) \} \]

45

\[ \text{\( \text{\( \text{\( \text{\( against the_ blue} \) And the_ col - ored pur - ple of the} \)}} \) \) \) \) \} \]
Example 5.6. *continued*

The music notation includes the following text:

- **La-zy sea,** And which had drow-*sed* a-long the bo-*ny* shores,
- **Shut to the bla-ther that the wa-*ter* made,**
- **up be-sprent** and sought the flam-*ing* red

The musical notation is composed of the following sections:

1. **La-zy sea,** And which had drow-*sed* a-long the bo-*ny* shores,
2. **Shut to the bla-ther that the wa-*ter* made,**
3. **up be-sprent** and sought the flam-*ing* red
Example 5.6. continued

Dab-bled with yellow pollen red as

red As the flag above the old café And

roamed there all the stupid afternoon, m_

(hum with closed lips)
Example 5.6. continued

\begin{example}
\centering
\begin{music}
\begin{align*}
73 & p \quad \text{a tempo} \\
\begin{align*}
\text{soave} & \\
\text{p legato} & \text{a tempo}
\end{align*}
\end{align*}
\end{music}
\end{example}
Example 5.7. continued

Like water flowing through the green saw-grass, under the rainbows; Under the rainbows that are like birds, Turning bedizened, While the
Example 5.7. continued

wind still whistles As killdeer

poco a poco cresc.

do When they rise At the

red turban of the
Example 5.7. continued
Example 5.8. *continued*

```
you. On-ly we two may in-ter-change Each in the o-ther what each has to
give. On-ly we two are one, not you and night, Nor night and I, but you and
I, a-lone, So much a-lone, so deep-ly by our-selves, So
```
Example 5.8. continued

33 a poco crescendo

far beyond the casual solitude, That night is only the

37

background of our selves, Supreme to its separate self, In the

41

pale light that each upon the other throws.
Example 5.8. *continued*
Example 5.9. continued

\(\text{Example 5.9. continued}\)

Example 5.9. continued
Example 5.9. continued

19

\( \text{Tempo } \frac{d}{4} = 52 \)

Is there any secret in skulls, The

\[ \text{p legato} \]

... cattle skulls in the woods? Do the drummers in black

\[ \text{f} \]

30

\( \text{Tempo } \frac{d}{4} = 88 \)

... hoods Rumble anything out of their drums?

\[ \text{mf} \]
Example 5.9. *continued*

Mrs. Anderson's Swedish baby

Well have been German or Spanish. Yet that things go round and a-

sempre staccato
Example 5.9. *continued*

42

\( \text{gain go round Has \textit{rather} a classical sound. Yet that} \)

45

\( \text{things go round and \textit{again} go round Has \textit{rather} a classical sound.} \)

48

\( f \)}

\( g \text{aug} \)

\[ J = 56 \]

The leaves are falling, and so am I. Nature I loved, and

next to Nature Art:

warmed both hands before the fire of life; It sinks, and I am ready to de-
Example 5.10. *continued*

![Musical notation image]
Notes


BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cited Sources and Suggested Readings

“League Offers 2d Program of New Works,” The Brooklyn Daily Eagle (16 February 1936), 44.


Wahl, Kay. *Oakland Tribune* (17 December 1961), 2S.

In her will, Louise Talma appointed the MacDowell Colony her legal heir. After her death in 1996, the MacDowell Colony entrusted to the Library of Congress the bulk of Talma’s correspondence, photographs, and other personal materials and paper ephemera; her own manuscript and printed scores; and other scores, generally in manuscript form, that had been given to her. (Talma’s personal copies of published scores and her books were distributed to friends and former students.) In 2005, music librarian Sarah Dorsey partially catalogued the materials, now known as the Louise Talma Collection, and processed some 7,300 items. Dorsey was able to identify many of the completed and printed compositions in the collection, but many other items remained unidentified.

Some works by Talma are held in other collections. Manuscripts can be located in the Thornton Wilder Collection and the Louise Talma Papers in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University, the Nadia Boulanger Collection at Harvard University’s Isham Memorial Library, the J. Pierpont Morgan Library, and several private collections. Fair copies of some works also reside in the archives of the Conservatoire Américain in Fontainebleau, France.

Collecting information for all of Talma’s works was not always as straightforward as compiling a list of pieces held in these many locations: the titles of some works changed as Talma worked on them; some works became parts of others or were left in various stages of completion; some scores are still missing, although recordings of the works prove their existence. (If anyone has information as to the location of scores for these missing works, I would be most grateful to receive it.) I found the “Christmas Carol” tucked inside a letter at Yale; at the Library of Congress I found pages for newly discovered works that were unnumbered, out of order, and sometimes inserted into the pages of other works.

Appendix 1 is an annotated list of recommended published sources and scholarly theses and dissertations on Talma’s works for voice and piano as well as her pieces that involve voice(s) in other ways. This list is alphabetized by author. Appendix 2 lists all of Talma’s works for voice, including voice and piano, voice and orchestra, multiple voices, and voice and chamber ensemble. It is organized by composition date. Publishers are listed for published works, as well as the location of manuscripts where known. Talma also sent out reproductions of her holograph manuscripts to prospective performers, conductors, and awards and grant committees; these may be found in some library and private collections. Copies at New York Public Library (US-NYp) have been noted. Songs written as stand-alone works and later incorporated into song cycles or collections are listed.
by date of composition and also cited in collection information. In Appendix 3, I list known recordings of Talma’s vocal works. For a list of Talma’s complete oeuvre, see my article “Towards a Works List for Louise Talma,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* LIX/2 (2012), 117–126; or the Appendix of my book *Louise Talma: A Life in Composition*.

Notes

1 Kendra Preston Leonard, personal communication with Patricia Woodard, November 2010.

SOURCES ON THE VOCAL WORKS BY LOUISE TALMA

Barkin, Elaine. “Louise Talma: ‘The Tolling Bell,’” Perspectives of New Music X/2 (Spring-Summer 1972), 142–152. Analysis of The Tolling Bell for baritone and orchestra, which was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.


Hanson, David. “Opera by Thornton Wilder to Be Premiered in Frankfurt,” The Overseas Family (March 2, 1962). Discussion of The Alcestiad.

Harris, Carole Jean. The French Connection: The Neo-Classical Influence of Stravinsky, through Nadia Boulanger, on the Music of Copland, Talma, and Piston. Ph.D.


THE COMPOSITIONS FOR
VOICE BY LOUISE TALMA

Completed Works with Vocal Forces


22. “Infanta Marina.” 1943. SSAA and piano. Text by Wallace Stevens. Missing. This may have been reworked for the 1988–1990 “Infanta Marina” for solo soprano and piano.


48. *Seven Songs for Voice and Piano* (“One Need Not Be a Chamber to Be Haunted,” text by Emily Dickinson (1941); “Rain Song,” text by Jean Garrigue (1973); “Glory Be to God for Dappled Things,” text by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1949); “Spring and Fall: To a Young Child,” text by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1946); “Sonnet: I Wake and Feel the Fell of the Dark,” text by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1946); “Sonnet: No, I’ll Not Go,” text by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1950); “Leap before You Look,” text by...


**Unfinished Works**


RECORDINGS OF TALMA’S VOCAL WORKS

Recordings are listed by date with publisher and catalogue, date, and a list of Talma’s works on the recording. In addition to these commercial recordings, the New York Performing Arts Library and the Library of Congress hold recordings of Talma’s music on a number of reel-to-reel and cassette tapes. Often, these were private donations to the library from Talma or the performers. Some are recordings of radio broadcasts and performances by college or university performers. As these were never publicly available, they are not listed here. Other recordings of interest include A Celebration for Louise: A Concert of the Music of Louise Talma, a recording of a concert held at Hunter College for Talma’s eightieth birthday, and In Thanksgiving for the Life and Music of Louise Talma, the recording of a memorial concert for the composer held a few weeks after her death in 1996. A Celebration, recorded February 5, 1977 at the Hunter College Playhouse, is held in the Louise Talma Collection of the Library of Congress. In Thanksgiving, recorded at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, on November 6, 1996, includes several spoken word tracks by Virginia Davidson, Ned Rorem, and others who knew Talma. It is held by the New York Performing Arts Library. Finally, an additional recording of Holy Sonnets: La Corona can be found on the recordings made to accompany the textbook Historical Anthology of Music by Women, edited by James R. Briscoe and published by Indiana University Press.


