

A Performer's Guide to the Songs of Gwyneth Walker

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ABSTRACT

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The prolific American composer, Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947), is well known for the quality of her choral music. Largely overshadowed by success in the choral realm, Walker's wealth of solo vocal music is virtually unknown and has been largely neglected by performers. Within her output, Walker has composed many art songs worthy of study and performance. Walker's songs have a distinctive voice that has been influenced by many different musical genres, and her songs are accessible to performers and audiences alike.

Despite the quality of the songs, very little has been written about the solo vocal works of Gwyneth Walker, and no strong discussion of the repertory exists to date. This document is a study of four representative song cycles for solo voice: *though love be a day*, *Mornings Innocent*, *No Ordinary Woman!*, and *The Sun is Love*.

The first chapter of this document is an introduction, biography, and review of related literature. Chapters 2 through 5 are devoted to discussion of each of the four vocal works, with special attention to the needs of the performer. The final chapter is a summary of findings and conclusions.

Appendices include a discography of recordings currently available, a current listing of songs in the composer's active catalogue, and a list of current publishers of the composer's songs.

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Finally, I am grateful for the authorization to reproduce portions of Dr. Walker's songs in this document. Permission was granted by E. C. Schirmer.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
I. INTRODUCTION, BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION, AND REVIEW OF AND LITERATURE	1
II. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF <i>THOUGH LOVE BE A DAY</i>	8
III. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF <i>MORNINGS INNOCENT</i>	35
IV. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF <i>NO ORDINARY WOMAN!</i>	62
V. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF <i>THE SUN IS LOVE</i>	88
VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY	127
APPENDIX A: DISCOGRAPHY OF CURRENT RECORDINGS	131
APPENDIX B: COMPLETE LISTING OF SOLO VOCAL WORKS IN THE CURRENT CATALOG	133
APPENDIX C: CURRENT SONG PUBLISHERS AND CONTACT INFORMATION	135

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The prolific American composer Gwyneth Walker is well known for the quality of her choral music. Largely overshadowed by success in the choral realm, Walker's wealth of solo vocal music is virtually unknown and has been largely neglected by performers. This is regrettable, since Walker has composed many wonderful songs worthy of study and performance. As with her choral music, Walker's songs are accessible to performers and audiences alike, "never simplistic," and display a sophisticated compositional style stemming from her interests in many musical genres.¹ Carson P. Cooman writes that within Walker's production exist qualities that "have often been classified as characteristic of 'American music' (including the strong rhythmic sense, open sonorities, and influences of rock, jazz, blues, and American folk music)."² Walker can be considered a member of an American musical tradition created by composers like Copland and Bernstein while maintaining a unique compositional personality.³ Displaying distinctive voice and quality of content, Walker's songs deserve greater attention in the world of contemporary American vocal music.

The purpose of this study is an in-depth focus on major works in Walker's repertoire for solo voice, producing a guide for performers. Due to the breadth of her repertoire of songs for solo voice and piano, the document does not attempt to discuss every song written to date.

¹ Carson P. Cooman, "Gwyneth Walker: An American Original," *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/walkinfo.html>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Instead, it focuses upon four of the major song cycles in her active catalog, devoting a chapter to each. These works are as follows:

1. *though love be a day*. Composed in 1979 to texts of E. E. Cummings and Walker, this is arguably her most performed cycle. The first song of the cycle, “Thy fingers make early flowers” was the first place winner of the Song Category in the 1983 Composers’ Guild National Competition.
2. *Mornings Innocent*. Walker has created versions of these songs for both chorus and solo voice. The cycle contains texts by May Swenson, which Walker chose for their shift amongst “a variety of topics” . . . “yet they speak with one voice, one style, and one life-affirming philosophy,”⁴ exemplifying her strong religious beliefs as a Quaker. It was composed in 1993.
3. *No Ordinary Woman!* This work was written in 1997 to texts of Lucille Clifton. The cycle is especially interesting, as Walker admittedly focuses upon jazz as her inspiration for their composition.⁵ It is also important to note that throughout her compositional output, “Dr. Walker’s choice of texts, particularly in the area of music for women’s voices, emphasizes the strength of women.”⁶ *No Ordinary Woman!* is a perfect example of this theme, as the pieces focus upon a female poet’s perception of her body and her life. Additionally, Walker continued to return to this piece, re-orchestrating the songs several times for different performers.
4. *The Sun is Love*. This cycle, composed in 2002, is interesting because the texts are taken from a 13th century Persian poet, Jalâl al-din Rumi. Walker makes a rare break from the use of American texts in this cycle, but the poetry chosen for this cycle maintains a common theme in Walker’s music: love. It is also an interesting piece to study as Walker herself says the songs are parts of a greater narrative and are intended to flow together and be performed as a complete collection.⁷

The document considers research that is currently available in the context of a detailed discussion of text setting within each work and a discussion of the musical and vocal challenges

⁴ Gwyneth Walker, Notes on *Mornings Innocent*, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/morningi.html>.

⁵ Gwyneth Walker, Notes on *No Ordinary Woman!*, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/morningi.html>.

⁶ Burrichter, 4.

⁷ Gwyneth Walker, Notes on *The Sun is Love*, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/thesunis.html>.

within each piece. When available, the document includes commentary by the commissioning and premiering performers.

It is hoped that the guide, featuring some of the major songs in Walker's output, will not only aid singers who feel intimidated by learning and programming relatively unknown literature but will also make a valuable addition to the available research and literature available on modern American art song.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Gwyneth Van Anden Walker was born in New York City on March 22, 1947. Her father was a physicist and her mother a housewife and social researcher. Walker is the youngest of their three daughters. When she was one year old, the family relocated to New Caanan, Connecticut, where she spent the majority of her childhood. Discussing her interest in music and her musical development, Walker notes similarities between herself and Charles Ives. "We're not far from Danbury, which is where Ives is from. My father was an inventor, so building and making things was omnipresent. My mother loved music; she had a bit of Italian in her and loved opera particularly."⁸ From the age of two, Walker took an interest in the family piano, beginning to experiment with the instrument and compose her own songs. In addition to teaching herself piano and guitar skills, Walker began to place her compositions on paper from the age of six. While in junior high school, she made arrangements of popular music for her friends to perform; in high school, Walker was an active participant in a folk and rock group, where she was a guitarist and made vocal arrangements.

⁸ Gene Brooks, "An Interview with Gwyneth Walker," *Choral Journal* 39:7 (February 1999), Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/walkinf5.html>.

With the exception of a music theory course in high school, Walker did not receive formal musical training until college. She entered Brown University as a physics major but promptly made a change to the field of music, where she was made exempt from most courses in music theory. Walker received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1968, and her graduate education took place at the Hartt School of Music, where she studied composition with Arnold Franchetti. Walker received a Master of Music in 1970 and a Doctorate of Musical Arts in 1976. She began her short teaching career at Oberlin College and also taught briefly at the Hartford Conservatory. She retired from teaching in 1982 in order to compose on a full-time basis.

Throughout her compositional career, Walker has produced works in nearly every musical genre, placing an emphasis upon works for chorus. She believes that “when you write for the human voice, you are writing for something that is universal and everlasting”⁹, and this is perhaps why she has also created many works for solo voice. The first major work in her repertory for solo voice is *though love be a day*, composed in 1979 to texts of E. E. Cummings and her own creation. Although the majority of Walker’s vocal works include texts by American composers, her overarching “aim is to develop a sense of theater on the concert stage.”¹⁰ This sense of drama can be witnessed in many of her works, among which is the retired work, *Holding the Towel: Sportsongs* of 1991, a piece that takes its inspiration from Super Bowl Sunday, directly offering the singer stage directions and prop suggestions.

Possibly the most important quality of Walker’s music is its accessibility to all people, stemming from several sources. First, as a Quaker, she believes in “egalitarianism: everyone

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Susan Weber and Marcia Lee Goldberg, eds., An Interview with Gwyneth Walker, June 2004, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/webintv.html>, 3.

should be able to understand the text.”¹¹ This causes her to sometimes alter, repeat, or expand the texts that she chooses to set. Walker states: “People are dying to have music they . . . can perform, something with meaning, and something the audience can understand.”¹² In selecting texts, she looks for “lines in the poem that are the poem, lines that could be sung, that an audience would be able to understand without looking at the program.”¹³

It is not only the texts of Walker’s songs that are accessible to audiences, however. The musical language is familiar. She notes that the experiences of performing rock and folk music have influenced her musical language,¹⁴ as well as listening to “musicians like James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins, and the Beatles.”¹⁵ In regards to this influence she notes: “I borrow sounds of what is around me, but I do not hear a particular composer and decide I need to write like that person.”¹⁶ She continues to state: “I use musical materials that are familiar, but I try to shape them into my own message. Therefore, audiences may say, “I think I understand that chord or that harmonic progression, that rhythm. I hear that she is using these for a reason, and I understand it.”¹⁷ In her work, Walker combines recognizable musical language with original ideas, creating sophisticated, artful music.

Finally, Walker accepts commissions for compositions from people within all levels of musical experience. She has written works for a wide range of performers, from professional

¹¹ Burrichter, 17.

¹² Brooks.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Weber and Goldberg.

¹⁵ Brooks.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Weber and Goldberg.

organizations down to community groups and elementary schools. Her music is for everyone to perform and enjoy.

Walker currently resides on a dairy farm in Braintree, Vermont. As a Vermont resident, she helped to found the Consortium of Vermont Composers in 1988 and was the 2000 recipient of the Vermont Art Council's "Lifetime Achievement Award." Walker received the prestigious Brock Commission in 1999. The year 2007 marks her "60th Celebration Year," and in addition to national activities dedicated to the celebration of her birth, Randolph, Vermont will hold a two day festival in October devoted to the performance of her works.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Very little has been written about the musical works of Gwyneth Walker, with an especially noticeable lack in research on her songs for solo voice. While several newspapers provide performance reviews and tidbits of background information for pieces, there is no strong discussion of the repertory. In a Masters document, Julie Wogan makes an analysis of Walker's song cycle *though love be a day*. This stands alone as the only research document focused on this prolific composer's song output, and unfortunately, the library that owns the document is unable to make the work available for observation or study. While not abundant, much of the information available about Walker's works for solo voice is actually written by Walker herself and exists in the form of short program notes, observations, and analytical essays. She posts writings, reviews, and responses to questions involving her music on her website.

Walker's biography has been largely documented, and detailed information exists on her choral works. The dissertation by Vicki Lynne Burrichter is a highlight in this area, and it also contains detailed information discussing Walker's major choral pieces. Additionally, the

dissertation includes a transcribed interview with the composer that covers a wide range of topics, from her Quaker religion to general information about choice of poetry. Other biographical interviews exist, conducted by Gene Brooks in the *Choral Journal* and the duo of Susan Weber and Marcia Lee Goldberg. While these interviews provide essential background information about the composer's life and thoughts, they are devoid of musical discussion as it pertains to solo song. Walker is also mentioned in books about modern female composers, like *Contemporary Concert Music by Women*, but discussion as it relates to specific musical pieces is missing from these sources as well. Examining the available research on Walker's songs, it is apparent that the need exists for studies such as this document.

CHAPTER TWO
THOUGH LOVE BE A DAY

In 1979, while on the faculty at Oberlin College, Walker composed the five-song cycle, *though love be a day*, for high voice and piano. The piece was premiered by soprano Kathryn Bennett, who was a former Walker student at Oberlin, and the pianist Douglas Stanton. Four texts were chosen from the works of E. E. Cummings, and the poem for the fifth song was written by Walker herself.

E. E. Cummings was born Edward Estlin Cummings on October 14, 1894 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The son of a Unitarian minister, Cummings graduated from Harvard in 1915. In 1917, he volunteered for the Norton-Hayes Ambulance Service but chose to abandon the unit in Paris. Shortly thereafter, he was detained for three months in Normandy on suspicion of espionage. Following the war, Cummings spent time between homes in Greenwich Village and Connecticut, making frequent travels to Europe. The Guggenheim Fellowship and the 1958 Bollingen Prize are among the many awards Cummings received during his lifetime. He died on September 3, 1962.

Discussing *though love be a day*, Judith Carman observes: “the four e. e. cummings poems that make up this cycle are images of love in both intimate and humorous contexts” . . . “the fifth song on a poem by the composer is a very personal love poem.”¹⁸ According to Walker, “The initial poem selected for the set was “after all white horses are in bed.” These words immediately suggested a musical setting as a love song. And this song became the

¹⁸ Judith Carman, “Music Reviews: *Though Love Be a Day. Five Songs for High Voice on Poems by E.E. Cummings and Gwyneth Walker*, by Gwyneth Walker,” *Journal of Singing* 54:2, (November-December 1997): 73-4.

centerpiece . . . of the cycle.”¹⁹ Walker chose two other Cummings poems, “lily has a rose” and “maggie and millie and mollie and may,” setting them to music with a more lively quality, in contrast to “after all the white horses are in bed.” The text “Thy fingers make early flowers” was selected for a setting that “beckons the listener to enter the romantic and playful world of e.e. cummings . . .”²⁰, and Walker created the final text, “Still,” in order to “provide an intense and powerful closing to the cycle.”²¹

The Songs of *though love be a day*

1. “Thy fingers make early flowers”

The first song of the cycle, “Thy fingers make early flowers,” is approximately 3 minutes and 20 seconds in duration. The voice part spans the range of D4 to A5, and the tessitura is medium, from F#4 to D5. E. E. Cummings’s entire poem provides the text for this song.

Thy fingers make early flowers

Thy fingers make early flowers of
all things.

Thy hair mostly the hours love:
a smoothness which
sings, saying
(though love be a day)
do not fear, we will go amaying.

thy whitest feet crisply are straying.
Always
thy moist eyes are at kisses playing,
whose strangeness much
says; singing
(though love be a day)
for which girl art thou flowers bringing?

¹⁹ Walker, Notes on *though love be a day*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

To be thy lips is a sweet thing
and small.
Death, Thee i call rich beyond wishing
if this thou catch,
else missing.
(though love be a day
and life be nothing, it shall not stop kissing).

“Thy fingers make early flowers” is comprised of three strophes, corresponding to the three verses of the poem. Each verse begins with metrical uncertainty: the opening moments of the first and last verses have no meter, and the second verse changes meter.²² Quasi-recitative, a feature present in many of Walker’s songs appears in this piece, as she chose this type of setting to help depict the delicate qualities of fingers and flowers.²³ This musical depiction of delicacy can be seen in the first measure, where the soft, high chords of the accompaniment are made daintier by the rolling gesture.

Example 1. Gwyneth Walker, “Thy fingers make early flowers,” m. 1.

Within the first verse, the metric uncertainty present during the quasi-recitative disappears as the voice states: “do not fear” in a clear 4/4. This sudden presence of time signature gives strength to the text, through the consistency of bar lines.

²² Walker, Analysis of “Thy fingers make early flowers,” 3.

²³ Ibid, 4.

Example 2. Gwyneth Walker, "Thy fingers make early flowers," mm. 5-7.

Example 2. Gwyneth Walker, "Thy fingers make early flowers," mm. 5-7.

Commenting upon this shift to meter Walker writes: "it might be observed that the musical setting of this song grows from the amorphous to the defined in terms of meter. Each verse has a similar motion."²⁴ The movement toward metrical clarity can be seen in the second verse, where the meter moves to a distinct 6/8 in measure 25. The repeated rhythmic gestures emphasize the meter, and the sixteenth note melismas give stress to the word "flowers."

Example 3. Gwyneth Walker, "Thy fingers make early flowers," mm. 25-27.

Example 3. Gwyneth Walker, "Thy fingers make early flowers," mm. 25-27.

Throughout "Thy fingers make early flowers" the harmonic language is intricate and challenging to analyze. Walker notes: "The complexity stems not only from the lack of key signature, but also from the constantly shifting tonal centers, and the chromatic links between them. But the common element is the employment of structures that are both tertian and

²⁴ Ibid.

quartal.”²⁵ Within the recitative portions of “Thy fingers make early flowers,” Walker uses quartal harmonies to create the effect of “tonal ambiguity and unsettledness.”²⁶ In contrast, areas of clear harmonic language correspond to areas of metric certainty, such as the metered portions of the strophes. According to Walker, this is because “the tertian harmonies are associated with the ‘goals,’ or the ‘answers’”²⁷ of each verse. This contrast in harmony can be clearly viewed in verse 3 that opens with a recitative underscored by quartal harmonies and moves to clear triadic harmonies at the 6/8.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 4-5.

²⁷ Ibid.

and small _____ Death, Thee i call rich be-yond wish -ing if this thou catch,

else miss - ing and life be noth - ing, and life be noth-ing

though love be a day _____ though love be a

day _____ though love be a day _____

Example 4. Gwyneth Walker, "Thy fingers make early flowers," m. 38 (2nd & 3rd Systems)-42.

From an analytical perspective, it should be noted that the frequent references to the number five within both this song and the entire cycle are coincidental. Walker explains: "There

are five songs. The title contains five words. There are many references to fingers. Quintuplet motives appear in the piano accompaniment of several songs: quickly in the first song, slowly in the last song. This happened subconsciously.”²⁸ No extra meaning should be sought in these occurrences of the number 5.

From a performer’s view, “Thy fingers make early flowers” is perhaps the most vocally challenging song of the cycle. While it does not make range or tessitura demands, the song is fairly rhythmically challenging, frequently presenting quintuplets and alternation between duplets and triplets. The difficulty of the song is enhanced by frequent change in meter and the use of quartal harmonies. In addition to the immediate musical demands, the piece is text driven with a primarily syllabic setting. As a result, the song demands special attention to textual interpretation in order to create a successful performance.

2. “lily has a rose”

Largely due to its playful tempo, “lily has a rose” provides a sharp contrast to “Thy fingers make early flowers.” “lily has a rose” is quite brief, lasting approximately 1 minute and 40 seconds. The range is more expansive than that of “Thy fingers make early flowers,” reaching from C4 to B5, but the tessitura remains medium, from approximately E4 to D5. The text by Cummings is slightly adapted by Walker, who alters the fourth line to read “you can have mine” instead of “you make take mine” and also uses word repetition.

Original Text

lily has a rose
(i have none)
“don’t cry dear violet
you may take mine”

“o how how how

Text Set by Walker

lily has a rose
(i have none)
“don’t cry dear violet
you can have mine”

o how how how

²⁸ Walker, Notes on *though love be a day*.

could i ever wear it now
when the boy who gave it to
you is the tallest of the boys:

“he’ll give me another
if i let him kiss me twice
but my lover has a brother
who is good and kind to all”

“o no no no
let the roses come and go
for kindness and goodness do
not make a fellow tall”

lily has a rose
no rose i’ve
and losing’s less than winning (but
love is more than love)

could i ever wear it now
for the boy who gave it to
you is the tallest of boys

“he’ll give me another
if i let him kiss me twice, twice
but my lover has a brother
who is good and kind to all”

“o no no no
let the roses come and go
for kindness and goodness do
not make a fellow tall”

lily has a rose
no rose i’ve
lily has a rose
no rose i
losing is less than winning
but love is more than love

Throughout “lily has a rose” Walker makes use of the accompaniment to create the mood for the piece and to comment upon the text. Within the first moments of the song the opening figure of the accompaniment establishes a light, playful mood, suggested by the sixteenth note staccati, and the notes of this figure are mimicked by the first vocal entrance.

♩ = 160

mf playfully

p

This musical score shows the beginning of the piece. It features a piano introduction with a tempo marking of quarter note = 160. The music is in 6/8 time and begins with a dynamic of *mf* and a *playfully* performance instruction. The piano part consists of a series of staccato chords in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The dynamics shift to *p* (piano) in the second measure.

f

li - ly has a rose, i have none "don't cry dear vio - let

f *mf*

port

This musical score shows the vocal entrance. The vocal line is in 6/8 time and begins with a dynamic of *f* (forte). The lyrics are "li - ly has a rose, i have none" followed by "don't cry dear vio - let". The piano accompaniment continues with a dynamic of *f* in the first measure and *mf* in the second. The vocal line ends with a *port* (portando) marking.

Example 5. Gwyneth Walker, "lily has a rose," mm. 1-3.

Following the vocal entrance, the accompaniment presents a series of staccato seconds that recur throughout the song, enhancing the lively, playful nature.

This musical score shows the piano accompaniment in measure 5. The piano part features a series of staccato chords in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The dynamics are *f* (forte) in the first measure and *mf* (mezzo-forte) in the second. The tempo is 160.

Example 6. Gwyneth Walker, "lily has a rose," m. 5.

Beginning in measure 6, the accompaniment takes on an ostinato that repeats through measure 14, as the singer represents the heavy-hearted character "violet."

Example 7. Gwyneth Walker, "lily has a rose," mm. 7-10.

The song's overarching light, playful quality returns once again at measure 15 as the notes from the vocal line in measure 2 reappear in the piano, accompanied by staccato markings.

Example 8. Gwyneth Walker, "lily has a rose," mm. 15-16.

Example 8. Gwyneth Walker, "lily has a rose," mm. 15-16.

The change in musical texture to rolled chords at measures 19 and 20 adds distinction to the character of the lover's brother, who unlike others is "good and kind to all."

Example 9. Gwyneth Walker, "lily has a rose," mm. 18-20.

Example 9. Gwyneth Walker, "lily has a rose," mm. 18-20.

This statement is followed by a return of the staccato seconds that occurred in measure 5, leading into a recurrence of the accompanimental ostinato underscoring "violet's" response. An

additional bit of word painting can be seen in the ascending octave portamento that occurs on the word “tall” in measures 32 and 33.

make a fel - low tall _____
stacc.

Example 10. Gwyneth Walker, “lily has a rose,” mm. 32-33.

In the closing moments of the song, the voice and piano begin a lighthearted dialogue that continues for five measures. The voice enters with the initial vocal motive from “lily has a rose,” and that motive is echoed one eighth note later in the staccato accompaniment.

li - ly has a rose no rose i've,
li - - ly has a rose no - - - - - rose have i

Example 11. Gwyneth Walker, “lily has a rose,” mm. 35-40.

Finally, the voice makes the serious, introspective comment “love is more than love” which precedes a playful restatement of the staccato seconds motive.

Example 12. Gwyneth Walker, “lily has a rose,” mm. 41-45.

Although the singer will not likely find much vocal challenge in “lily has a rose,” interpreting the meaning of the text in its musical setting will perhaps prove more difficult. The Walker scholar, Carson Cooman, comments about his interpretation of the two faster songs: “The songs ‘lily has a rose’ and ‘maggie and millie and molly and may’ I play very playfully -- as befits the poems, always keeping the touch light and spry. Although both poems are a tad ‘silly’, they also each have a ‘serious’ line or two which is important. Thus, like any true ‘scherzo’, there is some serious kernel buried in the heart of its frivolity.”²⁹ The same remarks apply to the vocal line, with special attention necessary when approaching the “serious” line,

²⁹ Cooman, Response to a Letter from Josh Ferguson.

“but love is more than love.” While the poem could have many meanings, it most likely signifies the loss of innocence, the climax of the “serious” nature appearing in this line.

3. “after all white horses are in bed”

The focal point of the cycle, “after all white horses are in bed,” lasts approximately 3 minutes and 30 seconds. Although the piece has a fairly wide range, from Db4 through A6, the tessitura remains medium, from approximately E4 to E5. Within her setting for solo voice, Walker chooses to use only a portion of Cummings’s poem, selecting five lines as the basis for her song text. Cummings’s original poem and Walker’s adaptation are as follows:

Original Poem

after all white horses are in bed
after all white horses are in bed

will you walking beside me,
my very lady,
if scarcely the somewhat city
wiggles in considerable twilight

touch (now) with a suddenly unsaid

gesture lightly my eyes?
And send life out of me and the night
absolutely into me.... A wise
and puerile moving of your arm will
do suddenly that

will do
more than heroes beautifully in shrill
armour colliding on huge blue horses,
and the poets looked at them,
and made verses,

through the sharp light cryingly
as the knights flew.

Text Set by Walker

after all white horses are in bed
will you walking beside me,
my very lady,
touch lightly my eyes
and send life out of me
and the night absolutely into me

Throughout the song, Walker makes use of frequent textual repetition, most notably in the title line “after all white horses are in bed.” Vicki Lynne Burrichter notes that this “becomes the textual anchor of the piece . . . Perhaps Walker chooses to emphasize this line because she sees it as the key to her understanding of the poem: after ‘knights’ on their ‘white horses’ . . . have faded into fantasy, the speaker will remain with his ‘lady.’”³⁰ Within the song, Walker also chooses to repeatedly emphasize the words “touch lightly my eyes,” enhancing the delicate, romantic nature of the text.

Discussing her choice to alter Cummings’s poetry for her musical settings, extracting and repeating portions of the text, Walker notes:

To some people, [E.E. Cummings’s poems] don’t make sense – I mean, my mother would be an example. She would not be able to make any sense out of an E. E. Cummings poem, and I know other people, too – because they read a poem very literally. In the song, “White Horses” that people know fairly well, I took just five lines from a poem that is much longer. And because I focused on them, most people get some meaning from that song. It may not be the same meaning, but they get some meaning. But if you look at the entire poem, it would be an impossible one to sing, because it goes off in different tangents. You wouldn’t know what the person was talking about. And in E. E. Cummings’s case, either I delete, or I bring back words again and again with perhaps just the subject and the verb, and leaving out the qualifying string of adjectives. Subject and verb, then subject with one or two adjectives and verb, then subject with three or four or five – they’re the same ones again, so maybe you’ll get this, then the whole, so it’s now comprehensible.³¹

Burrichter argues that Walker’s alteration of the text not only makes her music more accessible to people by making it easier to understand, but it also “is representative of her Quaker belief in egalitarianism: everyone should be able to understand the text, not just the most highly educated.”³²

³⁰ Burrichter, 16.

³¹ Ibid, 17.

³² Ibid.

In her description of the song that is the focal point of the cycle, Walker writes that it “may be interpreted as a love song hearkening back to the days of the Troubadours. Thus, the piano introduction (in high range) might function to transport the listener away from present day reality and into night and the past.”³³ The introduction, marked “dolce, una corda” remains unmeasured, enhancing a sense of timelessness. When the voice enters, however, the piece remains almost exclusively in a 4/4 meter.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for a piano introduction. The first system is marked 'slowly' and 'pp dolce, una corda'. It features a treble clef and a bass clef. The second system is marked '4:3' and 'tre corde'. It features a treble clef and a bass clef. The score ends with a 4/4 time signature.

Example 13. Gwyneth Walker, “after all white horses are in bed,” m. 1.

Measure 12 makes a shift to 6/4, providing the only moment of metric change within the metered portion of the song and also adding stress to the repetition of words “touch lightly my eyes.” The descending figure of C, B-flat, A, and F that underscores these words is present throughout the accompaniment, anticipating the text in the first through third beats of measure 11 and echoing the text in the third through fifth beats of measure 12. Beginning in measure 13,

³³ Walker, Notes on “White Horses.”

there is a change in the texture of the accompaniment, from the persistent motion of eighth notes to rolled chords underscoring the words “and send life out of me and the night absolutely into me.”

Example 14. Gwyneth Walker, “after all white horses are in bed,” mm. 11-13.

The texture changes yet again on measure 33, to quarter notes alternating with quarter rests, giving an airy lightness to the overlying text “touch, touch, touch.”

Example 15. Gwyneth Walker, “after all white horses are in bed,” mm. 32-34.

Another momentary change in accompanimental texture gives special emphasis to the word “lightly.” This occurs when the accompaniment moves to rolled chords on the downbeats of measures 64 and 66.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal piece. It is written in E major and 3/4 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system features a vocal line with the lyrics "la - - - dy, touch light - ly my eyes, touch" and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes a *dolce* marking. The second system continues the vocal line with "light - ly my eyes, touch light - ly my eyes" and the piano accompaniment, which includes *p* and *slower* markings. The piece concludes with a soft octave leap to a high A in the vocal line and a single, sustained high E in the piano accompaniment.

Example 16. Gwyneth Walker, “after all white horses are in bed,” mm. 62-69.

In the final moments of the piece, a soft octave leap to a high A in vocal line gives the ending a dreamlike quality, enhanced by a decrescendo to pianissimo and a single, sustained high E in the last measure of the accompaniment.

Reviewing the songs of *though love be a day*, John Rockwell observes that this music is “accessible and singable (meaning not excessively chromatic), yet responsive to the texts and convincing on its own terms.”³⁴ Judith Carman also notes that within these songs “there are few difficulties for performers familiar with popular ballad style and secure in rhythmic figuration.”³⁵ Both comments are applicable to “after all white horses are in bed” because in addition to the frequent word repetition, this piece contains recurring, memorable melodic lines. Although the song frequently changes tonal center, altering between unrelated keys such as E mixolydian, F

³⁴ John Rockwell, “Rondi Charleston Wins Art Song Vocal Competition,” *New York Times*, 6 May 1990.

³⁵ Carman, 74.

major, and E-flat mixolydian,³⁶ these tonal shifts will not be surprising to singers who, as Carman states, are familiar with popular styles. Perhaps the most challenging feature of this song is the use of dynamics, as the piece requires the performer to make pianissimo octave leaps to a sustained high F and a high A.

4. “maggie and milly and molly and may”

“maggie and milly and molly and may” is the shortest piece in the cycle, lasting only 1 minute and 15 seconds. It spans a vocal range of B3 to Ab5, and the tessitura is approximately F#4 to Eb5. The Cummings poem chosen as the song text reads as follows:

maggie and milly and molly and may
maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach (to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and

milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and

may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
It's always ourselves we find in the sea

“maggie and milly and molly and may,” in a lively 12/8, begins with a staccato eighth note on each beat of the measure. The introduction builds as a note is added to the downbeat of each of the first four measures.

³⁶ Burrichter, 23.

Example 17. Gwyneth Walker, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 1-4.

This airy texture is present through the depiction of the character maggie’s experience at the beach, discovering a singing shell. However, as milly’s experience of finding a starfish is described, the “languid” fingers of the animal are depicted in the ascending, connected triplet figures in the accompaniment.

Example 18. Gwyneth Walker, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 11-12.

The image of molly being chased by a creature is depicted in the running eighth notes of the accompaniment in measures 13 through 16, and fear is depicted through the presence of spoken text.

spoken

were and mol - ly was chased by a hor - ri - ble thing which

Example 19. Gwyneth Walker, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 13-14.

When may’s experience is described, the light staccato figure from the song’s opening occurs once again. Here, the word “large” is painted by a leap to a high G-flat, the highest note within the phrase. Then, the word “alone” is also enhanced by the musical setting: an octave leap to a high A-flat, placed over a significantly lower accompanimental figure.

May come home with a smooth round stone as small as a world and as large as a -

lone. for what - ev - er we lose like a you or a me it's

rit.

a tempo

f

slowly, pensively

a tempo

f

slowly

colla voce

Example 20. Gwyneth Walker, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 19-22.

The serious nature of the lines of text, “as small as a world and as large as alone” and “for whatever we lose like a you or a me it’s always ourselves we find in the sea,” is made more significant due to the ritardando markings and the words “slowly, pensively.” Finally, the song closes with a return to the initial playful tempo, with three descending statements of “maggie and milly and molly and may,” surrounded by descending chromatic eighth notes in the accompaniment that add to the lively nature of the piece, enhanced by staccato markings.

The image shows a musical score for the song "maggie and milly and molly and may" by Gwyneth Walker. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with lyrics: "mag-gie and mil-ly and mol-ly and may". The piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clef). The right hand features a descending chromatic eighth-note pattern, while the left hand has a simple bass line. Performance markings include "Ped." and "* (no Ped.)".

Example 21. Gwyneth Walker, “maggie and milly and molly and may,” mm. 19-22.

The overall style of this song “is much like a patter song with one spoken section and one slow section.”³⁷ As a result of the many words and quick rhythmic values, a singer performing this song will encounter the challenge of clear enunciation. Additionally, the spoken lines require dramatic presentation, and although this piece is marked “playfully,” the serious portions of the text demand a humorless approach. About this topic, Carson Cooman notes: “with “maggie and millie and molly and may”, this is a poem that for me, despite it's "child-like" playful nature, has a very serious subject of how different people can come away from the same experiences having very different things, based on who they actually are themselves.”³⁸ Walker aids the singer in the task of presenting the serious material, setting the weighty moments “as large as alone” and “for

³⁷ Carman, 74.

³⁸ Carson Cooman, personal email response, March 23, 2007.

whatever we lose like a you and a me it's always ourselves we find in the sea" apart from the rest of the song through changes in tempo.

5. "Still"

The final piece of *though love be a day* is the longest in the cycle, approximately 5 minutes and 20 seconds. The vocal range spans D4 through G5, and the tessitura is medium, approximately E4 to E5. Walker created her own text with which to close the cycle.

Still

When the streets are new wet dawning,
night lamps glowing, capering eyes,
walk gently in the song of morning
you are with me as I arise.

Still, still beyond my fingers,
beyond the reaching of my eyes,
comes the time beyond my seeking
you are with me as I arise.

Comes the time beyond all question:
is it you or is it I
who spoke the word to crack the darkness,
to bring you near as I arise.

Love, love this moment glistens
in sacred mourning of our lives.
Beyond the speaking and the breaking
you are with me as I arise.

In her analysis of "Still," Walker describes the primary musical motive: "One notices immediately the opening five intervals, displayed alone, without meter. These intervals split apart as the pitches diverge from the central D. One might call this the 'splitting apart' motive."³⁹ The initial occurrence of the motive is immediately followed by a second appearance of the motive, this time set against a countermelody.⁴⁰

³⁹ Walker, Analysis of "Still," 1.

Example 22. Gwyneth Walker, “Still,” m. 1, first system.

When the voice enters at the 2/4, it continues the motive, presenting “D, C#, B, A, the lower line of the ‘splitting apart’ motive.”⁴¹ This lower fragment of the motive remains important to the melodic structure of the vocal line throughout the song, as it provides the opening to every verse.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 2.

Example 23. Gwyneth Walker, “Still,” mm. 1, second system-7.

Recognition of this “splitting apart” motive can aid performers in study of the song, helping in interpretation of the emotional conflict inherent within each verse. Walker writes: “Taking a look at the text, the central message is one of separation, yet closeness.”⁴² In her composition, the “splitting apart” motive, beginning with the descending half step, represents the emotional separation.⁴³ In contrast, “healing closeness may be found in the melodic material associated with ‘you are with me as I arise.’ This is always cadential material, often presented in a diatonic cadence of VI VII i in the minor mode.”⁴⁴ As seen below, the cadence comes to a close on “arise” and the “healing closeness” has achieved its goal through a stepwise motion.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, 3.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 3.

you are with me as

I a - rise.

Example 24. Gwyneth Walker, “Still,” mm. 45-50.

The musical setting of each verse is similar throughout the song, being set in a modified strophic form. The first two verses are nearly identical, and the third verse is similar, presented a step higher. The ending of the piece becomes less structured, similar to the opening of the song. It is “amorphous, meter is discarded, and the song concludes with a repeated pattern fading away.”⁴⁶ Walker intends for the end of the song to express “a less tangible realm of existence.”⁴⁷ Though the person being addressed is not present in physical form, the memory remains.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

you are with me, you are with me as I a

mf *p* *slowly*

mf *p* *colla voce*

rise.

a tempo

8va *delicato 3* *pp*

* repeat pattern ad lib. al fine 5' 20"

Example 25. Gwyneth Walker, “Still,” mm. 140-141.

The singer studying “Still” may encounter a few challenges presented by the lack of key signature and frequent change in tonal center throughout the work. As in many other songs, Walker combines different tempi and meters in “Still,”⁴⁸ so it is possible that moments of blurred meter may present rhythmic difficulties for the singer. Within “Still” this occurs primarily in measures 93-104, where the singer is required to sing sustained “ahs” over repeated presentations of the “splitting apart” motive.

⁴⁸ Cooman, Response to a Letter from Josh Ferguson.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Still" by Gwyneth Walker, measures 93-100. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The piano part is divided into two systems. The first system includes a left-hand section marked "(l.h.)" and "simile". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes. The vocal line has a melodic phrase with a "5" marking over the right hand. The piano part has two "5" markings over the right hand. The vocal line has two "Ah" markings. The piano part has two "5" markings over the right hand.

Example 26. Gwyneth Walker, "Still," mm. 93-100.

In any event, a singer primed to encounter tonal shifts and small amounts of metric uncertainty will likely find "Still" easy to learn and prepare. Like several other Walker songs, it has been likened to a more popular style of song "in the vein of Andrew Lloyd Webber,"⁴⁹ with memorable melodies and repetition. Due to the singable nature of the melodic lines, perhaps the strongest demand upon the singer within "Still" is to create beautiful, legato phrases.

⁴⁹ Carman, 74.

CHAPTER THREE
MORNINGS INNOCENT

In 1993, Walker chose to set six poems of May Swenson to music, creating *Songs for Women's Voices* for SSA Chorus. Later in the year, Walker extracted four of the songs and created an arrangement for high voice and piano, believing that the solo editions would be a valuable addition to her catalog.⁵⁰

The poet May Swenson was born in Logan, Utah on May 28, 1913. The daughter of Swedish immigrants that converted to Mormonism, she was a known feminist and lesbian. Swenson graduated from Utah State University in 1934, and in 1936 she became the oral historian for the Federal Writers Project in New York City. "In her lifetime, she worked mainly as a poet, publishing over 450 poems. Much of her life was spent in Greenwich Village, New York City, where she was a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets."⁵¹ During her life, Swenson taught poetry at Bryn Mawr, the University of North Carolina, Purdue University, Utah State University, and the University of California at Riverside. She was also the recipient of the 1981 Bollingen Prize and the 1987 Mac Arthur Fellowship. Swenson died in Ocean View, Delaware on December 4, 1989.

Walker became aware of Swenson's poetry in an unusual fashion. One morning while reading the obituary portion of the NY Times, Walker viewed the obituary of Swenson, which also included lines of her poetry.⁵² She was immediately drawn to the writing because "it

⁵⁰ Gwyneth Walker, personal email, March 18, 2007.

⁵¹ Walker, Notes on *Mornings Innocent*.

⁵² Gwyneth Walker, Response to a Letter from Ginny Kerwin, November 1, 2005, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html#KERWIN>.

touched upon many topics, not just the ‘self!’⁵³ Walker chose to attend Swenson’s funeral, where she was acquainted with more of Swenson’s poetry and gained permission from the Literary Estate to set Swenson’s writings to music.⁵⁴

Walker chose the texts for the songs of *Mornings Innocent* because they “address a variety of topics—from feminism to romance to death—yet they speak with one voice, one style, and one life-affirming philosophy.”⁵⁵ She believes that within the varying topics “the view is always one of beauty and positive energy,”⁵⁶ and “the musical settings are intended to present these poems in a simple and straightforward manner which seeks to portray the beauty, humor, and passion of the words.”⁵⁷ Because Walker is primarily interested in conveying the meaning of the text, she suggests that the poetry should be read aloud before the performance of the work, so that the audience is able to focus completely on the singer during the performance.⁵⁸

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Walker, Notes on *Mornings Innocent*.

⁵⁶ Gwyneth Walker, Response to a Letter from Alan Gumm, February 5, 2006, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html#GLUM>.

⁵⁷ Walker, Notes on *Mornings Innocent*.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

The Songs of *Mornings Innocent*

1. “Women Should Be Pedestals”

The singer approaching the song, “Women Should Be Pedestals” will likely find the range to be medium, from C4 to G#5, with a comfortable tessitura of approximately F#4 to F#5. Neither range nor tessitura places an extreme demand upon the voice, and the song itself is short in duration, lasting approximately 2 minutes and 15 seconds. Walker chose the poem “Women,” as the text for her song.

Women

Women should be pedestals
moving pedestals
moving to the motions of men

Or they should be little horses
those wooden sweet
old fashioned
painted rocking horses
the gladdest things
in the toyroom

The pegs of their ears
so familiar and dear
to the trusting fists

To be chafed feelingly
and then unfeelingly
To be joyfully ridden
rockingly ridden until
the restored
egos dismount
and the legs stride away

Immobile sweet-lipped
sturdy and smiling
women should always
be waiting
willing to be set
into motion
Women should be
pedestals to men

Writing about the piece, Walker states: “‘Women Should Be Pedestals’ is a ‘tongue-in-cheek’ song. This is a satire – the lyrics are not to be taken seriously. For, of course, we do not feel that women should be pedestals, ‘moving to the motions of men!’”⁵⁹ In her thesis, Vicki Lynne Burrichter notes that “this is . . . a song of suffocation, sarcasm and cynicism.”⁶⁰ Due to the satirical, sarcastic nature of the text, when studying this piece, perhaps the most important element to be considered is the musical setting of the poetry. Walker writes:

When I set poetry to music, I focus on the central images in the poem. To me, poetry is not words. It is the images that the words create. And thus, with the musical setting, it is important that the images in the poetry translate into musical imagery. Often, the accompaniment is the central means of creating the imagery. The world of the poem may be established within the opening measures of accompaniment. The vocal lines, while also participating in the musical imagery, have a primary function of conveying the words.⁶¹

Throughout the piece, Walker is “sensitive to the poem and its feminist sentiments,”⁶² using the accompaniment to highlight irony in the text. Sarcasm is apparent from the first moment of the song, as the piece opens with a declaration by the singer: “Women should be pedestals,” marked “spoken boldly, tongue in cheek.” The piano then enters with a “gently swaying” tango, suggesting a seductive quality.

⁵⁹ Gwyneth Walker, Response to a Letter from Jan Petersen Schiff, February 13, 2006, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html#SCHIFF>.

⁶⁰ Burrichter, 33.

⁶¹ Gwyneth Walker, “Words and Music,” *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/e-words.html>.

⁶² Burrichter, 35.

Spoken boldly, tongue-in-cheek
(standing very straight and still)

Wom - en should be ped - es - tals —

gently swaying,
as a tango

p

ped. *

ped. * *sim.*

Example 27. Gwyneth Walker, “Women Should Be Pedestals,” mm. 1-5.

In measure 13, the tango is broken by a cluster in the piano that is sustained by the damper pedal. The echoes from the piano are left to support the vocal line “they should be little horses.” Then, the tango continues until the voice states that women, as rocking horses, should be “the gladdest things in the toyroom” on measure 18. In this moment, the text is left in the forefront, over a sustained chord. Walker then emphasizes the “gladness” within the statement by introducing staccato, “random white-note dyads” in the accompaniment that ascend and lead into the triple meter that begins at measure 22.

Slower
mf

hors - es, The glad - est things in the toy room

Slower
mf

Ped.

playfully rit. -----

with gentle motion

random white-note dyads

P very sweetly

Example 28. Gwyneth Walker, “Women Should Be Pedestals,” mm. 17-24.

As a sexual encounter begins, one can sense that the objectified woman is not always treated with tenderness or respect as Walker introduces repeated, marcato chords in the accompaniment at measure 33, underscoring “chafed feelingly, and then unfeelingly.”

mf

dear to the trust-ing fists. To be chafed feel - ing - ly,

Example 29. Gwyneth Walker, “Women Should Be Pedestals,” mm. 31-36.

Then, the vocal line then takes on a dotted quarter, eighth, quarter note pattern at measure 44 as the singer describes the woman-rocking horse being repeatedly “rockingly ridden.” This statement is accentuated by the marking of “bruskly” on “ridden.” The two-handed, black-note cluster over pedal in the accompaniment of measure 50 signifies the sexual meeting is complete.

Example 30. Gwyneth Walker, “Women Should Be Pedestals,” mm. 43-50.

After the encounter, the voice is left with a free, recitative-like statement “until the restored egos dismount and the legs stride away.” The man’s departure can be heard in the accompaniment, as his stride is marked by black-note clusters that are to be performed “roughly” by the pianist.⁶³ Despite any feelings she may have, the woman is then required to be “immobile,

⁶³ Burrichter, 34.

sweet-lipped, sturdy and smiling,” musically depicted by the grace notes that lead into an unobtrusive, sustained, chordal accompaniment at measure 54.

freely, quasi recit.
mf

un - til the re - stored e - gos dis - mount and the legs stride a - way...

freely, quasi recit.
l.v.

rit.

Grandly, slowly
f

Im - mo - bile,

roughly, ad lib.
black-note clusters up keyboard

Grandly, slowly
8va

f

8vb

Example 31. Gwyneth Walker, “Women Should Be Pedestals,” mm. 51-55.

Throughout this song, Walker’s directions to the singer help to point up the sarcasm in the text. For example, the phrase “women should always be waiting” is marked “patiently,” and it is preceded by a sigh in measure 60 that could be interpreted as that of a waiting woman. Next, the singer is instructed to be “attentive” as the piano acts “as a dinner bell,” calling the woman to action. An accelerando occurs, depicting the inevitable movement of women who are “willing to be set into motion.” This leads into a restatement of “women should be pedestals” and four measures of tango.

f *sighed* *p*, *patiently*
 (8va)-----, Ah!----- Wo-men should al-ways be
 (8va)----- *ped.*-----
 (attentive) *mp* *accel.*-----
 wait-ing, wil-ling to be set in-to mo-tion
 (as a dinner bell) *pp* *accel.*-----
p

Example 32. Gwyneth Walker, “Women Should Be Pedestals,” mm. 60-66.

In the final moments of the song, Walker repeatedly emphasizes the first syllable of pedestals at measure 71, perhaps attempting to convey a message of disgust at the objectification of women.

Pe-pe-pe-pe-ped-es-tals,
sim.

Example 33. Gwyneth Walker, “Women Should Be Pedestals,” mm. 71-72.

At the song's conclusion, the final accented, sustained statement of "women should be pedestals" that begins on measure 73 comes to a sarcastic halt as the singer "flippantly" remarks "to men" on a marcato, low Eb. Then "the final note in the accompaniment (the emphatic low C) serves to add a closing exclamation point to this lighthearted song."⁶⁴

The singer will encounter several challenges when studying or programming "Women Should Be Pedestals." As stated before, the foremost challenge is the attention that must be devoted to study of the manner in which the text is set and text delivery. Walker uses a primarily syllabic approach to text delivery in this piece. The accompaniment frequently makes commentary upon the text of the vocal line, and the two parts must be sensitive to the statements being made by one another. For example, the singer must deliver the line "women must be waiting," in such a manner as to enhance the audience's perception of the "dinner bell" in the accompaniment. The song requires the singer to act and to develop strong reactions to both the text and imagery created by the piano.

Furthermore, sarcasm and irony are essential elements in conveying the meaning of the song, and these attitudes are required in many situations. Perhaps the most sarcastic moment begins when the text compares women to "rocking horses, the gladdest things in the toyroom." The woman is established as an object to be possessed, used, and discarded by the male figure, left only with the option to remain "sweet-lipped, sturdy and smiling." It is this author's belief that if the majority of the song is delivered with cynicism and sarcasm, the emotions of disgust or anger at "pe-pe-pe-pe-pedestals," the last emphatic statement of "women should be pedestals," and the flippant, marcato presentation of "to men" can be successful in delivering the message.

⁶⁴ Walker, Response to a Letter from Jan Petersen Schiff.

In addition to the inherent textual challenges, the singer will encounter difficulties due to the frequent change in meter. An example occurs on page 6, in measures 62 through 65, where the meter changes from 2/2 to 3/2 to 7/8 and then returns to 2/2. Finally, the vocal line in this piece is responsible for the majority of the melodic interest, being presented over a primarily subordinate accompaniment that frequently moves in chordal motion or leaves the vocalist to sing over echoes remaining from a sustained pedal.

2. “Mornings Innocent”

The second song, “Mornings Innocent,” is comfortable in both range and tessitura, ranging from D4 to A5, with the majority of the notes lying between F#4 and F#5. However, the singer may find this piece to be more vocally challenging than “Women Should Be Pedestals,” as the song frequently moves through the passaggio. The piece lasts 2 minutes and 30 seconds, and it is based upon text from Swenson’s poem, “Mornings Innocent.”

Mornings Innocent

I wear your smile upon my lips
arising on mornings innocent
Your laughter overflows my throat
Your skin is a fleece about me
With your princely walk I salute the
sun
People say I am handsome

Arising on mornings innocent
birds make the sound of kisses
Leaves flicker light and dark like
eyes

I melt beneath the magnet of your gaze
gaze
Your husky breath insinuates my ear
Alert and fresh as grass I wake

and rise on mornings innocent

Text Set by Walker

I wear your smile upon my lips
arising on mornings innocent
Your laughter overflows my throat
Your skin is a fleece about me
With your princely walk I salute the
sun
People say I am handsome

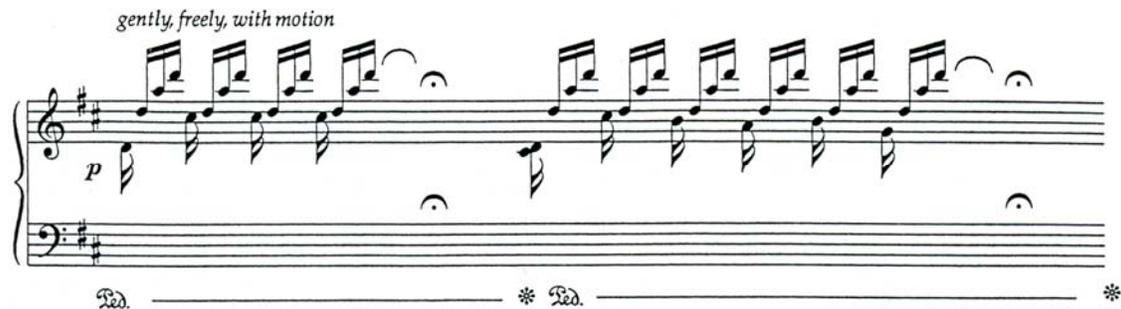
Arising on mornings innocent
birds make the sound of kisses
Leaves flicker light and dark like
eyes

I melt beneath the magnet of your
gaze
Your husky breath embraces my ear
Alert and fresh as grass I wake

and rise on mornings innocent

The strands of the wrestler
run golden through my limbs
I cleave the air with insolent ease
With your princely walk I salute the sun
People say I am handsome

“Mornings Innocent” begins with an extended one measure piano introduction, a musical depiction of the early morning. The musical imagery is created by a repeated sixteenth note pattern blurred by a sustained pedal. Marked “gently, freely, with motion,” this device helps to create the effect of sunlight across a bedroom.



Example 34. Gwyneth Walker, “Mornings Innocent,” m. 1.

When the voice enters at measure 2, the piano “becomes more sustained, as there are extended, rolled chords on the downbeat of most measures.”⁶⁵ The singer has just awoken and is beginning her day; this is reflected by the sudden presence of slower rhythmic values and the general increase in tempo during the song. Within these initial moments and throughout the song, “the overall accompanimental texture displays Walker’s usual sensitivity to the text.”⁶⁶ For example, this can be seen when the text “your skin is a fleece about me” is painted by the accompaniment, joining to double the voice in octaves. The previously sustained accompaniment now moves “about” the voice, in chordal motion with the melodic line.

⁶⁵ Burrichter, 37.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

flows my throat, your skin is a fleece a - bout me. With your

Example 35. Gwyneth Walker, “Mornings Innocent,” mm. 8-11.

Walker continues to use subtle forms of text painting throughout the song, such as setting the text “arising” to ascending notes each time it occurs in the song. According to Burrichter, “further text painting can be seen in her setting of ‘kisses of kisses,’ where a staccato marking is indicated over the triplets . . . perhaps imitating, in an onomatopoeic fashion, the lover being engulfed in brief kisses.”⁶⁷

rit. -----
3 3 3 *mp*
kiss-es and kiss-es and kiss-es, your

rit. -----
3 3
3

Example 36. Gwyneth Walker, “Mornings Innocent,” m. 44.

Beginning in measure 29, the repeated sextuplets in the accompaniment accent the increasing sexual intensity within the text, and the line “your laughter overflows my throat” is painted by a string of grace notes in measure 46.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 40.

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The top system is for the voice, starting with the tempo marking 'slower'. The lyrics are 'laugh-ter o-ver-flows my throat, your'. There is a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure of the vocal line. The bottom system is for the piano, marked 'p'. It features a trill in the bass line. The score concludes with a sustained A note in the voice part, marked '8va'.

Example 37. Gwyneth Walker, “Mornings Innocent,” mm. 45-46.

The piece ends dramatically, with a painting of the text “I salute the sun” as the voice ascends to a sustained A, the highest note in the piece.

Like “Women Should Be Pedestals,” “Mornings Innocent” requires the performers to devote special attention to the text, with the challenge of conveying passion and the eroticism of love. However, it should be noted that Walker made the choice not to set three lines of the poem that convey some of the most vividly erotic images: “the strands of the wrestler / run golden through my limb / I cleave the air with insolent ease.” Additionally, she made a change in wording. The line of the poem that reads: “your husky breath insinuates my ear” has been altered to “your husky breath *embraces* my ear.” This change is likely to aid the listener in textual comprehension.

As a result of the passionate musical setting of this text, one of the major obstacles to creating ensemble between the performers is the frequent change of tempo. A most difficult portion of the song occurs in measures 22 through 27, where a new tempo marking is present in nearly every measure. As in the previous song, the meter within the song “Mornings Innocent” changes frequently. The second page, for example, shifts repeatedly between 2/4 and 3/4.

Furthermore, the vocalist will experience the added challenge of being required to move fluidly

between eighth notes and triplets, such as in measures 46 to 48. The ability to execute quasi-recitative is also required in the moment “leaves flicker light and dark like eyes,” challenging the singer to resist indulging in the passion of the text and singing with too much weight.

A particularly rewarding aspect of the song “Mornings Innocent” is the rhythmic energy of the accompaniment that underscores much of the vocal line and helps to propel the song forward. According to her biographer, Carson Cooman, “Dr. Walker's personal sense of energy, rhythm, and particularly her keyboard style derive, in my mind, from her athletic life and personality. This is one of the unique hallmarks of her style, and I think it comes directly out of those parts of her life.”⁶⁸ Throughout the song “Mornings Innocent” the growing rhythmic vitality helps to enhance the intensity of passion and make the song dramatically effective.

3. “In Autumn”

“In Autumn” is the longest song of the cycle, lasting 3 minutes and 20 seconds. The vocal line ranges from C4 to Ab5 and has an overall tessitura of approximately G4 to F5. Swenson’s “I Will Lie Down” is the textual source for the song.

I Will Lie Down

I will lie down in autumn
let birds be flying

Swept into a hollow
by the wind
I'll wait for dying

I will lie inert unseen
my hair same-colored
with grass and leaves

Gather me
for the autumn fires
with the withered sheaves

⁶⁸ Carson Cooman, personal email, March 18, 2007.

I will sleep face down
 in the burnt meadow
 not hearing the sound of water
 over stones

Trail over me cloud
 and shadow
 Let snow
 hide the whiteness of my bones

As in the previous song, the mood of “In Autumn,” is established by a free measure of introduction. Following a series of descending quarter notes over a sustained pedal, the accompaniment settles in two long, rolled chords. The pedal remains sustained through measure 2, the voice entering over the reverberations from the opening measure. The overall effect of this simple, hollow accompaniment is a sense of emptiness and death, depicting the final season of life.

Slowly, freely

Piano *p*

ped. stays

(Slowly) *p*

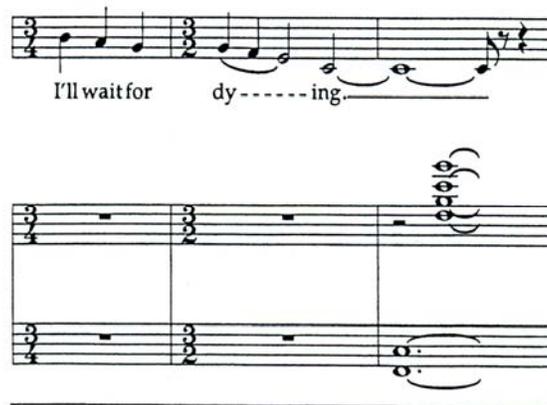
I will lie down in au - tumn, let birds be fly-ing.

(Slowly)

(ped. stays)

Example 38. Gwyneth Walker, “In Autumn,” mm. 1-5.

In measures 9 through 11, the vocal line descends from a B-flat to a sustained middle C on the word “dying.” Within the song, Walker notes that middle C represents the earth,⁶⁹ and this descending line helps to depict Walker’s interpretation that “rather than battle death, she [the poet] would rather let death be a time of uniting with the earth, peacefully, in beauty.”⁷⁰ As a result, the vocal line moves down to the level of earth at middle C.



Example 39. Gwyneth Walker, “In Autumn,” mm. 9-11.

The first moment of rhythmic energy in this song occurs in measure 21, where the eighth note runs in the vocal part are echoed by an accompaniment that continues on, depicting the steady flight of birds. The beating of wings can be viewed in the alternation between E-flat and C in the right hand of the piano.

⁶⁹ Walker, Response to a Letter from Alan Gumm.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

gradual accel.-----

fly ----- ing.-----

gradual accel.-----

(p) ----- mf

ped. stays ----- *

Example 40. Gwyneth Walker, “In Autumn,” mm. 21-24.

As the text states “gather me for the autumn fires” in measure 29, the accompaniment begins a repeated, circular sixteenth note pattern that is blurred by a sustained pedal. According to Walker, this figure along with the mid-range vocal line is to depict floating clouds and shadows.⁷¹

mf

Gath - er me ----- for the au - tumn fires ----- with the

3 3

p

ped. -----

Example 41. Gwyneth Walker, “In Autumn,” mm. 29-31.

Further imagery is created within the middle portion of the song, as text painting occurs when “water over stones” is illustrated by two rising and falling triplet figures.

⁷¹ Ibid.

The image displays a musical score for Example 42. The top system features a vocal line in treble clef with a 2/2 time signature. It contains four measures of music, each with a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics "hear - ing the sound — of wa - ter o - ver" are written below the notes. The bottom system shows a piano accompaniment. The first part is a dense texture of sixteenth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The second part shows a more sparse accompaniment with triplets of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A fermata is placed over the final measure of the piano part, followed by an asterisk.

Example 42. Gwyneth Walker, "In Autumn," mm. 36-37.

In measure 69, the voice begins an extended descent to "I'll wait for dying" that ranges in pitch from a high A-flat a sustained middle C, once more emphasizing the beauty of uniting with earth. The uplifting message of the piece continues as birds fly away through the sky. This image is created once again by a rising vocal melisma and repeated alternation between C and F in one line of the accompaniment and F and C in the other, mimicking the movement of the wings of two birds. Walker views this final image as "the soul floats off with the birds to heaven."⁷²

⁷² Ibid.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "In Autumn" by Gwyneth Walker. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 2/2 time and features lyrics: "birds be fly ing." with melismas indicated by dashed lines. The piano accompaniment includes triplets and a sustained pedal. The score is marked with "rit." and "p".

Example 43. Gwyneth Walker, "In Autumn," mm. 88-94.

Throughout "In Autumn," the singer faces the obstacle of being vocally exposed; much of the vocal line within the piece is unaccompanied or only lightly supported by a sustained pedal. Additionally, this is the most vocally challenging song of the group. It makes the largest demands in vocal range, with several high As and a long, sustained middle C on "dying" in measures 71-76. The voice is primarily required to be sustained, with a flowing legato. However, the singer must produce several short melismas that appear throughout the song, rising out of the sustained moments. "In Autumn," is also dynamically challenging to the vocalist, as most of the

piece should be executed in a piano dynamic. This includes two high As, the final A being sustained for two and a half measures.

In addition to vocal demands, the singer will find a challenge in conveying the meaning of the text, expressing the qualities of strength, beauty and hope in death. This is made more difficult by the sparse accompanimental texture. Because Walker chose to repeat three lines of text several times throughout the piece: “I will lie down in autumn / let birds be flying / and I’ll wait for dying,” it also remains the responsibility of the singer to present each occurrence with a different vocal inflection.

4. “I Will Be Earth”

The final song of the cycle, the love song “I Will Be Earth,” is approximately 2 minutes and 30 seconds in duration. The range is medium, from D4 to A5, and the tessitura is medium-low, centering around E4 to E5. Walker chose an untitled Swenson poem as the textual source for the song, making two small alterations. She removes contractions, and she changes the word “sex” to “love.” Presumably, these changes were made in order that the text be easier to understand and more appropriate for all ages.

Original Text

Untitled

I will be earth you be the flower
You have found my root you are the rain
I will be boat and you the rower
You rock you toss me you are the sea
How be steady earth that’s now a flood
The root’s the oar’s afloat where’s blown our bud
We will be desert pure salt the seed
Burn radiant sex born scorpion need

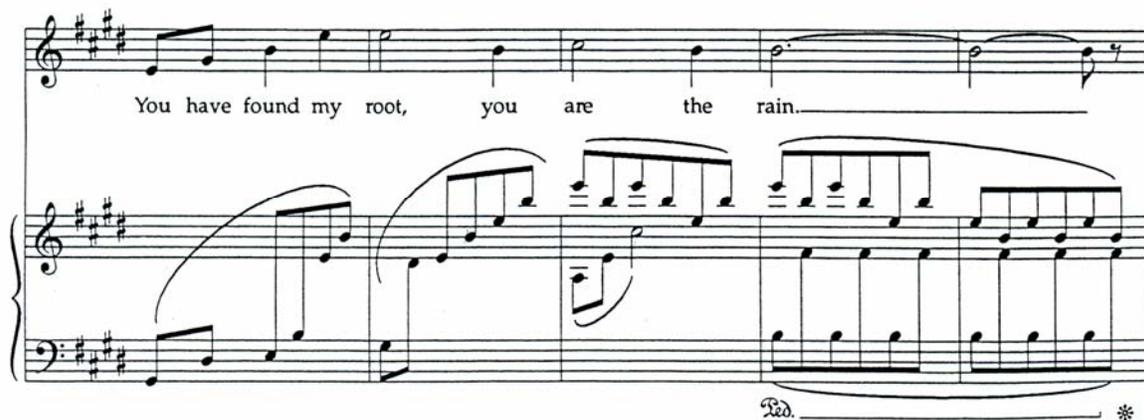
Text Set by Walker

I will be earth, you be the flower.
You have found my root, you are the rain.

I will be boat, and you the rower.
 You rock me, you toss me, you are the sea.
 How be steady earth that's now a flood.
 The root is the oar afloat where has blown our bud.
 We will be desert, pure salt the seed.
 Burn radiant love, burn scorpion need

In her “Observations on ‘I Will Be Earth’,” Walker comments about the musical setting of the text: “When viewing the poem by May Swenson, there appeared to be contrasting expressions of love. The opening lines ‘I will be earth, you be the flower,’ are gentle. They compliment each other. A cantabile style of music, in a ‘light’ key, such as E Major, seemed in order.”⁷³

Throughout the work, Walker uses the accompaniment to depict the imagery inherent in the text, and “I Will Be Earth” begins in a flowing 3/4 meter. The lover as “rain” is depicted in the falling alternation between E and B in the accompaniment of measure 12.



Example 44. Gwyneth Walker, “I Will Be Earth,” mm. 10-14.

Further musical depiction of the text is seen in the rocking, rearticulated eighth notes of measure 20, painting the words “you rock me, you toss me.”

⁷³ Gwyneth Walker, Observations on *I Will Be Earth*, Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/ana/gw-ivbe.pdf>.



Example 45. Gwyneth Walker, “I Will Be Earth,” m. 20.

In addition to text painting, an understanding of the harmonic language of “I Will Be Earth” provides a key to interpreting the song. Within the piece, Walker borrows material from folk music. She writes:

one might notice the progression in mm. 21-24. In the key of E Major, this would be analyzed as: VII (lowered 7th step), VII-IV-I. This is considered to be a motion from the Subdominant of the Subdominant to the Subdominant to the Tonic—a progression typically found in folk music. This was chosen as part of the harmonic language of this song due to the simplicity (i.e., folk nature) of the text and its musical setting.⁷⁴

This musical progression leads to a change in key from E major to C major. In measure 29, the meter changes from 3/4 to 6/8, and the voice takes on a duplet pattern against the triplets in the accompaniment, establishing a feeling of unsettledness.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Example 46. Gwyneth Walker, “I Will Be Earth,” mm. 29-32.

Walker writes this about the corresponding moment in the choral version of “I Will Be Earth”:
 “The chorus and the piano have different rhythms . . . The singers sing duplets over the piano’s three eighth-notes per dotted-half beat. This is all to express the unsteadiness, the ungroundedness of falling in love. One feels ‘at sea’ when one is in love. One feels ‘afloat!’ Thus, the music and the lyrics work together to express this “loss of balance.”⁷⁵

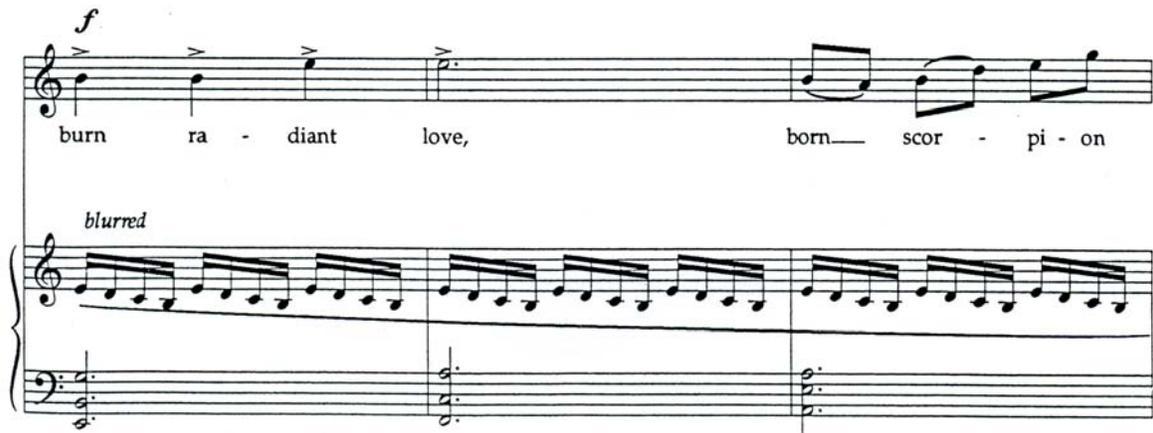
Walker also states: “The lines, ‘How be steady earth that’s now a flood’ imply the turbulent, passionate aspects of love. Therefore, rhythmic instability was created by switching the original 3/4 into 6/8, and then having the chorus sing eighth notes over each three eighth-notes. This was ‘intentional rockiness.’”⁷⁶ The same commentary applies to the arrangement for solo voice.

In addition to the rhythmic instability, more turbulence is created by the harmonic progression which passes through a circle of fifths progression from E Major to F Minor, and “the journey continues with the movement of the bass line from measures 43 to 47, bringing the music to E Minor for a forceful statement of the words ‘burn radiant love, burn scorpion

⁷⁵ Gwyneth Walker, Response to a Letter from Angela Crosby, March 12, 2003, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html#CROSBY>.

⁷⁶ Walker, Observations on *I Will Be Earth*.

need.”⁷⁷ According to Walker, it is essential “to remember that Scorpio is the astrological sign of Passion.”⁷⁸ The height of passion in “I Will Be Earth” is accompanied by the quickest rhythms in the entire song, seen in the blurred, repeated sixteenth notes of measure 50.



Example 47. Gwyneth Walker, *I Will Be Earth*, mm. 50-52.

This rhythmic pattern leads back into a change of key back to E major and a return of the A section of the song. Finally, the song closes on a sustained E in the vocal line at measure 80, accompanied by ascending, repeated eighth notes that lead into one last statement of “you are the sea” at measure 87.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Walker, Response to a Letter from Angela Crosby.

Example 48. Gwyneth Walker, “I Will Be Earth,” mm. 82-89.

“I Will Be Earth” is perhaps the most vocally rewarding of the four songs in *Mornings Innocent*. It requires beautiful vocalism with a smooth, flowing legato. Within the song, the singer will encounter challenges of bringing out the passion of the inner section, enhanced by the rhythmic instability of duplets against the triple eighth notes in the accompaniment. Additionally, the text is simple, with several repeats; therefore the singer is confronted with the challenge of presenting the textual recurrence with varied emotions. Finally, the singer must bring emotional

value to the “ah” of measures 56 to 58. In this author’s opinion, if performed with great attention to the emotional value of the text, “I Will Be Earth” is an accessible and beautiful piece that provides a successful close to the group of songs.

CHAPTER FOUR
NO ORDINARY WOMAN!

The cycle *No Ordinary Woman!* was commissioned by soprano, Denise Walker and pianist, Estrid Eklof. It was premiered at Brown University in 1997. That same year, Gwyneth Walker created an additional version for mezzo-soprano and piano. In 2004, the work was commissioned by the Concertante di Chicago under the direction of Hilel Kagan for the soprano, Jonita Lattimore.⁷⁹ The version chosen for discussion in this document is the original arrangement, for soprano and piano.

In composing this set of songs, Walker chose poetry from the American poet, Lucille Clifton. Clifton was born in 1936 in Depew, New York, and attended Howard University and the State University of New York at Fredonia. A Pulitzer Prize nominee and Emmy Award Winner, Clifton became Chancellor for the Academy of American Poets. She is a former Poet Laureate of the State of Maryland, and she has taught at Goucher College, the American University in Washington, DC, and St. Mary's College of Maryland.

Discussing her love of modern American poetry, Walker noted that she especially enjoys the poems of Lucille Clifton.⁸⁰ She chose to set Clifton's texts to music because she believes that "a lot of good poems aren't singable," . . . "there's an audience sitting there listening, and you can't lose them. Lucille Clifton uses words in a very powerful way without needing to be buried

⁷⁹ Walker, Notes on *No Ordinary Woman!*

⁸⁰ Steve Metcalf, "The Music of the Spheres and Then Some," *Hartford Courant*, 7 June 1998 Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/walkinf3.html>.

in them. She's also got a sense of humor, and that's important."⁸¹ Perhaps, as Steve Metcalf suggests, it is also "the sensuous simplicity of Clifton's work . . . that appeals to Walker's ear."⁸²

In any event, *No Ordinary Woman!* presents a textual theme that is common in Walker's vocal works: the strength of female characters.⁸³ Walker notes:

These songs might have been subtitled "Songs of Self Reflection." For they present the poet musing about her own life, and specifically her physical appearance. One imagines the poet looking in the mirror with amusement, horror and a strong sense of her own history. Thus, the songs range from an energetic first impression ("Bones, Be Good!") to philosophical reflection ("Turning") to humor and pride in the body itself ("Homage to My Hips/Hair") to a more serious summation ("The Thirty-Eighth Year"). A strong and colorful woman emerges.⁸⁴

In addition to emphasizing the strength of women, *No Ordinary Woman!* is a sound example of the blending of genres that occurs in Walker's musical works. Discussing her musical choices in this collection, Walker writes: "I felt her collection "No Ordinary Woman" has a very jazzy sense about it, and so the music also has a kind of jazz feel, even though I don't ordinarily think of myself as a jazzy composer."⁸⁵ It should be noted that each of the songs of *No Ordinary Woman* has its own, unique "jazz feel" due to different musical characteristics. This creates a cycle filled with interesting variety.

⁸¹ Kathy O'Connell, "Woman of Words, Woman of Music," *Hartford Advocate*, 27 April 1998, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/walkinf8.html>.

⁸² O'Connell.

⁸³ Gwyneth Walker, Response to a Letter from Darcy Crum, April 23, 2003, *Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer*, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/letrep.html#CRUM>.

⁸⁴ Walker, Notes on *No Ordinary Woman!*.

⁸⁵ Metcalf.

The Songs of *No Ordinary Woman!*

1. “Bones Be Good!”

In reviewing the choral composition, “Bones Be Good!,” the critic Paul Laprade writes that it “is a lively and clever swing-era-style composition . . . with extreme contrasts in dynamics, several types of accented articulation, vocal slides and glides, and even nonpitch elements. The piano accompaniment is moderate to easy in its demands, and the vocal writing is, for the most part, comfortable.”⁸⁶ The same commentary can be applied to the arrangement for solo voice. The piece, lasting approximately 3 minutes, offers a comfortable tessitura of E4 to E5. It does, however, offer the vocalist a wide range, of A3 to A5 with the option for a sustained Bb5 that is made less demanding by a forte dynamic. It is important to note that the command “bones be good” does not actually appear in Clifton’s text, but Walker chose to add and emphasize the phrase throughout her musical setting.

The Poet

i beg my bones to be good but
they keep clicking music and
i spin in the center of myself
a foolish frightful woman
moving my skin against the wind and
tap dancing for my life.

The opening measures of “Bones Be Good!” immediately establish a jazzy atmosphere with rhythmic intensity, and it is the strong rhythmic pulse of this song that remains a key characteristic of the cycle. In commenting upon this feature, Walker writes: “if there’s a good, steady rhythm in the poem, you have to address it musically.”⁸⁷ The piece begins with finger

⁸⁶ Paul Laprade, “Review of ‘Bones, Be Good!’ from ‘Dreams and Dances’ (1992) for SATB Chorus and Piano (or Strings),” *The Choral Journal*, Website of Gwyneth Walker—Composer, <http://www.gwynethwalker.com/r-bones.html>.

⁸⁷ O’Connell.

snaps on the first and third beats of the measures, and the piano enters with a repeating swing figure that focuses upon the notes E, G, and A. When the voice enters on measure 13, it begins on the same three notes.

13 *mf* **B**
I beg my bones to be good but

p **B**

Example 49. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 13-16.

Throughout the song, the singer laments the fact that her body does not function as well as it once did. She cannot prevent it from “clickin’,” “spinnin’,” or “movin’.”⁸⁸ These moments of sound are emphasized by the musical setting. On measure 17, the text “they just keep clickin’” is set to staccato quarter notes, emphasizing the clicking of bones in an onomatopoeic fashion. The music of the bones is then reflected in a “music theme” that recurs several times in the piece, beginning in the right-hand accompaniment of measure 19 and reappearing in measures such as 35, 61, 85 and 115.

17
they just keep click-in' mu - - - - sic,

mf

Example 50. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 17-20.

⁸⁸ Laprade.

In measure 28, the accompaniment takes on a second “music theme,” a descending eighth note figure that recurs in the song in measures such as 30, 78, and 80; the swing rhythm of this theme enhances the jazzy nature of the song.

25 C *p* ————— *mf*
 Bones, be good!—
C
p *mf*
 29 *p* ————— *mf* *p* —————
 Bones, be good!— Bones be good, be good, be good.
p *mf* *p*

Example 51. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 25-32.

The musical atmosphere of the song undergoes a distinct change at measure 41, as the accompaniment has sustained whole notes over which the singer contemplates feelings generated by her physical changes. This reflection, initiated by “I spin into the center of myself” is further emphasized by a mordent in the accompaniment in measure 43, that could be interpreted as mimicking the poet’s “spinning.”

41

spin in the cen - ter of my - self, a

Example 52. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” m. 41-44.

In keeping with the jazzy nature of the work, *No Ordinary Woman* requires the singer to perform a bit of extended vocal technique, and this can be seen in the vocal slide on measure 47 and the percussive “tas” that begin on measure 62.

percussive sound (mostly air)

ta ta ta ta

sim.

Example 53. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 62-64.

The singer is also required to produce ad lib scat that is lightly supported by the piano following the return of “Bones be good” in measure 77.

The accompaniment plays a large role in creating visual imagery throughout this piece. For example, when the text “movin’ my skin against the wind” returns in measure 95, it is followed by a circular, descending figure in measure 97 that suggests the movement of wind.

Example 54. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 95-98.

Additionally, the precarious physical imagery inherent in “dancin’ for my life” is emphasized by two preceding measures of tremolo. The second tremolo, occurring in measure 107, can be heard as particularly menacing, due to the lower register.

Example 55. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 107-109.

Even though her body is no longer in prime physical condition, the woman of Walker’s musical setting continues on living her life with strength, vitality, and a sense of lightheartedness. This is especially evident as the piece draws to a close. Ten measures of ad lib scat conclude with an ascending, chromatic line punctuated by a staccato low A that occurs in beat 4 of the accompaniment in measure 138.

135

ya ba ba

Bones, Be Good!

Duration: 3'

Example 56. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 135-138.

“Bones Be Good!” is a piece full of rhythmic vitality and energy. In order to create a successful performance of the song, both the singer and pianist must maintain vitality through the swing rhythm and ad lib moments. Vocal slides and percussive moments must also be approached with conviction. The piece requires meticulous attention to musical markings, such as staccato, marcato, accents, dynamic changes, and tempo. All of these elements are essential to the musical drama. For example, if performed as written the sudden contrast in dynamic level after “tap tap tap tap dancin’” underscores the serious nature of “dancin’ for my life.”

53

tap tap tap tap danc - - in', dan - cin' for my

f *p* *a tempo*

white-note gliss. *a tempo* *f*

Example 57. Gwyneth Walker, “Bones Be Good!,” mm. 53-56.

Performing a Walker song such as “Bones Be Good!” is a wonderful opportunity to present a piece “where dramatic presentation (even though not full "staging") is important to making the

work come alive in performance.”⁸⁹ If special attention is given to both the musical and theatrical requirements, “Bones Be Good!” can create a very effective opening to the cycle.

2. “Turning”

The song “Turning” is relatively short, lasting 2 minutes and 30 seconds. The range is medium, spanning C4 through G5, and the tessitura is also medium, from G4 to C5. It is based upon the Clifton poem of the same title.

Turning
 turning into my own
 turning on in
 to my own self
 at last
 turning out of the
 white cage, turning out of the
 lady cage
 turning at last
 on a stem like a black fruit
 in my own season
 at last

A dreamlike quality is created by the piano introduction, as it features a circular triplet figure. This is enhanced by the marking “delicato, una corda,” creating a light blurring.

gently flowing ♩ = ca.80

gently flowing ♩ = ca.80

start slowly and accel. into a blur

p *delicato, una corda*

Red. stays →

Example 58. Gwyneth Walker, “Turning,” mm. 1-3.

⁸⁹ Cooman, personal email.

The dreamlike mood continues as the voice enters on measure 9, sustaining notes over the barline and helping to blur aural reception of the meter.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef, and the bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 9 is marked with a '9' above the vocal staff. The vocal line begins with a long note on the word 'Turn' that extends across the barline. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with many beamed notes and rests, creating a shimmering, dreamlike effect. The word 'ing,' is written under the vocal line in measure 10. Performance markings include a piano (*p*) dynamic at the start of measure 9, a *sed.* marking at the beginning of the piano accompaniment, and a *sim.* marking in measure 10.

Example 59. Gwyneth Walker, “Turning,” mm. 9-10.

Measure 25 marks a distinct change in accompanimental texture, as the piano is sustained and chordal. The overlying vocal line depicts the action of “turning” through a circular motion, ascending to the words “white cage” and then descending to “lady cage.” Staccati are used effectively in this piece to emphasize these words, essential elements in understanding the social implications of the text. For example, the words “white cage” and “lady cage” are both set apart from the surrounding text by staccato markings.

25 *(mf)* *p* *mf*

Turn - ing out of the white cage, turn - ing out of the

28 *delicato* *rit. - - - - -* *p*

la - dy, la - dy, la - dy cage,

rit. - - - - - *p*

Example 60. Gwyneth Walker, "Turning," mm. 25-28.

The dreamlike quality of the introduction returns at measure 36, and this is shortly followed by a modified return of the B section at measure 52. In this return, however, it is the words "black fruit" that receive the most attention, emphasized with staccato markings. The last, proud presentation of "In my own season at last" occurs on measure 61, and it is followed by new material in the accompaniment, a descending chromatic, marcato line. The piece comes to a close as the voice sustains the word "last" for several measures over ascending, accented, rocking eighth notes in the piano. One final appearance of the opening, circular triplet motive serves to round off the song, but continuing the feeling of transformation.

"Turning," is not a vocally demanding song, especially due to the medium tessitura throughout. The focus of the piece is placed completely on the words and meaning, breaking away from confinements placed on a person by society and embracing the true self. To help in conveying the message of the poem, Walker chooses to repeat the textual elements: "white cage," "black fruit," "turning" and "in my own season at last." Staccato and tenuto markings, as

well as dynamics and tempo markings must be given special attention, as they help to give emphasis and convey the composer's interpretation of the text.

3. "Homage to My Hips"

"Homage to My Hips" is one of the most vocally demanding of all the songs in *No Ordinary Woman!* Although it has a duration of only 2 minutes and 45 seconds and contains a medium tessitura, from G4 to D5, the range is quite large and spans G3 to Bb5. The text is taken from Clifton's poem "Homage to My Hips."

Homage to My Hips

these hips are big hips.
they need space to
move around in.
they don't fit into little
petty places. these hips
are free hips.
they don't like to be held back.
these hips have never been enslaved,
they go where they want to go
they do what they want to do.
these hips are mighty hips.
these hips are magic hips.
i have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top!

Text Set by Walker

These hips are big hips.
They need space to
move around in.
They don't fit into little
petty places. These hips
are free hips,
they go where they want to go,
and do what they want to do.
These hips are mighty hips.
These hips are magic hips.
I have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top!

When studying "Homage to My Hips," it is important to note the textual changes that Walker made when creating her musical setting. She eliminated two lines from the central portion of Clifton's poem: "they don't like to be held back / these hips have never been enslaved." This choice eliminates some of the racial imagery inherent in the poem and perhaps makes the text accessible for a larger audience. From a performer's perspective, however, awareness of this textual change can add nuance to the choices that the performer makes.

“Homage to My Hips” begins in a swaying tempo. The syncopated rhythms and jazz chords in the accompaniment give the song a dance-like quality. The vocal line paints the constriction of “big hips in small places” through leaping only as far as a minor third.

♩ = 66 at a gently swaying tempo

mf

poco & ad lib.

Example 61. Gwyneth Walker, “Homage to My Hips,” mm. 1-3.

As the text “these hips are free” is sung at measure 19, the voice attains a greater range of movement, leaping up to a sustained high F. Then, “as an afterthought,” the word “hips” is presented once again, on beat three of measure 26, in a soft, staccato manner, adding emphasis to the lighthearted nature of Walker’s adaptation of the poetry.

19

These hips are free

22

25 *p as an afterthought*
hips.

Example 62. Gwyneth Walker, “Homage to My Hips,” mm. 19-25.

Beginning in measure 29, the vocal line becomes constricted once again, with the text “these hips” occurring on ascending half steps. This pattern is broken by an octave leap on measure 35, followed by a white note glissando that ascends into “they go where they want to go and do what they want to do.” A moment of quasi-scat occurs when the word “do” is repeatedly expressed at 41, and the voice is then required to ad lib scat beginning at measures 56 and 68, lightly supported by the piano accompaniment. While adding jazz color to the song, the ad lib scat could also be interpreted as depicting the imagery of the text. As the poet’s hips “do what

they want to do,” so does the vocal line give the impression of the singer having an almost improvisatory-like freedom.

34
these hips, _____ they
white-note gliss.

37
go where they want to go, _____ and do what they want to

41
do
play only to support voice

Example 63. Gwyneth Walker, “Homage to My Hips,” mm. 34-43.

When new text is presented at measure 71, “these hips are mighty hips,” the strength of text is emphasized by a marcato quarter note chord followed by an accented whole note chord. Then, a sustained pedal and ascending grace note figure describe the spell that the singer’s hips have over men. One man’s reaction to the hips, spinning “like a top,” is depicted in the ascending grace note figure in the accompaniment of measure 80.

75
I have known them to put a spell on a man and spin him like a

79
top! a tempo a tempo

Example 64. Gwyneth Walker, "Homage to My Hips," mm. 75-82.

Finally, the tango that begins at measure 82 emphasizes the seductive quality of the hips that was able to "spin him [a man] like a top." Here the poet walks away, the mordents in the accompaniment of measure 82 and of the vocal line in measure 85 suggesting flirtation. The final repeated vocal alternation of F and E emphasized with a ritardando and fermata suggest a final tease.

83

p

la la la la

87

rit. ----- *a tempo*

la la la la la la la la la la

right hand plays only to support voice

rit. ----- *a tempo*

play with palm

f 10 *p*

8th

Homage to my Hips

Duration: 2'45"

Example 65. Gwyneth Walker, “Homage to My Hips,” mm. 83-88.

“Homage to My Hips” is the most vocally demanding song of the cycle, having the most extreme range and a great deal of syncopated rhythms. Accents are essential to bringing out the rhythmic energy of the song. In order to perform this piece in a convincing manner, the singer will need to find humor in addressing aspects of her body. It is necessary to present syllables such as “do” and “la” with attitude and character.

4. “Homage to My Hair”

At 1 minute and 25 seconds, “Homage to My Hair” is the shortest song in the cycle, filled with vitality and energy. The range is generally medium-high, spanning from F4 to Ab5, but it requires the singer to produce Sprechstimme down to F3. The tessitura is medium, from F4 to F5. Walker uses Clifton’s poem, “Homage to My Hair,” as the textual source for the song, but

she makes several adaptations to the text. These include: altering the line “i hear the music” to “i hear the music, my God!”, Changing the line “Black man” to “my man”, and adding the punchline: “I’m *just* talking about my hair!”

Homage to My Hair

when i feel her jump and dance
 i hear the music
 i’m talking ‘bout my nappy hair!
 she is a challenge to your hand
 Black man
 she is as tasty on your tongue as
 good greens
 Black man
 she can touch your mind
 with her electric fingers and
 the grayer she do get, good God!
 the blacker she do be!

Text Set by Walker

When I feel her jump up and dance,
 I hear the music, my God!
 I’m talking about my hair,
 my nappy, nappy hair.
 She’s a challenge to your hand,
 my man,
 She’s as tasty on your tongue as
 good, good greens.
 She can touch your mind
 with her electric fingers.
 And the grayer she do get, good God,
 the blacker she do be!
 I’m *just* talking about my hair!

The interaction between the vocal line and accompaniment is essential to understanding the song. From the beginning, the introductory measure displays rhythmic vitality through ascending grace notes that lead into a vocal fanfare on “when I feel her jump up and dance.”

Example 66. Gwyneth Walker, “Homage to My Hair,” mm. 1-3.

The repeated eighth notes in the accompaniment of measure 7 provide energy for the final statement of “when I feel her jump up and dance,” and the dancing is depicted in the rolled

seventh chords in measures 8 and 9. Following the text “I hear the music, my God!” the music breaks into a lively, syncopated dance.

Example 67. Gwyneth Walker, “Homage to My Hair,” mm. 10-12.

As the singer speaks about her “nappy, nappy hair” in measure 16 and how the hair is “tasty on your tongue as good greens” in measure 20, the “nappiness” is painted by seconds in the right hand of the accompaniment.

Example 68. Gwyneth Walker, “Homage to My Hair,” m. 16.

The accompaniment changes to repeated sixteenth notes to illustrate the voice’s “electric fingers” in measure 23.

22

She can touch your mind with her electric fingers.

mf *p sub.*

Example 69. Gwyneth Walker, "Homage to My Hair," mm. 22-24.

Suspense is built in measures 25 to 29 with syncopated seventh chords followed by sustained seventh chords. After the vocal line delivers a punchline, referring to the blackness of hair in a "mischievously, proudly, almost spoken" manner, the syncopated dance returns in the accompaniment. Following a forte, white-note glissando that leads to a marcato eighth note chord in measure 34, the singer speaks the second punchline of the song "matter-of-factly," and the piano provides the last hit with "off-handedly" descending grace notes.

28

gray-er she do get, good God, the black-er she do

mischievously, proudly p almost spoken

8va

6

a tempo ♩ = 112

p *mf*

be! *a tempo* ♩ = 112

p

Example 70. Gwyneth Walker, "Homage to My Hair," mm. 28-33.

“Homage to My Hair,” is a song of pride, a based upon a text that is a celebration of something that historically has been viewed as an object of shame.⁹⁰ As in many of Walker’s songs, the medium tessitura and syllabic text setting places the message of the poetry in the forefront. The singer should approach vocalism in this song with energy and character, elements that need to also be present throughout the spoken lines.

5. “The Thirty-Eighth Year”

The final song in *No Ordinary Woman!* is the most serious and also the lengthiest of the cycle, lasting approximately 4 minutes and 15 seconds. The range is fairly wide, from C4 to A5, with the majority of the notes lying between G4 and D5. Walker chose an untitled Clifton poem as the basis for her musical setting.

Untitled

the thirty eighth year
of my life,
plain as bread
round as cake
an ordinary woman.

an ordinary woman.

i had expected to be
smaller than this,
more beautiful,
wiser in Afrikan ways,
more confident,
i had expected
more than this.

i will be forty soon.
my mother once was forty.

my mother died at forty four,
a woman of sad countenance

Text Set by Walker

In the thirty-eighth year
of my life,
plain as bread,
as round as a cake
an ordinary woman,

an ordinary woman.

I had expected to be
smaller than this,
more beautiful,
wiser in African ways,
more confident, more confident,
I had expected
more than this.

I will be forty soon.
My mother once was forty.

I have dreamed dreams
for you mama,

⁹⁰ Joyce Johnson, “The Theme of Celebration in Lucille Clifton’s Poetry,” *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 18, No. 1/2 (Nov. 1983): 74.

leaving behind a girl
awkward as a stork.
my mother was thick,
her hair was a jungle and
she was very wise
and beautiful
and sad.

i have dreamed dreams
for you mama
more than once.
i have wrapped me
in your skin

and made you live again
more than once.
i have taken the bones you hardened
and built daughters
and they blossom and promise fruit
like Afrikan trees.
i am a woman now.
an ordinary woman.

in the thirty eighth
year of my life,
surrounded by life,
a perfect picture of
blackness blessed,
I had not expected this
loneliness.

if it is western,
if it is the final
europe in my mind,
if in the middle of my life
i am turning the final turn
into the shining dark
let me come to it whole
and holy
not afraid
not lonely
out of my mother's life
into my own.
into my own.

i had expected more than this.

more than once.
I have wrapped me
in your skin

and made you live again,
more than once.
I have taken the bones you hardened
and built daughters
and they blossom and promise fruit
like African trees.
I am a woman now,
an ordinary woman.

In the thirty-eighth
year of my life,

surrounded by life,
a perfect picture of
blackness blessed,
I had not expected this
loneliness.

If in the middle of my life
I am turning the final turn
into the shining dark,
let me come to it whole
and holy.
Le me come to it
unafraid,
out of my mother's life
out of my mother's life
into my own.

I had expected more than this.
I had not expected to be
an ordinary woman.

i had not expected to be
an ordinary woman

In this piece, as in many of Walker's other songs, the introduction establishes the mood. Here the introduction, marked "reflectively," suggests dreams of the past being conjured, through fermatas that mimic a person experiencing difficulty attempting to remember an event. The musical energy changes at measure 6, where the poco accelerando emphasizes the full remembrance of a memory unfolding.

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Thirty-Eighth Year" by Gwyneth Walker, measures 1 through 8. The score is written for Soprano and Piano. The tempo is marked "at a moderate tempo" with a quarter note equal to 80 (♩ = 80). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor) and the time signature is 4/4. The piano part begins with a dynamic marking of *p* and the instruction "reflectively". The score includes fermatas in measures 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7. At measure 5, there are tempo markings: "poco accel." leading to "rit." and then "a tempo". The piano part has dynamic markings of *mf* and *p* at various points. The lyrics "The Thirty-Eighth Year" are written under the piano part starting at measure 5.

Example 71. Gwyneth Walker, "The Thirty-Eighth Year," mm. 1-8.

"The Thirty-Eighth Year" is completely text-driven, as can be witnessed in the frequent use of "quasi-recitative," where the accompaniment becomes sustained and the vocal line should be performed freely, like that of measures 11 and 17. Additionally, within this song the rhythm of

the words is driven by the natural inflection of speech, and this can be viewed in the triplet figures of measures 19 and 22, where “beautiful” and “confident” are set to their spoken rhythm.

A typical Walker device can be seen in measures 32 and 33, where the tempo changes as the piece enters a new section: as the singer reflects upon her own age in relation to her mother’s life, there is a ritardando. Then, as the singer moves to address her mother’s memory directly, the new tempo begins “with motion.”

The musical score for Example 72, Gwyneth Walker, "The Thirty-Eighth Year," mm. 28-33, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 28-30, and the second system covers measures 31-33. The vocal line is in a soprano clef, and the piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* freely and *p* reflectively, and performance instructions like *rit.* (ritardando) and *with motion*. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 112. The piano accompaniment features circular triplets and repeated quintuplets, which are highlighted with asterisks and the word "Reda" (likely a typo for "Reda" or "Reda").

Example 72. Gwyneth Walker, “The Thirty-Eighth Year,” mm. 28-33.

The circular triplets in the accompaniment of this new section heighten the emotion found in the text of the vocal line. Repeated quintuplets in measure 46 continue to build emotional intensity as the singer describes pride in her own daughters and the height of her life.

Example 73. Gwyneth Walker, “The Thirty-Eighth Year,” mm. 45-48.

Walker continues to make several additional changes in the final moments of the song to enhance textual meaning. When the text conveys a sense of loneliness at measure 56, the tempo slows and the texture of the accompaniment becomes a more sustained, chordal movement; it can be understood that the singer has moved past the peak of her life. As the text expresses a determination at living the final stages of life with strength, the tempo once again accelerates back to “with motion” at measure 68. Additional determination in the text is musically enhanced by quicker rhythmic values in the accompaniment, moving from triplets to quintuplets as the singer asks to be “unafraid” and move down her own path instead of following her mother’s life. The greatest moment of strength is displayed as the text “into my own” is sung. Here the singer is asked to sustain a fortissimo high G on measure 85 as the accompaniment slows to repeated, chordal eighth notes and then to a sustained whole note in measure 89.

Example 74. Gwyneth Walker, “The Thirty-Eighth Year,” mm. 85-88.

Within the final moments of the song, the mood turns contemplative as the vocal line reflectively states: “I had expected to be more than this, I had not expected to be an ordinary woman,” coming to a close on a low D.

As previously stated, text is the most important element of “The Thirty-Eighth Year,” and it should be the focus of any performance. The text is set strictly syllabically throughout, and Walker makes frequent use of quasi-recitative. Performers preparing this song will find difficulty in creating ensemble, as there are frequent changes in both meter and tempi in addition to irregular meters such as 5/4 and free measures of recitative. It is this author’s belief that when the ensemble works together to create a sensitive portrayal of the text, the “serious summation”⁹¹ of “The Thirty-Eighth Year,” provides a powerful close to the cycle.

⁹¹ Walker, Notes on *No Ordinary Woman!*.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE SUN IS LOVE

The *Sun is Love* was created for soprano and piano in 2002 as a commission for the pianist, Jamie Shaak, and the soprano, Michelle Areyzaga, for premiere at Shaak's wedding. The entire cycle is intended to be performed without pause, and it is approximately 21 minutes in length. When planning their ceremony, Shaak and her husband desired to include the memory of her late father in the celebration. Because Shaak's father had been interested in the writings of the 13th century Persian poet, Jelaluddin Rumi, it seemed appropriate to musically honor her father through a setting of Rumi's poetry. Dr. Walker accepted the commission, and rights were acquired to use translations by Coleman Barks.⁹² Shaak requested that one poem be included in the cycle, "Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along.", and Walker chose the remaining texts.⁹³ Commenting upon Rumi's works, Walker writes: "The poetry of Jelaluddin Rumi . . . is seamless. Some poems are lengthy, with images spinning out into many directions. Other poems are fragments, joining together to offer varying views of love. And thus, *The Sun is Love* is a flowing set of songs intended to be presented as a whole. The language of Rumi . . . may enfold the listener as the course of the songs progresses."⁹⁴

Jelaluddin Rumi was born near Balkh, in what is modern-day Afghanistan on September 30, 1207. His family had a long history of leadership in the Islamic religion. When Rumi was young, his family fled from the army of Genghis Khan, eventually settling in south central

⁹² Jamie Shaak, personal email, April 24, 2007.

⁹³ Jamie Shaak, personal email, July 19, 2007.

⁹⁴ Walker, Notes on *The Sun is Love*.

Turkey. Rumi's father became sheikh of the dervish community, a leadership role that Rumi would assume following his father's death. His life as a mystical poet began after a meeting with Shams of Tabriz, another dervish. Shams was murdered, and in response, Rumi began circling a pole and speaking poetry, which then became the origin for the spinning meditation of the Mevlevi dervishes.⁹⁵ The majority of Rumi's poetry "can be considered spontaneous improvisation,"⁹⁶ placed into writing by scribes. Rumi spent the last twelve years of his life composing one continuous poem of sixty-four thousand lines that is divided into six books. This poem, the *Masnavi*, "has no parallel in world literature."⁹⁷

When preparing the cycle, *The Sun is Love*, Walker strove to "capture the simplicity and variety of the Rumi style: the joyful circling of the sun, the passionate surrender to love and the bouncy flirtatiousness."⁹⁸ She intended for each song to have a different character⁹⁹ but the piece should flow together as one unified work. The songs are best not extracted for individual performance.

The Songs of *The Sun is Love*

1. "Circling the Sun"

The first piece of *The Sun is Love* is approximately 3 minutes in duration. It has a fairly wide range, from C4 to A5, but the tessitura remains medium, from G4 to F5. Rumi's text reads as follows:

⁹⁵ Coleman Barks, Introduction to *The Soul of Rumi*, Ed. Coleman Barks, San Francisco: Harper, 1995: 3-6.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 6.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁹⁸ Walker, Notes on *The Sun is Love*.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Circling the Sun

The sun is love. The lover,
a speck circling the sun.

A Spring wind moves to dance
any branch that isn't dead.

Something opens our wings. Something
makes boredom and hurt disappear.
Someone fills the cup in front of us.
we taste only sacredness.

Held like this, to draw in milk,
no will, tasting clouds of milk,
never so content.

I stand up, and this one of me
turns into a hundred of me.
They say I circle around you.
Nonsense. I circle around me.

The song, “‘Circling the Sun,’ introduces the [cycle’s] title phrase of ‘the sun is love,’ along with the image of the lover as a ‘speck circling the sun.’ This song is intended to draw the listener into the world of romance which is central to Rumi's writings. Sacredness and love.”¹⁰⁰

The introduction of the accompaniment sets the tone for the piece, with the circling motion being depicted through the circular triplet movement of the opening bars, such as measures 3 and 4.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

♩ = 120

p lightly

sim.

P

poco Ped., gradually add more until m. 9

The first system of the musical score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 120. The right hand features a series of descending triplets, starting with a piano (*p*) and *lightly* dynamic. The first four measures are marked with *sim.* (sostenuto). The left hand is mostly silent, with a few notes appearing in the final measure of the system, marked with a piano (*P*) dynamic. A performance instruction at the bottom right reads: *poco Ped., gradually add more until m. 9*.

cresc.

sim.

The second system of the musical score continues from the first. The right hand continues with the descending triplet motif, marked with a *cresc.* (crescendo) dynamic. The left hand has a *sim.* (sostenuto) dynamic. The system consists of four measures.

Example 75. Gwyneth Walker, “Circling the Sun,” mm. 1-7.

The lover as a “speck” is painted by a vocal staccato in measure 14, the brevity of the note suggesting the small size of the lover in relation to the sun. Within this portion of the piece, however, the circling imagery remains at the forefront, as the voice sings round, descending triplets that are taken over by the piano in measure 18. In measure 19, the accompaniment briefly presents a circular triplet motive that makes many appearances throughout the song cycle.

Example 76. Gwyneth Walker, “Circling the Sun,” mm. 17-22.

The texture of the song changes at letter D, where the accompaniment moves to sustained clusters, and the singer is instructed to present the quasi-recitative of the vocal line in a “hushed, magical” manner. Additionally, a sense of timelessness is created by a change of meter in every measure. Within measure 36, the vocal line ascends to the peak of this portion of quasi-recitative, leaping a minor third to an F on “sacredness.”

At letter E, the key changes to E-flat, a key that has been historically associated with the divine. For example, Rita Steblin notes that in his treatise, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, C.F. D. Schubart referred to E-flat as “The key of love, of devotion, of intimate conversation with God; through its three flats it expresses the holy trinity.”¹⁰¹ In his *Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst*, Gustav Schilling also suggested “The psychological character of this key is the language of

¹⁰¹ Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1983: 277.

love, of devotion, of intimate conversation with God.”¹⁰² Within *Circling the Sun*, as the key changes to suggest sacredness, the meter changes back to 4/4, and circular triplets return in the accompaniment.

31 rit. **D** Slower, quasi recitative
p hushed, magical 3
 Some - thing o - pens our wings.

34 3 3 3 3
 Some - thing makes bore - dom and hurt dis - ap - pear. Some - one fills the cup in front of us. —

36 **E** a tempo ♩ = 120
 We taste on - ly sa - cred - ness. —

(p) 3 3 3
sim.

Example 77. Gwyneth Walker, “Circling the Sun,” mm. 31-38.

At letter F, the texture changes once again. The vocal line returns to quasi-recitative, this time over an A-flat whole note in the piano, sustained by pedal. The text remains in the forefront, receiving commentary from the accompaniment. As the voice “emphatically” exclaims “a

¹⁰² Ibid, 279.

hundred of me” for the second time, the piano moves in accented chordal motion underneath, highlighting the magnitude of the number. The text “nonsense” is emphasized by a marcato eighth note downbeat in the accompaniment followed by two marcato eighth notes in the voice. A fermata adds additional significance to “nonsense,” setting it apart from the rest. Then, as the voice states “I circle around me,” the piano responds with triplets that hover around G on measure 52 and 53, C on measure 54, and F on measure 55, effectively circling each of those notes in turn.

51 *a tempo* ♩ = 120
 Non-sense. I cir-cle a-round me.
 53
sim. *p* *f* *8va*

Example 78. Gwyneth Walker, “Circling the Sun,” mm. 51-55.

The A section of the song returns at letter G. In this instance, the word “circling” is replaced with a playful “la” and the word “love,” which ends on a sustained high A. One final

statement of “the sun is love” is supported by a sustained pedal, descending triplets, and finally a “gentle strum on low strings inside [the] piano” using the flesh of the finger. According to Walker, this strum mimics a caress,¹⁰³ and this gesture provides a point of connection to the next song of the cycle.

“Circling the Sun,” presents several challenges to the vocalist. Foremost is the alternation between the primary, opening tempo and the moments of quasi-recitative. Frequent dynamic marking require attention, as do the few occurrences of staccato and tenuto markings. Accent markings appear only at letter F, so care must be taken to follow the composer’s instruction: “emphatically.” Finally, it should be noted that although the text of the song is primarily set in a syllabic fashion, this is the only piece of the cycle that includes melismas.

2. “Quietness”

“Quietness” is the shortest of all the songs in the cycle, with duration of approximately 1 minute and 45 seconds. It maintains a lower tessitura, hovering between F4 and D5, and the range is fairly small, from D4 to F5. Text is the focus in this piece, being delivered syllabically throughout.

Quietness

Inside this new love, die.
Your way begins on the other side.
Become the sky.
Take an axe to the prison wall.
Escape.
Walk out like someone suddenly born into color.
Do it now.
You’re covered with thick cloud.
Slide out the side. Die,
and be quiet. Quietness is the surest sign
that you’ve died.

¹⁰³ Walker, Notes on *The Sun is Love*.

Your old life was a frantic running
from silence.

The speechless full moon
comes out now.

Describing her interpretation of the text, Walker writes: “‘Quietness’ is a brief reflection of the letting go (dying) of the self in surrender to love, and to the new self which begins ‘on the other side.’”¹⁰⁴ Beginning with the echoes from the previous song enhanced by a sustained pedal, the voice is left to sing “inside this new love die” in a gentle manner. The accompaniment remains subordinate to the voice in the next few measures as well, presenting block chords as support beginning on measure 7. However, as the singer expresses “become the sky” in measure 10, the accompaniment suddenly becomes more active, with triplets followed by accelerating, repeated quintuplets. This change in rhythmic activity depicts the transformation proposed by the text.

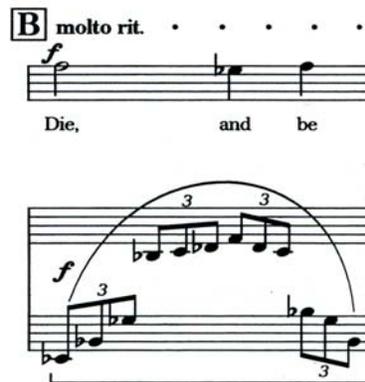
The accompaniment continues to help evoke the imagery of the words. In measure 13, the text urges the listener to “escape,” and the piano takes on a staccato, march-like quarter note figure that suggests light footsteps.

The musical score for Example 79, Gwyneth Walker, "Quietness," measures 13-16. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins at measure 13 with the lyrics "wall. Es - cape. Es - cape. Walk out like some - one". The piano accompaniment features block chords in the left hand and a staccato, march-like quarter note figure in the right hand, marked "loco" and "p".

Example 79. Gwyneth Walker, "Quietness," mm. 13-16.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

As previously stated, the circling triplet motive from “Circling the Sun” appears at various times throughout the cycle. Within “Quietness,” the motive emerges at letter B, as the text states “die, and be quiet.”



Example 80. Gwyneth Walker, “Quietness,” m. 24.

At measure 26, the texture of the accompaniment changes once again, as the piano drops out and its echoes are sustained by a pedal in measure 26, over which the singer presents “quietness is the surest sign that you’ve died.” Following “your old life was a frantic running from silence,” the piano responds with two accented triplets that could be interpreted as running. Finally, “Quietness” comes to a close as the singer presents the text “the speechless full moon comes out now.” Set on a C5, with no prescribed rhythm, this line is supported by an ascending scale that ends the gesture of a caress, or a gentle strum of the piano’s high strings.

A singer presenting “Quietness” will experience many quasi-*a capella* moments, being accompanied solely by a sustained pedal. Letter A and the first two measures of letter B are exceptions to this accompaniment, where the piano takes a more active role. This can be seen in the march-like, alternating staccato quarter notes of letter A. An additional feature that will be encountered in the song is the interesting use of tempo, increasing from the song’s opening until letter A and slowing from letter B until the final measure of the piece.

3. “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers”

The longest piece of the cycle is “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers.” It spans approximately 4 minutes and 30 seconds. In contrast to “Quietness,” the range in “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers” is fairly extensive, from B3 to B5, and the piece has a medium-high tessitura of approximately G#4 to F#5. The text of the song is comprised of several short Rumi poems.

Come to the Orchard in Spring

Come to the orchard in Spring.
There is light and wine, and sweethearts
in the pomegranate flowers.

If you do not come, these do not matter.
If you do come, these do not matter.

Daylight, Full of Small Dancing Particles

Daylight, full of small dancing particles
and the one great turning, our souls
are dancing with you, without feet, they dance.
Can you see them when I whisper in your ear?

I Would Love to Kiss You

I would love to kiss you.
The price of kissing is your life.

Now my loving is running toward my life shouting,
What a bargain, let's buy it.

The Breeze at Dawn has Secrets to Tell You

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

According to Walker, “‘Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers’ is a set of short flirtation songs. She [the female character] entices her lover to the orchard in Spring, their souls

dance. She tells him of the mysteries of life, and then chastises him when he falls asleep as she sings (!).”¹⁰⁵ There should be no audible break between this song and “Quietness,” as the pedal is once again used to blur the boundaries between songs. Within the introduction, the accompaniment suggests imagery that establishes the mood of the piece. The opening piano figure can be interpreted as depicting a descending beam of light, initially suggested by the song’s title. Measure 2 begins a sensuous and flirtatious tango, setting the scene for the singer to seduce her lover.

Relaxed tempo (equal eighths) rit. . . .

gva *loco*

p

(Ped.)

♩ = 144 as a gentle Tango

2 *p lightly*

poco Ped. (ad lib.)

5 *mf lightly, flirtatiously*

A

Example 81. Gwyneth Walker, “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers,” mm. 1-7.

This flirtation occurs further as the singer teases the lover over a sustained accompanimental cluster at letter B. Then, the first four measures of letter C transition back to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

65

rit.

see them when I whis-per in your ear, I whis-per in your ear, I whis-per in your ear?

p

p

(*red.*)

* High glissando on strings inside piano

Example 83. Gwyneth Walker, “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers,” mm. 65-67.

At measure 68, the singer is once again asked to be playful and flirtatious, singing “I would love to kiss you,” the playfulness enhanced by the quick rhythms and staccati. The flirtatious nature of the text is painted further by a grace note response in the accompaniment and fermata following each statement.

68

F freely, quickly

pp playfully

I would love to kiss you. I would love to kiss you. *8va*

pp

(*red.*)

Example 84. Gwyneth Walker, “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers,” mm. 68-69.

As the singer finally decides to give over to love and kissing, the strength of this choice is emphasized by marcato markings in voice and accompaniment, as well as a grand pause and fermata surrounding the text “let’s buy it” in measure 79.

Within measures 80 through 83, the accompaniment presents a “slightly cocky”¹⁰⁷ response to the singer’s exclamation in the “jaunty tempo” that serves as a transition to “the mysteries of life.”¹⁰⁸

at a jaunty tempo ♩ = 152

Example 85. Gwyneth Walker, “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers,” mm. 80-83.

Letter H, beginning the depiction of life’s secrets, is marked “fluid, as curtains blowing in the breeze.” Here the circling triplet motive from “Circling the Sun” makes yet another appearance, suggesting the swirling of the breeze. The singer attempts to tell her lover life’s mysteries, but he desires to go back to sleep. She gives him a “slight reprimand” on measure 94 that is enhanced by a marcato on “don’t.” The singer then continues to tell her secrets and once again becomes angry at her drowsy lover. A marcato eighth note occurs on the downbeat of measure 104, following which the singer is to speak in disgust “don’t go back to sleep!” The “jaunty tempo” of measure 105 brings back a return of the flirtatious “come to the orchard in spring.”

¹⁰⁷ Shaak, personal e-mail, April 17, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

During this return, the singer's spirited "las" are mimicked in the piano line of measures 134 through 136 and 137 through 138, both parts marked "playfully." The song comes to a close with a major second whole note cluster that is repeated three times in measure 141, each presentation one octave lower than the preceding. All have fermatas, and the final two are marked by octave grace notes.

Example 86. Gwyneth Walker, "Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers," mm. 140-141.

This song presents a dramatic challenge to the singer, as the song requires interaction with an imaginary lover. There are spoken lines and several instructions for text delivery, such as "lovingly" and "spoken in disgust." Additionally, the singer is presented with several moments that are *a capella* or only lightly supported by sustained pedal. Many staccato arpeggios occur throughout the piece; those set to a repeated "la" requiring a flirtatious character in addition to accuracy. The presence of frequent dynamic markings also requires study. Finally, the singer will experience the challenge of transitioning through several different key signatures and tempi.

4. "The Sunrise Ruby"

"The Sunrise Ruby" has an overall range from Eb4 to Bb5, and the tessitura is medium high, sitting approximately between Bb4 and F5. In its entirety, the piece lasts around 3 minutes

and 15 seconds. Emphasizing the romantic portions of Rumi's text in her musical setting, Walker omitted approximately half of the poem, and she modified the word "Hallaj" to "Lord."

The Sunrise Ruby

In the early morning hour,
just before dawn, lover and beloved
wake
and take a drink of water.

She asks, "Do you love me or
yourself more?
Really, tell the absolute truth."

He says, "There's nothing left of *me*.
I'm like a ruby held up to the
sunrise.
Is it still a stone, or a world
made of redness?
It has no resistance to sunlight."

This is how Hallaj said, *I am God*,
and told the truth!

The ruby and the sunrise are one.
Be courageous and discipline yourself.

Completely become hearing and ear,
and wear this sun-ruby as an earring.

Work. Keep digging your well.
Don't think about getting off from work.
Water is there somewhere.

Submit to a daily practice.
Your loyalty to that
is a ring on the door.

Keep knocking, and the joy inside
will eventually open a window
and look out to see who's there.

Writing about this song, Walker notes: "'The Sunrise Ruby,' is a passionate song. She asks 'Do you love me or yourself more?' He answers 'There's nothing left of me . . . I'm like a

Text Set by Walker

In the early morning hour,
just before dawn, lover and beloved
wake
and take a drink of water.

She asks, "Do you love me or
yourself more?
Really, tell the absolute truth."

He says, "There's nothing left of *me*.
I'm like a ruby held up to the
sunrise.
Is it still a stone, or a world
made of redness?
It has no resistance to sunlight."

This is how the Lord said, *I am God*,
and told the truth!

The ruby and the sunrise are one.

ruby held up to the sunlight.’ As he surrenders to love, the piano expresses the warmth of the ruby. The interval of the second, which opens and closes the song, symbolizes the closeness of the two lovers.”¹⁰⁹ The major second that closes “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers” opens “The Sunrise Ruby,” beginning in a repeated eighth note pattern. A new note is added to the chord every few measures suggesting the increasing energy as the day begins and progresses.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "The Sunrise Ruby" by Gwyneth Walker, measures 1-4. The score is written for piano and is in 3/4 time. The tempo is marked "Very peacefully" with a quarter note equal to 72 beats per minute. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The piano part consists of a repeated eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The score includes dynamic markings "pp" and "sustain Ped. & soft Ped.".

Example 87. Gwyneth Walker, “The Sunrise Ruby,” mm. 1-4.

Accompanimental texture changes as the voice depicting the female character asks a serious question in measure 17, “do you love me or yourself more?”. Here the accompaniment becomes sustained as the female character asks “really, tell the absolute truth.” The repeated high G in the piano depicts her waiting a response, and the “slightly faster” accompaniment at letter A prepares the male character’s response “there’s nothing left of me . . . I’m like a ruby held up to the sunrise.”

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

15 (hum) rit. Slower, more freely *mf*
 mm She asks, "Do you love me or your-self more?"
 (sus. + soft Peds.)

18 *mf* 3 ^ poco rit.
 Real-ly tell the ab-so-lute truth."
mf
 sus. Ped. only

Example 88. Gwyneth Walker, "The Sunrise Ruby," mm. 15-18.

Beginning on measure 23, the accompaniment is once again circular, first being comprised of sextuplets and then of sixteenth notes.

The rhythmic activity in letter B, from measures 31 to 38, represents the male lover giving over to passion. It is significant to note that the voice is only briefly present in these measures, in the form of two brief "ah"s, marked "as a background sonority." At letter C, the man states "there's nothing left of me," and the climax of the song begins on the high Bb at measure 45.

Example 89. Gwyneth Walker, “The Sunrise Ruby,” mm. 34-37.

Within the closing moments of the piece, at letter D, the voice presents a free, recitative-like line over a sustained accompaniment. According to Walker, the final minor seconds in the piano represent the “closeness of the two lovers.”¹¹⁰

DURATION: 3' 15"

Example 90. Gwyneth Walker, “The Sunrise Ruby,” mm. 52-54.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

The singer presenting “The Sunrise Ruby” has the challenge of making character distinction between the narrator, female, and male characters. The piece opens with the narrator atop repeated eighth notes in the piano. Then, the accompaniment becomes sustained and the voice is marked “freely” when the female poses her question. As the male character responds at letter A and then gives over to passion, the piece increases in rhythmic energy and emotional passion through measure 48. Perhaps the most vocally challenging moment within the song is the Bb in measure 44 that is sustained for four measures, beginning at a piano dynamic with a steady crescendo.

5. “Dualities”

“Dualities” is comprised of four different musical fragments. The song lasts 4 minutes, and the fragments together span a range of D4 through A5 and maintain a medium tessitura throughout. The texts for these fragments were chosen from shorter Rumi writings. The poetry is listed below, with the song title in brackets.

[a. INSOMNIA]

When I am with you, we stay up all night.
When you’re not here, I can’t go to sleep.

Praise God for these two insomnias!
And the difference between them.

[b. MEETINGS]

The minute I heard my first love story
I started looking for you, not knowing
how blind that was.

Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere.
They’re in each other all along.

[c. MIRRORS]

We are the mirror as well as the face in it.

We are tasting the taste this minute
of eternity. We are pain
And what cures pain, both. We are
the sweet cold water and the jar that pours.

[d. STONES]

I want to hold you close like a lute,
so we can cry out with loving.

You would rather throw stones at a mirror?
I am your mirror, and here are the stones.

Writing about the four portions of the song, Walker noted that each is:

expressing a contradictory set of aspects of love. She has insomnia when her lover is present (staying up all night together) and when he is absent (distraction). Looking outward for love, and looking within. Love as pain, and the sweet cold water that cures the pain. Holding the lover close like a lute, or tossing stones (teasingly) at the beloved. In keeping with the dualities topic of the lyrics, each song employs opposing musical elements: high and low ranges of the piano, alternations between two chords, or gentle strumming (lute) vs. scampering intervals (tossing stones).¹¹¹

“Insomnias” begins a blurred, unmeasured, repeated pattern of five notes over a pedal in the accompaniment. This figure gives the first 8 measures a sense of timelessness and the aural effect of a lack of consistent meter. The vocal line is repetitive, centering on C, but descends as far as a perfect fourth.

[Singer moves forward]

♩ = 96 Leisurely tempo

p gently

When I am with you, we stay up all night.—

pp repeat note pattern rapidly, blurred, unmeasured thru m. 8

Sustain & Soft Ped.

Example 91. Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities,” a. “insomnias,” mm. 1-3.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Frustration at the inability to sleep is expressed through marcato and accent markings in the voice on measure 7 and then the piano on measure 8. However, it is apparent that the poet is glad for the present situation: as the text begins “Praise God for these two insomnias,” the accompaniment becomes chordal, and the vocal line leaps an octave, adding emphasis to the word “God.” The fragment closes with three grace note figures and a marcato low C in the accompaniment.

a tempo

Example 92. Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities,” a. “insomnias,” m. 12.

“Meetings” is the second fragment, and it begins in a “gentle tango.” This music mimics a seductive meeting between two people, enhanced by the mordent in the accompaniment on measure 21.

[Singer mover to different location]

$\text{♩} = 132$ As a gentle Tango

Example 93. Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities,” b. “meetings,” mm. 1-3.

Following the declaration “lovers don’t finally meet somewhere,” there is a grand pause, and the accompaniment remains only an echo sustained by pedal. The vocal line is free, supported by a sustained chord on measure 25. Finally, the tango returns at measure 28, bringing the fragment to a close.

The third fragment of *Dualities* is “Mirrors,” combining musical motives from other songs in the cycle. The opening measure consists of the circular triplet motive from “Circling the Sun,” and the second measure includes a repeated five note pattern that is similar to the opening motive in “Insomnias.” These two motives alternate presence throughout the fragment.

[Singer moves to different location]
♩ = 96 Relaxed tempo

p

repeat note pattern rapidly, blurred, unmeasured

The image shows a musical score for piano accompaniment in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 96 Relaxed tempo. The score is divided into two measures. The first measure contains a piano (p) dynamic marking and a triplet of eighth notes in the bass line. The second measure contains a marking that says 'repeat note pattern rapidly, blurred, unmeasured' with a wavy line above it, indicating a rapid, unmeasured repetition of a note pattern.

Example 94. Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities,” c. “mirrors,” mm. 1-2.

The musical texture suddenly changes in measures 12 to 13 and 18 to 19. Here, the text “we are pain and what cures pain, both” is present, and these words are supported by accented, block chords. Measure 22 includes the ascending eighth note motive from measure 53 of “The Sunrise Ruby,” and the piece ends on the blurred “Insomnia” motive.

“Stones” is the final portion of “Dualities.” It opens with rolled chords that mimic the strumming of a lute. The clusters of seconds that begin in measure 5 help to once again depict the closeness of the lovers.

[Singer moves to different location]

♩ = 72 *Slowly, as if gently strumming a lute* more quickly ♩ = 108

Soft Ped. _____ *(Sft.) & Sust. Ped.* _____

Example 95. Gwyneth Walker, “Dualities,” d. “stones,” mm. 1-5.

Within this piece, the voice and piano participate in active musical dialogue. This can be witnessed in measure 14, where the singer begins an acapella quasi-recitative, flirtatiously asking: “you would rather throw stones at a mirror?” To this, the accompaniment responds with a marcato chord. The singer remarks “I am your mirror” which is punctuated by a high staccato chord in the piano. Following the accented statement “and here are the stones,” the piano takes off with “playful” triplets that are instructed to become random ascending and descending black notes depicting the throwing of stones. The singer is instructed to mime in an ad lib fashion throwing imaginary stones at an imaginary lover and aim the last stone at the pianist, which is accented by a high, staccato B-flat in the accompaniment.

15 **Quickly** ♩ = 120 [Singer returns to original location, by piano, tossing ...

stones. _____

mf playfully (random black keys "scampering" up and down ...)

rit.

18 ... a few imaginary stones at the imaginary lover, ad lib.] [one last "pebble" aimed at pianist]

...the keyboard to depict throwing stones)
dim. to end **pp**

DURATION: 4'

Example 96. Gwyneth Walker, "Dualities," d. "stones," mm. 15-20.

In its entirety, "Dualities" is challenging because it is comprised of four distinct thoughts: four different musical textures, textual ideas, and tempo changes between fragments. Additionally, each fragment requires moments where different syllables are set to the same note in repetition. Perhaps the most challenging movement is "stones," where the singer is required to perform quasi-recitative and follow stage directions at the end of the song. Drama remains an important feature throughout the cycle, and to enhance the theatricality within a performance of "Dualities" Walker has suggested that each fragment be performed in a different spot within the performance venue.

6. “A Waterbird (Flying into the Sun)”

“‘A Waterbird’ is a pure love song, without teasing or flirtation. The lover seeks the other . . . and seeks a union with love.”¹¹² This song displays a vocal range of D4 to A5 and a medium tessitura of G4 to F5, and it is approximately 3 minutes and 30 seconds in duration. In setting Rumi’s text as a love song, Walker chose to eliminate several lines of the original poem. Additionally, she added her own line of text “what I want is to see your face,” and within the song she chose to present the text “I am a waterbird flying into the sun” earlier than it occurs in the original poem. This addition and early presentation are noted with a bracket in the adapted text below.

Original Text

What I want is to see you face
in a tree, in the sun coming out,
in the air.

What I want is
to hear the falcon-drum, and light again
on your forearm.

You say, “Tell him I’m not here.” The sound
of that brusque dismissal
becomes what I want.

To see in every palm your elegant silver coin-shavings,
to turn with the wheel of the rain,
to fall with the falling bread

of every experience,
to swim like a huge fish
in ocean water,

to be Jacob recognizing Joseph.
to be a desert mountain
instead of a city.

I’m tired of cowards.

¹¹² Ibid.

I want to live with lions.
With Moses.

Not whining, teary people. I want
the ranting of drunkards.
I want to sing like birds sing,

not worrying who hears,
or what they think.
Last night,

a great teacher went from door to door
with a lamp. "He who is not to be found
is the one I'm looking for."

Beyond wanting, beyond place, inside form,
That One. A flute says, *I have no hope
for finding that.*

But Love plays
and is the music played.
Let that musician

Finish this poem. Shams,
I am a waterbird
flying into the sun.

Text Set by Walker

What I want is to see you face
in a tree, in the sun coming out,
in the air.

What I want is
to hear the falcon-drum, and light again
on your forearm.

To see in every palm your elegant silver coin-shavings,
to turn with the wheel of the rain,
to fall with the falling bread

To swim like a huge fish
in ocean water,

to be Jacob recognizing Joseph.
to be a desert mountain

instead of a city.

I'm tired of cowards.

I want to live with lions.
with Moses.

I want to sing like birds sing,
Not worrying who hears,
Or what they think.

[I am a waterbird flying into the sun.
What I want is to see your face]
Beyond wanting, beyond place, inside form,

I am a waterbird flying into the sun.

As the song opens, the introduction radiates energy through the rhythm of repeated eighth notes. Letter B marks a change in musical texture as the accompaniment becomes subordinate to the vocal text, presenting rolled whole notes. Once again, the circular triplet motive from “Circling the Sun” returns, supporting the text “to turn with the wheel of the rain” in measure 26.

19 *mf* **B**
 To — see in — ev — ery palm your

23 *p*
 el - e - gant sil - ver coin sha - vings, — to — turn with the wheel of the

Example 97. Gwyneth Walker, “A Waterbird,” mm. 19-26.

As the voice presents the repeated text “what I want,” the accompaniment takes on repeated triplets moving in contrary motion, supporting the desire present in the text. Following, “to see your face” the accompaniment returns to repeated eighth notes, shifting in texture to arpeggiated triplets at letter D. Here, the statement “to swim like a huge fish in the ocean water,” is depicted in the accompaniment as the pianist is specifically asked to bring out a triplet “fish motive.”

43 **D**
swim like a huge fish in ocean wa - - - ter,
3
(bring out this 'fish' motive) →
46
to be Ja - cob rec - og - ni - zing Jo - seph. To be a

Example 98. Gwyneth Walker, “A Waterbird,” mm. 43-48.

The text “I’m tired of cowards. I want to live with lions, with Moses,” is marcato and declaimed, presented over sustained chords. At letter E, the accompaniment once again references the song “Circling the Sun” as the circular triplet motive makes an appearance. Following this occurrence, the piano again highlights the text, as the singer’s reference to singing like the birds is suggested by the grace note figure in the upper hand of the piano, at measures 58 and 62.

61 **E**
what they think. I am a
3

Example 99. Gwyneth Walker, “A Waterbird,” mm. 61-63.

As the waterbird takes off, flying to the sun, rhythmic values become quicker and the tempo accelerates. The sustained F sharp on “sun” is supported by repeated eighth notes. “What I want” and “is to see your face” are supported minimally by chordal movement that parallels the direction of the vocal line. As the text moves to “beyond wanting,” the tempo accelerates and rhythmic values once again move more quickly through the final statement of “I am a waterbird.” When the singer presents “flying” in measure 90, the vocal line ascends in eighth notes that are taken over in the accompaniment. Then, “the [singer’s] final surrender comes with the phrase ‘I am a waterbird flying into the sun,’”¹¹³ accompanied by repeated sixteenth notes and quintuplets. “With this, the piano accompaniment rises to the end of the keyboard, and the singer stands with arms outstretched to the sun.”¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

The image displays a musical score for two systems, measures 95-98. The top system (measures 95-96) features a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics "to the sun." and a high note marked with a box "H". The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with eighth-note runs and a left hand with a similar eighth-note pattern. The bottom system (measures 97-98) continues the piano accompaniment with a "Ped. sim." marking. The key signature changes from one flat to two sharps between the systems.

Example 100. Gwyneth Walker, “A Waterbird,” mm. 95-98.

“A Waterbird” remains fairly straightforward throughout, with little vocal challenge. This piece allows the singer to create lovely legato lines. Perhaps the greatest challenge in performing this song is the change of tempo between formal sections of the piece, in the form of ritardando and accelerando. There are word repetitions to be considered, especially “what I want is to see your face” and “I am a waterbird flying into the sun.” These words will require new character with each statement. Finally, the vocalist will experience strong rhythmic energy and vitality through nearly continuous motion in the accompaniment that helps the piece build in dramatic energy and support the final, sustained high A.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Although the majority of Walker's solo songs are for soprano or high voice and piano, she has composed works appropriate for all voice types and a number of small ensembles. Her songs are accessible to performers and audiences alike, displaying careful attention to text setting, dramatic content, and a general musical style that is influenced by several different genres. With the quality of content displayed in Walker's music, it is unfortunate that her solo vocal music has been largely neglected; her songs that are deserving of greater attention through performance and study.

TEXT SETTING

It should be noted that the texts to Walker's songs for solo voice are in English or English translation, deriving primarily from American poetry. As her music is text-driven, textual interpretation should perhaps be given the foremost consideration in study of her works. Throughout her songs, Walker uses different textual devices to emphasize the words and aid the performer in expression of textual meaning. First, she suggests that the poetry of many of her songs, such as those of *Mornings Innocent* be read aloud before the performance, allowing the audience to focus completely upon the singer. Walker also frequently alters and adapts poetry for her musical settings, shaping it to fit her vision for the text and attempting to make the text easier for an audience to comprehend.

In creating her solo songs, Walker frequently eliminates lines of text from the original poetry, such as in "after all white horses are in bed," where she chooses to set only a portion of

the poem, presumably to form a text that has greater meaning for a wider audience. She also occasionally chooses to substitute her own words in place of those that are more difficult to understand, so that the basic meaning of the text can come through more easily in a performance. An instance of this occurs in *Mornings Innocent* when Walker removes “insinuates,” substituting “embraces,” a word more likely to be understood by a larger audience. Perhaps the most frequent device Walker uses to emphasize textual meaning and comprehension, however, is the reiteration of portions of the poetry that best express her interpretation of the text. For example, Walker repeats the line “after all white horses are in bed” throughout this song from *though love be a day*.

To further increase comprehensibility in her songs, the texts are set in a primarily syllabic manner with few melismas. Quasi-recitative is used frequently, the syllabic text set over an accompaniment that is generally sustained or absent. Additionally, Walker uses spoken text to enhance the drama or emphasize specific words, as seen in “Flirtation: Light and Wine and Pomegranate Flowers,” where the female character reprimands her drowsy lover with “don’t go back to sleep!”

USE OF ACCOMPANIMENT

In her compositions for solo voice, Walker uses the accompaniment as the foundation for depicting the images inherent in the poetry. Nearly every solo vocal work begins with a piano introduction, setting the tone for the remainder of the work. For example, the simple, hollow introduction of “In Autumn” from *Mornings Innocent*, sets the tone for a song about the final stage of life, and the introduction to “after all white horses are in bed” establishes a dreamlike quality for a piece about the night. In addition, the accompaniment of her songs helps to depict

the intrinsic imagery of the poetry, highlighting poignant words and making musical commentary upon the text. This can be seen in “Homage to My Hair” as the repeated minor seconds of the accompaniment underscoring “nappy, nappy hair” emphasize the entangled quality of the hair. Additionally, the retreating footsteps of the male character of “Women Should be Pedestals” can be heard in the ascending black note clusters of the piano line, and the steps of the “horrible thing” chasing molly in “maggie and milly and molly and may” can be heard in the rising eighth notes of the accompaniment. The use of accompaniment to make musical commentary on the text can also be seen in the song “Dualities” of *The Sun is Love*, where vocal line states “and here are the stones,” following which the random black keys of the accompaniment serve to depict the tossing of stones.

MELODIC LINES

Walker’s melodic lines are accessible and memorable; in general they are relatively easy to sing, similar to songs in folk or popular veins. This is especially true of the melodies in songs such as “I Will Be Earth” from *Mornings Innocent* or “Still” from *though love be a day*. The melodies of these songs display little chromaticism and move stepwise or in small leaps. By and large, Walker’s vocal lines are conducive to textual comprehension; the melodic lines are focused in a medium tessitura and the ranges are not extremely demanding. When high notes occur in her solo vocal works, they are typically present in dramatic portions of the phrase, at moments where text comprehensibility is not at risk. For example, in the song “The Sunrise Ruby,” the listener has already heard a previous statement of “I’m like a ruby held up to the sunrise, a ruby held up to the sun” when Walker chooses to set the word, “sun,” on a high B-flat.

HARMONIC LANGUAGE

The harmonic language of Walker's songs varies between tonality and modality. While generally relying upon tertian and quartal harmonies, Walker's harmonic language is complicated by lack of key signature, such as throughout *though love be a day*, and constantly shifting tonal centers, as can be seen in "Thy fingers make early flowers." Walker also frequently employs the use of modal harmonies, such as those present in the first piano interlude of "I Will be Earth," stemming from her interest in folk music. Additionally, Walker has proven capable of writing within a jazz idiom, as can be witnessed in *No Ordinary Woman!* Throughout her compositions for solo voice, Walker uses musical materials that sound familiar, but she fuses those elements together with personal style, creating a sophisticated, artful product.

RHYTHM, TEMPO, AND METER

In her solo vocal works, Walker makes use of frequent tempo and meter changes to distinguish between formal sections. Absence of meter occurs in her songs, as does occasional rhythmic instability. These features often aid in enhancing imagery in the text, such as in the duplets against triplets of *I Will Be Earth* that suggest the unsteadiness of love. Another feature common within many of Walker's songs is the alternation between rhythmic values of duplets and triplets within the vocal line, requiring the performer to fluidly shift between the two values. For example, the melodic lines of "Thy fingers make early flowers" frequently alter between the two rhythms. Perhaps above all, Walker's songs make use of repeated, quick rhythms that fill the works with energy and vitality. This can be observed in "The Sunrise Ruby," where repeated thirty-second notes are set against sixteenth note quintuplets, propelling the work forward and giving it a sense of vigor.

DRAMATIC DEVICES

Finally, there are several musical devices that Walker uses to enhance dramatic effect that should be considered when preparing her songs. Walker makes frequent use of dynamic contrast and accents to emphasize important words in the poetry. This can be witnessed in the piece “Dualities” from *The Sun is Love*. Within the first lines of the movement, “Insomnias,” Walker uses these devices to create contrast between moments with and without the lover. Additional markings, such as staccato, marcato, and tenuto enhance dramatic effect. For example, within “Circling the Sun” from *The Sun is Love*, she uses marcato markings to both emphasize the word “shouting” and to display the strength of the decision to give over to love in “let’s buy it.” Walker occasionally requires the singer to use extended vocal sounds like percussive noises, vocal slides, and Sprechstimme in her musical settings. In the case of *No Ordinary Woman!*, scat is an element that Walker uses to enhance musical style and the dramatic effect. Walker frequently sets syllables such as “la” to arpeggios as well, leaving room for the singer to add unique personality to the song.

In addition to musical devices, Walker uses specific written directions to the singer to enhance drama. For example, within *The Sun is Love*, Walker asks the singer to perform portions of the cycle from different locations within the performance venue, in order to make a dramatic distinction between sections of the work. Walker also occasionally gives specific stage directions to a singer, asking them to act in a certain manner to portray the character of the text. For example in “Women Should be Pedestals” of *Mornings Innocent*, Walker gives the instructions “spoken boldly, tongue-in-cheek,” “patiently,” “attentively,” and “flippantly.” These directions can guide singers in creating their interpretation of Walker’s songs.

Theatricality and the creation of mood play an important role in Walker's composition for solo voice. As of the writing of this document, Walker is composing several new collections and cycles of solo song that should prove to further emphasize theatricality. Cooman notes:

Dr. Walker has frequently explored aspects of performer drama in her music that one does not often find in the works of most composers. . . . Over the past few years, Dr. Walker has been working primarily on music that blurs all the distinctions between instrumentalist, vocalist, actor, narrator, and audience. All of these things become brought together as in certain pieces they take on the duties or attributes of the others. . . . [Her] works share the attribute that an active "drama" is part of the fiber of what is required of every participant. There is no just "sitting there and playing or singing your part." Everybody (even sometimes the audience!) is called upon to do something, and this becomes a part of the music. Though these elements have always been a part of her style, they are now coming to the fore as her primary preoccupation compositionally. . . .

This is the area of her work (these pieces which are "dramatic" in every sense) which will be pursued primarily in the future, and is perhaps one of the most interesting and unique areas she has ever explored. Genres will be blurred and everybody will be asked to take on new and exciting challenges.¹¹⁵

As Walker's song catalog continues to evolve in dramatic content and mature in musical language, one can only hope that this repertory will receive greater attention and study. With the quality of content and accessibility to all involved, Walker's songs for solo voice certainly deserve greater recognition in the field of vocal music. It is this author's hope that as more research and performance is given to this quickly expanding repertoire, it will continue to gain appreciation for its unique and valuable contribution to American art song literature.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

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APPENDIX A

DISCOGRAPHY OF CURRENT RECORDINGS

As a Branch in May and Weave No Cloak Against Tomorrow
on the CD "Music Sweet as Love"

Holly Outwin-Tepe, soprano and Catharine Dorin, piano
available from

Holly Outwin-Tepe
741 Upper Straw Road
Hopkinton, NH 03229
Phone: (603) 225-2438

I Speak for the Earth

on the CD "Donne e Doni Vol. II"

Sonja Gourley, soprano; Debra Richter, piano; Susan Pickett, violin.
available from

Susan Pickett
Department of Music
Whitman College
Walla Walla, WA 99362

maggie and millie and mollie and may

on the CD "Women's Voices" (Leonarda #338)

Neva Pilgrim, soprano and Steven Heyman, piano
available from

Leonarda Records
P.O. Box 1736
New York, NY 10025-1559
Phone: (212) 666-7697
Fax: (212) 662-0210

No Ordinary Woman!

on the CD "No Ordinary Woman!"

Catherine Card, soprano and Paul Baker, piano
available from

Catherine Card
3444 Sherbourne Drive
Culver City, CA 90232
Phone: (310) 559-8146
Fax: (310) 825-6649

though love be a day, Mornings Innocent, and The Sun is Love
on the CD "The Sun is Love"

Michelle Areyzaga, soprano and Jamie Shaak, piano

available from

Proteus Records

1944 North Sedgwick

Chicago, IL 60615

Phone: (773) 968-6559

though love be a day, Songs of the Night Wind, No Ordinary Woman!

on the CD "Scattering Dark and Bright"

Denise Walker, soprano and Estrid Eklof, piano

available from

Denise Walker Recordings

117 Goose Green Road

Barkhamsted, CT 06063

Phone/Fax: (860) 829-0764

though love be a day

on the CD "though love be a day" (Innova #529)

American Celebration Duo: Diana Guhin Wooley, soprano and Richard Steinbach, piano

available from

Electronic Music Foundation

116 N. Lake Avenue

Albany, NY 12206

Phone (888) 749-9998

though love be a day

on the cassette "Music of Her Own"

Jill Hallett Levis, soprano and Elaine Greenfield, piano

available from

Elaine Greenfield

47 Proctor Avenue

S. Burlington, VT 05403

though love be a day and maggie and millie and mollie and may

on the CD "Ah! Love but a day: Songs and Spirituals by Women Composers"

Louise Toppin, soprano and John B. O'Brien, piano

available from

Albany Records/Videmus

915 Broadway

Albany, NY 12207

Phone: (518) 436-8814

APPENDIX B

COMPLETE LISTING OF SOLO VOCAL WORKS IN THE CURRENT CATALOG

Voice and Piano

<u>Title</u>	<u>Voice Type</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Publisher</u>
As a Branch in May	Soprano or Treble	1988	ECS #6349
As a Branch in May (Text by Gwyneth Walker)	Soprano or Treble Duet	1988	ECS #6350
Collected Songs for Medium-Low Voice (Text by Various Authors)	Medium-Low Voice	1978-2003	ECS #6642
Crossing the Bar (Text by Alfred, Lord Tennyson)	High Voice	2000	ECS #5758
Gestalt at Sixty (Text by May Sarton)	Narrator	2007	Walker Music
Handfuls of Love! (Traditional Shaker)	Soprano or Soprano/Mezzo Duet	2007	Walker Music
Mornings Innocent (Texts by May Swenson)	High Voice	1993	ECS #5132
Mother Earth (Texts by Alice Walker and Langston Hughes)	Soprano	2007	Walker Music
My Love Walks in Velvet	Medium or High Voice	1978	ECS #4515
My Love Walks in Velvet (Text by Gwyneth Walker)	Medium or Low Voice	1978	ECS #4516
No Ordinary Woman!	Soprano	1997	ECS #5728
No Ordinary Woman! (Texts by Lucille Clifton)	Mezzo-Soprano	1997	ECS #5729
Prayers and Blessings (Texts by Christopher Brunelle (translated), Saint Francis, and Traditional Gaelic)	Bass-Baritone	2004	ECS #6593
Psalm 23 (Text from the Bible)	High Voice	2000	ECS #5740
Songs of the Night Wind (Texts by Louise Bogan, Lisel Mueller, and H.D.)	Soprano	1982	Walker Music
The Sun is Love (Texts by Jelaluddin Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks)	High Voice	2002	ECS #6162
though love be a day (Texts by E. E. Cummings and Gwyneth Walker)	High Voice	1979	ECS #4319
Three Songs on Poetry of E. E. Cummings	High Voice	2006	ECS #6843
Three Songs for Lucille (Texts by Lucille Clifton)	Soprano	2007	Walker Music
Weave No Cloak Against Tomorrow (Text by Jan l'Heureux)	High Voice	1974, 1986	Walker Music

Voice and Instruments

<u>Title</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Publisher</u>
As a Branch in May (Text by Gwyneth Walker)	Medium Voice, Guitar	1988	ECS #4309
I Speak For the Earth	Soprano, Flute/Violin, Piano	1986	ECS #4322
The Laughter of Women	Soprano, Violin, Piano	2000	Walker Music
The Laughter of Women	Soprano, Clarinet, Piano	2002	Walker Music
The Laughter of Women (Texts by Lisel Mueller)	Mezzo, Clarinet, Piano	2002	Walker Music
No Ordinary Woman! (Texts by Lucille Clifton)	Soprano, String Orchestra	2004	Score: ECS #6541 Parts: ECS #6542
Prayers and Blessings (Texts by Christopher Brunelle (translated), Saint Francis, and Traditional Gaelic)	Bass-Baritone, Cello, Organ	2005	Score: ECS #6591 Cello: ECS #6592
Sleep, Little Bird (Text by Jean Merrill)	Various Versions	1982	Walker Music
Songs for Voice and Guitar (Texts by A. E. Houseman, George Mackay Brown, E. E. Cummings, Gwyneth Walker, and Anonymous)	Voice, Guitar	1966-79	Walker Music
Songs of the Night Wind (Texts by Louise Bogan, Lisel Mueller, and H.D.)	Soprano, Cello	1982	Walker Music
Three Songs for Tres Voces	Countertenor, Tenor, Baritone, Guitar	1983	ECS #4325

ECS: E. C. Schirmer

Walker Music: Walker Music Productions

APPENDIX C

CURRENT SONG PUBLISHERS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Publishers

ECS Publishing

138 Ipswich Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02215-3534

Telephone: (617) 236-1935; (800) 777-1919 (USA/Canada)

Fax: (617) 236-0261

Email: office@ecspublishing.com

Website: <http://www.ecspublishing.com/>

Walker Music Productions

273 Brainstorm Road

Braintree, VT 05060

Telephone/Fax: (212) 656-1367

Email: Walkermuse@aol.com