

THE INFLUENCE OF SELMA MEERBAUM-EISINGER'S DEATH ON
XAVIER PAUL THOMA'S COMPOSITION OF *ICH BIN IN
SEHNSUCHT EINGEHÜLLT: SIEBEN LIEDER FÜR
SOPRAN UND KLAVIER*, A LECTURE RECITAL
TOGETHER WITH THREE RECITALS OF
SELECTED WORKS OF O. MESSIAEN,
G.F. HANDEL, A. SCARLATTI,
J.S. BACH, W. LATHAM,
AND OTHERS

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DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

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Rushing, JemmiLou Rye, The Influence of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger's Death on Xaver Paul Thoma's Composition of *Ich bin in Sehnsucht Eingehüllt: Sieben Lieder für Sopran und Klavier*, A Lecture Recital Together with Three Recitals of Selected Works of O. Messiaen, G.F. Handel, A. Scarlatti, J.S. Bach, W. Latham, and Others. Doctor of Music Arts (Performance), August 2002, 48 pp., 15 musical examples, sources consulted, 25 titles.

The aim of this study is to introduce the contemporary German composer, Xaver Paul Thoma, and his composition, *Ich bin in Sehnsucht Eingehüllt* on the poems of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. This study explores the possible reasons behind Thoma's decision to set the poems, as well as the circumstances and significance of the poets' life and poetry, made known through Thoma's composition. An analysis of each song is included, emphasizing especially the relationship between text and music.

Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the University of North Texas Library.

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RECITAL I

University of North Texas
College of Music

presents

A Graduate Recital

JEMMILOU RUSHING, *soprano*

assisted by

Alexandra Adkins, *violin* • Madeline Adkins, *violin*
W. Warren Pattison, *viola* • Phillip Ty Young, *'cello*
Wayne Foster, *harpsichord and piano*
William Stowman, *trumpet*

Monday, June 17, 1996

6:30 pm

Concert Hall

- "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen," Cantata 51* J. S. Bach
 I. Aria
 II. Recitativo
 III. Aria
 IV. Choral
- Quatre Chansons de jeunesse* C. Debussy
 Pantomime
 Clair de lune
 Pierrot
 Apparition
- Intermission —
- Trois Melodies* O. Messiaen
 Pourquoi?
 Le Sourire
 La fiancee perdue
- "Non mi dir" from DON GIOVANNI* W. A. Mozart
 Recitativo
 Aria

Three Songs N. Rorem
To My Dear and Loving Husband
To the Ladies
We never said Farewell

Requiem For My Love W. P. Latham
I.
II.
III.

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

RECITAL II

University of North Texas

College of Music

presents

A Graduate Recital

JEMMILOU RUSHING, *soprano*

assisted by

S. Wayne Foster, *organ and piano*

Petronel Malan, *piano* • David W. Spencer, *trumpet*

David W. Dicke, *guitar*

Monday, June 23, 1997

6:30 pm

Concert Hall

"Let the bright Seraphim," SAMSON George Frideric Handel

The Eternal Source of Light Divine

from *ODE for Queen Anne* George Frideric Handel

Sette Arie con Tromba Sola Alessandro Scarlatti

I. *Si suoni la tromba*

III. *Con voce festiva*

Five Love Songs for Soprano and Guitar Thea Musgrave

Except I Love

O love, o love

Poor is the life

Weep eyes, break heart

The spring of joy

— Intermission —

Les Nuits D'été - A Cycle of Six Songs on Poems
by Théophile Gautier Hector Berlioz
Villanelle
Le Spectre de la Rose
Sur les Lagunes
L'Absence
Au Cimetière
L'Ile inconnue

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

RECITAL III

MEMPHIS SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

David Loebel, Music Director

‡ Lincoln Masterworks Series

Peace

March 30 & 31, 2001 - 8 p.m. - Eudora Auditorium

David Loebel, Conductor
Memphis Symphony Chorus
Dr. Lawrence Edwards, Chorus Director
JemmiLou Rye, Soprano
Martha Antolik, Alto
Randal Rushing, Tenor
Horace English, Bass

DAVID DIAMOND | *Rounds for String Orchestra*
I. Allegro, molto vivace
II. Adagio
III. Allegro vigoroso

BERNSTEIN | *Chichester Psalms for Chorus and Orchestra*
I. Psalm 108: 2, Psalm 100
II. Psalm 23, Psalm 2: 1-4
III. Psalm 131, Psalm 133: 1
Memphis Symphony Chorus
Stephen Nelson, Boy Soprano

Intermission

HAYDN | *Mass in C Major, "Mass in Time of War"*
I. Kyrie
II. Gloria
III. Credo
IV. Sanctus
V. Benedictus
VI. Agnus Dei
Memphis Symphony Chorus
JemmiLou Rye, Soprano, Martha Antolik, Alto
Randal Rushing, Tenor, Horace English, Bass

RECITAL IV



Four hundred fifty-seventh program of the 2001-2002 season.

A Doctoral Lecture Recital

JEMMILOU RYE RUSHING, soprano

accompanied by
Greg Ritchey, piano

Monday, April 22, 2002

5:00 pm

Concert Hall

**THE INFLUENCE OF SELMA MEERBAUM-EISINGER'S
DEATH ON XAVER PAUL THOMAS'S COMPOSITION,
ICH BIN IN SEHNSUCHT EINGEHÜLLT
SIEBEN LIEDER FOR SOPRAN UND KLAVIER**

PROGRAM

Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt, Op. 37/A (1984/1986) Xaver Paul Thomas
Ja (b. 1953)
Spürst du es nicht ...
Herbstregen
Den gelben Aestern ein Lied
Welke Blätter
Spürst du es nicht ...
Tragik

Presented in partial fulfillment of the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
MUGC 6954.706

Steinway is the piano of choice for the College of Music.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to introduce the music of Xaver Paul Thoma (b.1953), composer, and the poetry of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924-42), poet, through a set of seven songs entitled, *Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt für Sopran und Klavier*. The seven poems, selected by the composer, come from a collection of fifty-seven poems, called *Blütenlese*, found by the composer in a German bookstore in 1984. At the time, Thoma was fascinated with the subjects of death and dying, which made these poems even more appealing to him. “It was pure chance that these poems fell into my hands. The dark side of the poems was what intrigued me the most. We see a Jewish girl, with a dreadful future ahead of her and her unflinching hope of surviving, yet realizing that she didn’t have any hope of staying alive.”¹ The life of Selma, her family, friends, and those who taught her become unique reasons for Thoma’s interest in this composition.

¹Xaver Paul Thoma of Bad Mergentheim, Germany, interview by author, 10 May 2001, Stuttgart, Germany.

BIOGRAPHY AND SELECTED WORKS OF XAVER PAUL THOMA

Xaver Paul Thoma was born in Haslach/Kinzigtal, Germany in 1953. During a childhood sickness when he was four years old, Thoma's parents gave him a *blockflöte* to help occupy his time. His grandfather, Karl Thoma, was influential in helping his grandson with the *blockflöte*, and later, at the age of five, his first violin instruction. His grandfather was a musician by profession who played violin, piano, clarinet and trumpet. He provided Thoma's initial music instruction. Thoma began formal violin and viola study in 1968, with Professor Albert Dietrich (1908-1979), and later with Jörg-Wolfgang Jahn. His first attempt at composing was at the age of twelve. This was also the year he began his music study at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Karlsruhe, Germany, where he continued his studies with Professor Dietrich on violin, viola and chamber music. He began music theory study with Professor Eugen Werner Velte and Roland Weber. Beginning in 1972-80 he was the violist for the *Wahl Quartett*, making radio recordings and performing concerts for young musicians. He participated in the master classes with the *Wahl Quartett* and the *Bartok Quartett*. From 1972-77 he was a regular with the *Badischen Staatskapelle* in Karlsruhe and the *Bayreuther Festspiel Orchester* in Bayreuth. In 1977, he began free-lancing as a violist, composer, and teacher. The family moved to Niedersachsen in 1980 and since 1989 has resided in Bad Mergentheim, just outside of Stuttgart, Germany.

Thoma began composing in 1972, eventually completing over 115 compositions, that include: chamber music, choral works, songs, instrumental concertos, works for

orchestra, solo works for instruments, opera and ballet. Thoma's chamber opera, "Draussen vor der Tür" (Outside the door), based on Wolfgang Borchert's play, premiered in January of 1994, performed by the *Hannover Oper*. Another of Thoma's recent compositions includes a work for dance drama called "Kafka" which premiered in May of 1997 at the Hannover Opern Haus. A work for oboe and orchestra, entitled *Konzert für Oboe d'amore und Orchester* premiered in Augsburg in February of 1998. The Staatsorchester Stuttgart commissioned two symphonic works for their concert series from Thoma: *Hölderlein-Fragmente*, first conducted under the baton of Michael Gielen in 1994 with Wolfgang Bünthen (tenor); and a violin concerto, the second symphonic work performed, dedicated to a friend, violin virtuoso Joachim Schall.²

The most recent compositions by Thoma are:

Composition	Premiere	Date	Number
<i>Tausend Kraniche for soprano and piano</i>	Japan-Culture Center of Hiroshima	July/August 1999	119
<i>Turmberg-Musik for flute, drums, and string orchestra</i>	Bad Mergentheim	May 2000	120
<i>Paintings Pia M. for Cello</i>	Stuttgart	Spring 2001	121
Weihnachten for Orchestra after an Organ piece, op. 145/3 by Max Reger	Bad Mergentheim- Jugendorchester	December 2000	122

²Xaver Paul Thoma, *Werkverzeichnis*, Antes Edition, Bühl/Baden, May 1998.

<i>Auf der Suche . . .</i> for cello and piano	Stuttgart – Jugend Musiziert	January/February 2001	123
<i>Musik für</i> <i>Kontrabas solo</i>	Stuttgart	April 2001	124
<i>Saxophone-</i> <i>Quartett”</i>	Maulbronn	November 2001	125

Thoma has also written compositions on poetry of Paul Celan and Rose Ausländer. Both writers were born in Cernowitz, the same birthplace of Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. From Celan, Thoma composed a three-movement work for two violas in *Drei Impressionen op. 22b: Psalm, Todesfuge, Schneebett*, in 1980. More recently in 1998, *Mein Umdunkeltes Herz 5 Lieder nach Gedichten von Rose Ausländer für Sopran, Bratsche und Klavier: Die Nacht beleben, Stilleben, Wehrlos, Tag, Nacht, Verborgenes Licht*; and for mixed choir from 1988, *Der Traum hat offene Augen*.

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Thoma describes his compositional style “as playful in the beginning stages,”³ imitating violin duets and etudes. In his first semester of study at the *Musikhochschule* in Karlsruhe, Thoma’s growing knowledge of music history and introduction to composers such as Schubert, Mozart, and Brahms inspired his own thoughts of composing. He experimented with the twelve-tone row and serial techniques, and noticed early on “that he wasn’t able to go against his own instincts in order to be ‘modern.’”⁴ When questioned about his compositional development, Thoma insisted, “... I did not take a step backwards in my composing, but took on new realizations.”⁵ The pieces composed from that time forward marked the beginning of his “purposeful” composing. Thoma’s interpretation of his compositional identity reveals his “desire that his work make an impression.”⁶ The phase of emotionless, “playful composing” was to be no more: “Basically, I turned my interests from the pure technical aspects of composition, which at this time were quite clear to me; to the real musical work and to my own musicality.”⁷ He focused on further study of Max Reger’s works, meticulously studying the form, harmony, and tone of Reger’s compositions. While studying at the *Musikhochschule*,

³ Xaver Paul Thoma, "Interview mit Xaver Thoma aus Anlaß der Uraufführung seiner Orchesterlieder op. 37/b; *Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt*", interview by Martin Brauß, 2. *Konzert Des Niedersächsischen Staatsorchesters Hannover*. (14./15. November 1988), 4.

⁴Ibid., 4.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Xaver Paul Thoma, Interview by Martin Brauß, 4.

⁷Ibid.

Thoma remembers “writing as many fugues as possible and eventually earning the nickname ‘Fugen-Thoma’ from fellow students.”⁸

When Thoma was asked about Max Reger and his influences, it reminded him of his days with the *Wahl Quartett* in Karlsruhe, Germany, “where pieces I performed broadened my musical horizons and led me to my composing.”⁹ The study of the D minor quartet of Max Reger, in particular, “was a true musical event for me and piqued my curiosity.”¹⁰ From that work, “I experimented with the early works of Arnold Schönberg, and Alban Berg. I would have preferred not to include Anton Webern, but I naturally dissected his works.”¹¹ The sound idioms of “Reger, early and middle Schönberg, and Berg – inspired my beginnings. This was surely the root of my composing.”¹² Other composers that influenced Thoma included: Bach, Schubert, Mozart, Brahms, and Zemlinsky.¹³ In response to Thoma’s expression in his music, he replied,

Expression for me is very important. Expressing something musically was what gave purpose to my compositional work, although impression in my music composing is most important. These compositional qualities make sense of my composing. Naturally, I busied myself with pieces of my colleagues. They were good, interesting studies for me, but the tendency to imitate or copy became too great. Therefore, I protected myself from a strong influence from

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Xaver Paul Thoma, Interview with Martin Brauß, 5.

¹³Xaver Paul Thoma, interview by author, 10 May 2001.

others by immersing myself in my own music over the past two or three years.¹⁴

Thoma speaks of trying to stay away from ‘tradition’ in his composing, but insists that he has not lost the connection. “Tradition is necessary. It is somewhat like the foundation, the security that one needs to compose something new to become free. The problem with today’s music is the varied directions a composer can take. On one hand this provides freedom to compose different kinds of music and on the other it means a certain confinement because one feels so pressured from the many compositional possibilities available.”¹⁵

Continuing on with the question about his style of composition, he replied, “I hear the orchestra version in my head, not the piano version.”¹⁶ When asked if he wrote for a particular audience, he responded, “No, I compose for myself.”¹⁷ Thoma makes no revisions, and even leaves the first draft alone after the first hearing.

¹⁴Xaver Paul Thoma, Interview by Martin Brauß, 5.

¹⁵Ibid

¹⁶Xaver Paul Thoma, interview by author, 10 May 2001.

¹⁷Ibid

ICH BIN IN SEHNSUCHT EINGEHÜLLT-THE SONGS

The songs from Xaver Paul Thoma and Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger; “Ich bin in Sehnsucht Eingehüllt,” *Sieben Lieder für Sopran und Klavier* were premiered in Lüchow/Dannenberg, Germany on May 6, 1988. The Thoma composition originally scored for soprano and piano, and only later after the premiere with piano, were the songs also scored for orchestra. Thoma added the orchestra, “because an orchestra can express with more strength what the composer hears in his mind, or even more so, portrays the instruments in a more intimate manner.”¹⁸ Thoma claims to compose in color and that composing for orchestra brings out the concept that incorporates varied instrumental sounds.¹⁹ The orchestration of *Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt* consists of: flutes, piccolo, oboe, horns, clarinets, bassoon, contra-bassoon, celesta, harp, and a full complement of strings. The following is an example of Thoma’s autographed manuscript.

¹⁸Ibid

¹⁹Ibid

Ex. 1: Autographed Manuscript

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a symphony, featuring multiple staves for different instruments and vocal parts. The score is divided into two main sections, each marked with a tempo change from *poco stringendo* to *A TEMPO*. The instruments listed on the left include Flute 1 and 2, Oboe 1 and 2, Clarinet 1 and 2, Bassoon 1 and 2, Contrabassoon, Cello, Double Bass, Horns (with the instruction "so natural wie möglich"), Trumpets (1-4), Trombones (1-3), and a Soprano voice part. The notation is dense, with many notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *pp*, *f*, and *mf*. There are also handwritten annotations and corrections throughout the score, including a boxed note in the Horn part that reads "siehe den A. mit verbundenen Schreibe in 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 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789. 790. 791. 792. 793. 794. 795. 796. 797. 798. 799. 800. 801. 802. 803. 804. 805. 806. 807. 808. 809. 810. 811. 812. 813. 814. 815. 816. 817. 818. 819. 820. 821. 822. 823. 824. 825. 826. 827. 828. 829. 830. 831. 832. 833. 834. 835. 836. 837. 838. 839. 840. 841. 842. 843. 844. 845. 846. 847. 848. 849. 850. 851. 852. 853. 854. 855. 856. 857. 858. 859. 860. 861. 862. 863. 864. 865. 866. 867. 868. 869. 870. 871. 872. 873. 874. 875. 876. 877. 878. 879. 880. 881. 882. 883. 884. 885. 886. 887. 888. 889. 890. 891. 892. 893. 894. 895. 896. 897. 898. 899. 900. 901. 902. 903. 904. 905. 906. 907. 908. 909. 910. 911. 912. 913. 914. 915. 916. 917. 918. 919. 920. 921. 922. 923. 924. 925. 926. 927. 928. 929. 930. 931. 932. 933. 934. 935. 936. 937. 938. 939. 940. 941. 942. 943. 944. 945. 946. 947. 948. 949. 950. 951. 952. 953. 954. 955. 956. 957. 958. 959. 960. 961. 962. 963. 964. 965. 966. 967. 968. 969. 970. 971. 972. 973. 974. 975. 976. 977. 978. 979. 980. 981. 982. 983. 984. 985. 986. 987. 988. 989. 990. 991. 992. 993. 994. 995. 996. 997. 998. 999. 1000.

Thoma has always been drawn to the lyrics; more seldom, coincidentally, to the poems of women – Nelly Sachs, Else Lasker-Schüler, Rose Ausländer, Ingeborg Bachmann and Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. “In the poems of Ms. Meerbaum-Eisinger, at first glance, they seemed terribly naive, but then after further thought and reading, one discovers the undertones that begin to stir the interests of the reader. These undertones interested me very much.”²⁰ At the time, Thoma had no knowledge of Selma’s personal history.²¹

The vocal part written for soprano in these songs tends to include wide leaps from the low register to the high register and vice versa, especially in numbers two, “*Spürst du es nicht*” and four, “*Den Gelben Aestern Ein Lied*”. A dramatic or a lyric Soprano is best suited to this work, depending on whether orchestra or piano is used. The soprano must be able to sing wide ranges, for example, from a low “g” below middle “c1” to a high “b2” directly under the high “c3”.

The dynamics for each of the seven *lieder* range from a triple *pianissimo* to a quadruple *forte*. Thoma tried to link the dynamics to what the text is trying to reveal. As far as the rhythmic writing is concerned, one can see that the traditional style can be found in a few of the selections, but time signatures, key signatures, and note values in the songs give way to irregular meters and irregular note values. Some of the songs bear no time signature at all, while the complete set has no key signature.

²⁰Xaver Paul Thoma, interview by Martin Brauß, 7.

²¹Ibid

The accompaniment for the piano has a role as important as does the vocalist in this set of songs. Both seem to reflect the text in many instances; sometimes alone, sometimes together, revealing the story in a stirring dramatic fashion. The combination of the two in tempo, dynamic execution, interpretation of text, and ensemble illustrate very well the composers' intent.

Two of the songs contain the same text. When asked why he repeated the same text, Thoma answered, “The reason has to do with interpretation. I originally chose many more poems to put to music, but gradually, over time reduced the number because of the amount of musical material at hand.”²² Thoma goes on to admit to not realizing the repeat of the second poem at the time, but looks back on it as it having some sense in the total work.²³ Thoma was most connected with the development of the musical line from the beginning to the end.²⁴ In terms of whether or not the meaning of the poetry was lessened by its’ being repeated, Thoma explains that the poems brought an awakening of new music to his mind and a purpose of sharing Selma's poetry. The reason for choosing the shorter of the poems was to give place for his music.

After composing for three more poems, I laid them aside for a while. It was not until after a suggestion from George Metz, the choir director at the Hannover Staatsoper, did I finish the cycle. As stated earlier, I had not realized that the same text had already been set to music. The possible reason behind this over-sight is that I did not take notes, or do so seldom. I also do not write down the notes on

²²Xaver Paul Thoma, Interview by Martin Brauß, 7.

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid, 8

manuscript as a thought comes to me, so I innocently, without thought to the other poems, composed different music to the same text.²⁵

²⁵Ibid

THE POET: SELMA MEERBAUM-EISINGER, HER LIFE AND POETRY

Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger was born on August 15, 1924 in Cernowitz, Rumania to poor Jewish parents. Cernowitz was formerly a province of the Austrian Empire, called Bukovina, which is now divided between Romania and Ukraine, not far from the Republic of Moldova.²⁶ At that time, Cernowitz was the capital of Bukovina. In 1926, when Selma was only one and a half, Max Meerbaum, Selma's father, died of tuberculosis. He caught the illness while serving in the Austrian Army. Her mother eventually re-married Leo Eisinger. They met while Mr. Eisinger was looking for a shop to rent. Selma's mother, Frieda, owned one half of the store, where she sold magazines, newspapers, needles and thread. Mr. Eisinger wanted to put a sandal and shoe store next door in the other half. The two eventually fell in love and married.

Renee Abramovici-Michaeli, a girlfriend of Selma's since they were nine years old, describes Selma's features: Selma was approximately five feet tall with brown eyes and long brown curly hair. Renee remembers how Selma and her mother argued about her hair daily, and how her mother had to brush and braid it every day before school, causing the girls to be late almost every day.

Renee describes how Selma and her parents lived together in a two-room apartment, which consisted of a living/sleeping area and a kitchen. Selma slept on a couch at the foot of her parent's bed with the kitchen nearby. There was a desk for Selma and closets (*garderobe*) for storage. There was no running water or electricity in the

²⁶Larry R. Jensen, <http://feefhs.org/bukovina/map-fr3.html>. 1.

apartment and no bathroom. For the latter, the family had to go down the hall, sharing with the rest of the residents in the building, because there was only one bathroom for each floor.²⁷ As a child Selma loved to read, write poetry, and work with the Zionist Youth Movement, a sect of Judaism in Cernowitz. The Zionist group was where she met her boyfriend Lejser Fichmann who became the inspiration for the majority of her poems.²⁸ Lejser was her first and her only love, but because of the German occupation and beginning of WWII, Lejser was ordered to work in a forced labor camp outside the city. The two would unfortunately never see each other again. According to Serke, Selma wrote love poems that were more like dreams than reality.²⁹

Selma began writing poetry at the age of fifteen, when WWII broke out. In the aforementioned *Blütenlese*, was the first poem, entitled *Stille*.

Stille (Quiet)

*Im Zimmer schwebt die Stille und die Wärme,
ganz wie ein Vogel in durchglühter Luft,
und auf dem schwarzen kleinen Tische
liegt still das Deckchen, dünn und zart wie Duft.
Das Glas mit klarem Wasser, wie ein Traum,
wacht, dass das Glöckchen neben ihm nicht lärme
und wartet scheinbar auf die kleinen Fische.
Die rote Nelke dämmert in den Raum,
als wäre sie dort Königin.*

In the room floats the stillness and warmth
Just like a bird in a glowing breeze,
On top of a small black table
Lay still, a cloth, thin and tender like air.
The glass with clear water, like a dream,
Awakens, because the bell nearby didn't ring
And obviously waits for the little fish.
The red carnation closes
As if it were a Queen.

*Die ganze Stille scheint für sie zu sein,
und nur die Flasche mit dem süßen Wein
blinkt still und wie befehlend zu ihr hin.
Sie aber schwebt auf ihrem grünen Stengel,
dünn wie ein Kindertraum das Kleid der Engel*

The complete stillness appears for it to be,
And only the bottle with the sweet wine
Blinks quietly, as if ordered to.
But, it suspends from a green stem,
Thin like a child's dream of an Angels' dress

²⁷http://www.exil-club.de/html/03_biografien/schriftstellerinnen/meerbaum.html. 1.

²⁸Jürgen Serke, "Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger - *Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt* - Gedichte Herausgegeben von Jürgen Serke (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984), 9.

²⁹Ibid.

*und ihr betäubend süßer Duft lullt ein,
als wollt' er aus dem Märchenschlaf
Dornröschen rauben.*

*And its' dazzling, sweet smell falls asleep,
As if he wanted a fairy-tale sleep
Sleeping Beauty to steal.*

*Die Fenster blicken auf die Strasse und sie glauben,
das dort sei alles nur für sie getan.
Der Spiegel glänzt und in ihm tickt die Uhr,
ganz weit im fernen Dorfe kräht ein Hahn,
und die Gardinen bündigt ein blaue Schnur.
die Nelke mit den zarten roten Spitzen
harret des Sonnenstrahls, der durch die Ritzen
ihr heut ein Kleid aus Goldstaub angetan.*

*The window looks out at the street and believes,
That there, all is done only for you.
The mirror shines and in it the clock ticks,
Very far in the city crows the rooster,
And the curtains are tied with a blue string.
The carnations have tender, red tips
Waiting for the suns rays, through the crevices
Is a dress for her made of gold dust. 24.10.1939³⁰*

Renee recalls that Selma would never read her writing to others, but enjoyed finding a hiding place to read to herself during class, when she had no interest in the lesson. Her favorite writers were Heinrich Heine, Rainer Maria Rilke, Paul Verlaine, an Indian Soothsayer, Rabindranath Tagore, and some Chinese poems her mother found for her.³¹ She even includes five poems by other poets in her album of *Blütenlese*: two from Verlaine, two, from Yiddischer poets, Itzik Manger and H. Lejwik, and one from Romanian Discipol Mihnea. The teacher, Hersch Segal, taught each lesson in the Rumanian language, but the students spoke German to their friends and family as well as in the Zionist Youth Group. Selma spent a great amount of time there studying and discussing the ideas and writings of Sigmund Freud, Bertolt Brecht, and Franz Kafka.

Selma's other girlfriend, Else Schächter-Keren, remembers how upset Selma became when she noticed fellow students laughing at her poetry, the event that began their friendship. Schächter-Keren said, "I found her poetry beautiful and I told her so on our way home from school. Selma was always active and never still. Sometimes at 10:00

³⁰Serke, 15, 16.

o'clock at night, she would come to the window and whistle and ask me to come and go for a walk. She loved to dance and was the most exuberant student in the whole youth group. It was as if she wanted to live out each moment."³²

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded and took over Poland and divided it between Germany and the Soviet Union. In May of 1940, the Germans began to take over the West and France surrendered. Selmas' girlfriends' families recall how the Nazis began to take over the city. They thought that it would never happen to them. Renee remembers seeing into the University's *mensa* or lunchroom, from her classroom and watching how the Jewish students were treated. They even learned of one Jewish student jumping out of the third floor window. "As the take over began, we thought that this Socialistic government would be good for the people. There was great enthusiasm from the marching in of troops. Only later, did we find out that the Russians, as well as the Germans were doing away with thousands of Jews, themselves."³³ On June 13, 1941, 4000 men, women, and children were labeled "inadmissible elements" and deported to Siberia."³⁴ On July 5, 1941, Rumanian troops marched into Cernowitz, where all Jews lost their citizenships and had to wear yellow stars on their clothing, and were required to be inside after 6:00 p.m. every evening. Soon, more than 60,000 Jews from Cernowitz were ordered out of their homes and into open-air, ghetto-like camps near the river to live for three months. The camp was full of the sick, children, and the elderly. All that was

³¹Serke, 9.

³²Serke, 9.

³³ Ibid.

available to eat was a thin soup every day.³⁵ There, they awaited their deportation to Michailowska KZ concentration camp.

One year before the deportation of Selma and her family to Michailowska, Selma wrote the following poem:

Du, weißt du . . .(You, do you know?. . .)

Du, weißt du, wie der Regen weint,	You, do you know how the rain cries,
Und wie ich geh', erschrocken bleich,	And how I go, shockingly white,
Und nicht weiß, wohin zu flieh'n?	And not know, where to flee?
Wie ich verängstigt nicht mehr weiß:	How I with fright, no more know:
Ist es mein Reich, ist es nicht mein Reich,	Is it my Kingdom, or is it not my Kingdom,
Gehört die Nacht mir, oder ich, gehör' ich	Do I own the night, or does it own me, and
ihr, Und ist mein Mund, so blaß und wirr,	is my mouth so pale and tangled,
Nicht der, der wirklich weint. . . . ?	Not them, that in reality cry. . . . ? ³⁶

4.3.1941

A letter from Selma to Renee delivered by a young boy to the camp next to hers describes her feelings: "Man never gives up, but he says to himself, now, now it has gone too far, I can't hold out any longer, now I am falling apart ... and at the end, Kisses. 'Chasak' ("Be Strong"), Selma."³⁷ The day before the Eisingers were taken to the

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Serke, 18.

³⁶Ibid., 9,10.

³⁷<http://www.1pb.bwue.de/publikat/ghettos/b10.htm> 5.

concentration camp in Michailowska, Selma left an album of poems with a girlfriend to give to Lejser. These were the fifty-seven poems incorporated in the album, entitled *Blütenlese* (Readings in Bloom). Lejser kept the album until he fled the forced labor-camp and immigrated to Palestine. He left the album with Selma's girlfriend Else Schächter-Keren for safekeeping. It was fortunate that he left the album because he was killed in the Black Sea, when a Russian submarine torpedoed the boat he was in and sunk it. The album ended up in the hands of another of Selma's girlfriends, Renee Abramovici-Michaeli in Palestine years later. She delivered it to Hersch Segal, their former teacher from Cernowitz. Segal had the poems published in East Germany in 1976 with his own funds. Segal commented, "these poems are a part of world literature, but from an unknown author".³⁸ According to Serke, who has further documented the history and set of poems in the newest collection entitled, Selma "wrote love poems that were more like dreams than reality."³⁹ Serke also reveals that, "Segal has lived in Israel, near Tel Aviv since 1962, and over the years has sent four hundred copies of Selma's poetry to friends and relatives."⁴⁰

The poems from *Blütenlese* were also found in a collection by an author named Heinz Seydel in a catalogue in an antique shop in Hamburg in 1968, entitled "Welch Wort in die Kälte gerufen"– Die Judenverfolgung des Dritten Reichs im Gedicht (Which

³⁸<http://www.wortkino.de/reperto/iwnsn.html>. 1.

³⁹<http://www.exil-club.de/html/03-biografien/schriftstellerinnen/meerbaum.html> 1.

⁴⁰Serke, 10.

words are in the cold- The Jewish movement of the Third Reich in Poetry).⁴¹ The former owner's name of this collection had been stamped on the inside of the book as belonging to: Ministerrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik. Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technik Wissenschaftliche Bibliothek (Ministry of the German Democratic Republic Ministry of Economy and Technological Science Library.)⁴²

A lyricist from Heidelberg contributes more information concerning Selma's family. Hilde Domin, an immigrant going back to Germany from Israel, brings the same album of poetry by Selma in the album named *Blütenlese* (Flower Readings). Domin writes concerning Selma's poetry as, "*Es ist eine Lyrik, die man weinend vor Aufregung liest: so rein, so schön, so hell und so bedroht* (It is a lyric that one reads in excitement while weeping: so pure, so beautiful, so bright, and yet so threatened.)"⁴³ These poems were the same set of fifty-seven that Segal had published. A cousin of Paul Celan (a famous "post war" poet) from the United States gave Domin the poems, revealing that Paul Celan and Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger in fact, were cousins, because they had the same great-grandfather on the mother's side. As was mentioned earlier, both Paul Celan and Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger came from Cernowitz, along with another famous writer, Rose Ausländer, who lives today in a Jewish nursing home in Düsseldorf, Germany.⁴⁴

⁴¹Serke, 10.

⁴²http://members.aol.com/irenastash2/selma_b.htm. 4.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴http://members.aol.com/irenastash2/selma_b.htm. 4.

Paul Celan lived the rest of his life in Paris, France until 1970, when at the age of fifty he took his own life. His tombstone reads:

Der Tod ist ein Meister aus The dead is a Master from Germany.

Deutschland.

Seine Augen sind blau His eyes are blue.

Er trifft dich mit bleierner Kugel He hits you with a lead bullet.

*Er trifft dich genau.*⁴⁵ He hits you precisely.

Stephan Hermlin from East Germany spoke of Selma's poetry as "*erschütternden Gedichten*"(shuddering poems), and wrote to Segal concerning his other private impressions. Hermlin commented that it was good to know that there were still people who overcame tough complications, so that a small but perceptible trail will never be lost.⁴⁶ In other words, because of Segal, Selma's poetry was published and is known today.

⁴⁵Ibid

THE DEATH OF SELMA MEERBAUM-EISINGER

As previously reported, the Eisingers were eventually taken to the Michailowska concentration camp. Letters were exchanged between the two friends at the camp. After a brief time, Selma contracted typhoid fever, possibly through body lice. It began with a high fever and a rash, and because there were no doctors around, her condition worsened and caused her death at eighteen years of age. She died on the highest bed of five bunk beds, stacked upon one another. Had the German S.S. (Secret Service) known about Selma and the condition she was in, she would have been shot immediately. The people around her helped and hid her from the German military.⁴⁷ Had it not been for a painter and his wife in the camp with Selma, no one would have know when or even how Selma had died. In her last moments of life, the wife of painter Alfred Daghani recounts that she heard Selma's voice become smaller and weaker. And then it was quiet. Only a few survived those days at the concentration camp. Nearly everyone was executed, as soon as they couldn't work anymore.⁴⁸ Daghani kept a diary of his days in the camp. These notes were taken from Daghani's diary from October 19, 1942 through December 18, 1942 of Selma's last days:

October 19, 1942, Sunday. Selma Eisinger, eighteen years old, and I talked about the book that she owned, 'The House and the World' by Tagore.

⁴⁷Serke, 20.

⁴⁸Ibid., 22.

October 25, 1942, Sunday. I couldn't get the book...it was turned into cigarette paper.

December 16, 1942, Sunday. About evening time, Selma took her last breath. Her life was gone.

December 17, 1942. A Professor Dr. Gottlieb has died of weakness. He and Selma were burned and buried together...

December 18, 1942. Mrs. Eisinger told me that before Selma got sick that she was determined to flee with a man from the militia. Selma had written this in a letter to her mother that was later found in her coat. Her mother said that she had found out about the beautiful poetry that she had been writing.⁴⁹

Daghani also left a charcoal pencil drawing that depicted the lowering of Selma's corpse down over the ladder from the highest bunk to be burned. The drawing can now be found in the *Yad Vashem* in Jerusalem, where the Nazi's crimes against the Jews are documented.⁵⁰ Today, Daghani and his wife Anisoara live in Brighton, England. Considering the life and circumstances of Selma, one is reminded of another young Jewish girl with a similar background from Holland, Anne Frank. Anne died of typhoid fever like Selma, but two years before her, at the age of fifteen in the concentration camp at *Bergen-Belsen*, two thousand kilometers east of where Selma lost her life. The two were both writers; Frank writing daily in a diary, while Eisinger wrote poetry.

⁴⁹Serke, 6.

⁵⁰Ibid., 22.

OTHER COMPOSERS WHO SET MEERBAUM-EISINGER POEMS

Other composers have set Selma's poetry to music for the voice as well as for the theater. Felicitas Kukuck (b.1914) wrote *Sieben Lieder zu Gedichten von Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger* for a mezzo-soprano with an easy to medium difficulty in the accompaniment that connects with the emotional text.⁵¹ Kukuck was born and raised in Hamburg and wanted to become a school music teacher. At the time, because of being Jewish, it was not possible, so, she studied piano at the Musikhochschule (Music Conservatory) in Berlin. During that time, she also had the privilege to study theory with Paul Hindemith. She received her teacher certification in 1937, but because of the war, and being Jewish, was forbidden to teach. After the war, she began her teaching and composing career. Her writing is focused on the church choir, although she has written many instrumental works for harpsichord, piano, recorder, viola, organ, oboe, and flute, as well as a few works for guitar and voice, guitar and chorus. She has directed her own chamber choir for twenty years.

The composer, Luna Alcalay, wrote a play based on the same poetry by Meerbaum-Eisinger from, *Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt*. These are entitled: "Scenes of Reflection to Love Poems from Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger," which portray her last three years of life and her fifty-seven poems posthumously published.⁵² Klaus Kirchberg from the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, from October of 1989 describes her work "as a many

⁵¹<http://www.furore-verlag.de/deutsch/noten/gesang.html>. 1.

⁵²http://presence.or.at/kuk/prod/sehns_d.htm. 1.

sided portrait, resulting in many discrepancies between the impression given of the work and the complicated artistic structure it possessed.”⁵³

Alcalay is considered one of the leading female composers in Austria. She was born in Zagreb in 1928 and studied piano with Bruno Seidlhofer and composition with Alfred Uhl at the Vienna Academy of Music and was granted a scholarship to Rome at the end of her studies (1958). She has described her approach to music “as traditional and her work methods, as nonconformist.”⁵⁴ After returning to Vienna, she received an invitation to come and teach at the University of Music and Arts in Vienna. As a composer, Alcalay established early in her career, contacts with the international *avant-garde*, visited the Darmstadt holiday music courses and in many respects was encouraged by Bruno Maderna. She had early international success and has received a large number of composition prizes, including- Darmstadt 1963 and 1964, Gaudamus- competition 1967, Berlin 1972, International ISCM-competition Italy 1973, ORF Steiermark 1973, *Preis der Stadt Wien*, 1992. Luna Alcalay has been working in multi-media since 1975; also in this field she is counted among the internationally renowned Austrian composer personalities. Alcalay is the first female composer to have had a documentation of her work in the Austrian National Library (September 2000), where ‘*relatif a la sonorite*’ was performed for the first time.

⁵³Klaus Kirchberg, “Luna Alcalay: *Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt-Szenische Reflexionen zu Gedichten von Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger*,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 10 Oktober 1989, vol. 150, 48-49.

⁵⁴ http://www.editionhh.co.uk/ab_la.htm. 1.

The performance of “Scenes of Reflection...” was held on the twenty-fourth of September 1984 in Graz, Austria, The House of Youth, *Steirischer Herbst*. The program consisted of:

- I. Prologue
(Information)
- II. Notes 1
(The picture of Selma)
- III. Notes 2
(The poems)
- IV. Red Carnations
(The poem)
- V. Epilogue
(The Diagnosis)

Violeta Dinescu also used Ms. Meerbaum-Eisinger’s texts for three of her songs entitled: *Herbst(Fall)*, *Der Kelch(The Cup)*, and *Kristal(Crystal)*. Earlier, Ms. Dinescu used Selma Meerbaum-Eisingers’ poetry from *Ich bin in Sehnsucht Eingehüllt* for Soprano and cello in 1985. Ms. Dinescu was born in Bucharest, Rumania in 1953. She did her studies in mathematics and physics and then studied music at the Conservatory C. Porumbescu, Bucharest with Myriam Marbe for composition. She received diplomas in the areas of composition, piano, and pedagogy. Her first teacher contract was in the *Musikschule George Enescu* in Bucharest. Later places of employment were Heidelberg, Frankfurt, Bayreuth, and where she now resides, the University of Oldenburg as a composition teacher.⁵⁵

Tilo Medek writes three songs for middle voice and organ entitled *Schlaflieder*’’: I. *Schlaflied für mich*, II. *Schlaflied für dich*, III. *Schlaflied für die Sehnsucht*. Medek was

⁵⁵<http://www3.oldenburg.de/01/Kulturdatenbank/data/kdb.71.html> 1.

born in Jena, Germany in 1940. He studied musicology at the Berlin University from 1959-1964, also taking composition lessons with Wagner-Régeny until 1967. From 1964 he worked as a freelance composer.⁵⁶ He was one year old when Selma began writing her poetry. At this writing, he is now forty-one and Selma would have been in her middle fifties... the wounds are still fresh!⁵⁷ The premiere of this work took place on the twenty-second of November 1981 in Potsdam-Bornstedt, Germany.

⁵⁶Sadie, Stanley, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 20 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 12:216.

⁵⁷Medek, Tilo. "Schlaflieder," Edition Tilo Medek, Unkel am Rhein, 1981.

Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt – The Poems

I. JA (Yes)

<i>Du bist so weit.</i>	You are so far away.
<i>So weit wie ein Stern,</i>	As far away as a Star,
<i>Den ich zu fassen geglaubt.</i>	That I thought I could reach.
<i>Und doch bist du nah-</i>	And still you are near-
<i>Nur ein wenig verstaubt</i>	Only lightly dusty
<i>Wie vergangene Zeit.</i>	As time gone by.
<i>Ja.</i>	Yes.
<i>Du bist so groß.</i>	You are so large.
<i>So groß wie der Schatten</i>	As large as the Shadow
<i>Von jenem Baum.</i>	Of any tree.
<i>Und doch bist du da-</i>	And yet you are there-
<i>Nur blaß wie ein Traum</i>	Only pale like a dream
<i>In meinem Schoß.</i>	In my lap.

6.7.1941

In measure four (see Example 1a), the text begins, “*Du bist so weit,*” with the dynamic level marked *pianissimo*. The text translated means, “You are so far away...” The dynamic marking helps to interpret the text, while the note being sung is in the high range depicting from the height of the note for the listener to detect someone as being far away.

Example 1a

Xaver Paul Thoma
(1953*)
op. 37/A

Ja

Sehr Langsam
♩ = 50

Sopran

Klavier

S

Kl.

5

pp

ppp

pp sfz pp

p

f

pp

Sob-----

weit. So weit wie ein Stern den ich zu fassen glaubt

The same thing happens in the second phrase (measures six and seven), which continues with the text, “*So weit wie ein Stern...*” (as far as a star), demonstrating the depiction of text (see example 1a measures six and seven). As in the first example, the note being sung on the word “Star” reflects the reality of where a “Star” is: high, in the heavens, or high in the singing range.

The next example connects the musical text depiction with dynamics yet another time. In measures 21 and 22, a dynamic level of *pianissimo* on the word “*groß*”(large) on

a low E_b. Immediately following, a dynamic level of *forte* or *fortissimo* is also used for the word “*groß*,” but this time on a high note. In this instance, the *fortissimo* is used to stress the word “*groß*”. The dynamic markings help to interpret the word in both examples. The *pianissimo* dynamics give the listener an idea of disbelief, while the second textual reiteration with loud dynamics for the size and the reality of it.

Example 1b

The image shows a musical score for Example 1b, consisting of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle staff is the piano accompaniment, and the bottom staff is the sub-bass line. The vocal line has lyrics: "Du bist so groß. so groß". The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *pp*, *(pp)*, and *sffz*. The sub-bass line has a dynamic marking of *sffz*. The score is marked with a box containing the number 20. The piano part includes a section labeled "verklingen".

The analysis process of this work will bring some understanding to the composer’s choice of sound, harmony, movement, rhythm, growth, and text. The first thing to notice is that there is no key signature available; only a sea of sharps, flats, and accidentals within the music. Thoma felt that one was not necessary. In this instance, one can assume that the composer had a key in mind, but decided not to follow through. Instead, he felt free to compose each particular chord/note in an untraditional fashion.

At the beginning and at the end, the first song and the last appear to be in B flat major, but the key is never established during the piece. It also never implies a major or

minor connotation. One could understand how the key of D flat becomes a possibility with the enharmonics of g flat and f sharp throughout, but still not a true key of D flat. A motive occurs between measures four and five in the vocal line and measures seventeen and eighteen in the piano accompaniment. Pitch names are different, the rhythm is altered slightly, but the intervals correspond exactly to each other. In other words, they create the same sound. (Major third, to minor sixth, and minor second) The time signature keeps the half note as the basis of beat, shifting only twice from 3/2 to 4/2 and 4/2 back to 3/2.

II. Spürst Du es nicht...(Do you not feel it?)

+++++

Spürst du es nicht,

Wenn ich um dich weine,

Bist du wirklich so weit?

Und bist mir doch das Schönste,

Das Eine, um das ich sie trage,

Die Einsamkeit.

23.12.1941

+++++

Do you not feel it?

When I cry over you

Are you really so far away?

And you are to me the most beautiful,

The one that I carry,

Loneliness.

In the second song, “*Spürst du es nicht,*” the word “*weine*”(which means to cry) in measure thirty-six, is marked at the beginning with a *pianissimo*, but immediately following the very soft section Thoma adds a quick crescendo marking to *forte* to resemble a crying effect.

Example 2a

Musical score for Example 2a. The vocal line (S) is in treble clef and features dynamic markings *pp*, *f*, and *p*. The piano accompaniment (Kl.) is in grand staff and features dynamic markings *f* and *pp*. The lyrics are "Wein e, bist du wirk".

In measure thirty-nine, of the second song, word-painting technique re-occurs with use of dynamic contrasts as before, with the word “*weit*” sung on a high G2 with a triple *pianissimo* dynamic level. “*Weit*,” meaning far away, gives the feeling that Lejser, Selma’s boyfriend, is indeed far away. In the accompaniment, the piano resolves to a unison sonority on the word “*weit*” with the soprano, which makes for a settling affect.

Example 2b

Musical score for Example 2b. The vocal line features dynamic markings *pp* and *ppp*. The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings *pp*. The lyrics are "lich so weit?". The measure number 39 is indicated.

The word “*trage*” in measure forty-three, has accents above it, which means to sing with a bit more effort and air, accent or force. The meaning of the word is to “carry.” In this instance, the meaning deals with the difficulties of loneliness or “*einsamkeit*”.

Example 2c:

The image shows a musical score for Example 2c. It consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, with lyrics "um das ich sie tra - ge die" written below it. A triple accent (three slanted lines) is placed over the word "trage". The dynamic marking *pp* is written above the final note of the vocal line. The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, with the word "trocken" written above it. The dynamic marking *p* is written below the first note, and *ppp* is written below the final chord. The measure number "43" is written in the center of the middle staff. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, with the dynamic marking *pp* written below the final note.

One last example from number two demonstrates how the dynamics resemble the text. This instance is on the German word, “*einsamkeit*,” which means “loneliness.” The soprano is instructed by the composer to sing at the triple *pianissimo* level, sending the message of “loneliness” through the dynamic level and the not so active accompaniment. Thoma ends this song with a most unusual choice of *sforzandi* accents, *staccatto*, and large intervallic jumps and at the top of the keyboard, a high *f sharp*. (See Example 2d).

Example 2d

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal part (S) is in G major and 4/4 time. The lyrics are: "Ein-sam-keit." and "Starr". The piano accompaniment (Kl.) features a variety of dynamics including ppp, p, sfz, and molto ritard. The score includes a fermata over the vocal line and a 45-measure rest in the piano part. The piece concludes with a key signature change to A major.

III. *Herbstregen* (Autumn Rain)

Ich starr hinaus

I stare out

Und seh-versteh!

And see – and understand!

Dabei der Trauer ins Gesicht.

Thereby the sadness in the face.

Und so wie ich den Regen seh –

And likewise I see the rain-

Oh, so siehst du ihn nicht.

Oh, so you don't see the rain.

Er ist für mich dem Weinen gleich,

It is for me just like crying,

Das mich wiegt – Nacht um Nacht

That weighs upon me – Night after Night

Und auch der Rauch

And also the smoke

Ist ganz so bleich

Is totally pale

Wie mich dein Bild gemacht.

As your portrait made me.

30.6.1941

One difference between the orchestral score and the piano score for the third song “*Herbstregen*” or “Autumn Rain,” is in the introduction. The piano accompaniment version of the introduction begins in the fifth measure of the piece, with the vocalist singing after one measure of introduction, while the orchestral version begins five measures earlier with the soprano humming in the first two bars. Another interesting effect comes from the accompaniment throughout the piece in the right hand. Every measure, with the exception of three, has the right hand trilling in the high register, possibly giving the listener the sense of rain falling or simply creating a rain-like atmosphere. The accompaniment in the left hand plays short, sporadic chords in a difficult rhythm with extreme dynamic markings throughout. A *sfortzando* is placed here and a *pianissimo* there. The soprano must sing in the lower register of her voice for this particular song. It must be in dramatic style to get the text across to the listener. Some word-painting and rhythmic punctuation can be found in two different areas of number three. Measure fifty-nine calls for a loud reaction on the word, “Oh,” followed by an accented grouping of rhythmically punctuated text: “*so siehst Du ihn nicht*” or “You do not see the rain.”

Example 3a.

The musical score for Example 3a consists of two staves. The upper staff is for the voice (S) and the lower staff is for the keyboard (Kl.). The vocal line has the lyrics: "Und so wie ich den Re-gen seh' Oh, so siehst Du ihn". The score includes various dynamic markings: *pp* (pianissimo) for the keyboard, *ff* (fortissimo) for the voice, and *ppp* (pianississimo) for the voice. There are also performance instructions such as *tr* (trill) and *acc* (accent). The keyboard part features a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more rhythmic pattern in the left hand.

The accompaniment in example 3a has the right hand at the top of the keyboard very soft, while the left hand is at the bottom of the keyboard very loud for one sixteenth of a beat followed by a quarter note. The next instance occurs in the measure sixty-one, with a simple rhythm (see Example 3b), but with a detached and accented text on each syllable in a *pianissimo* dynamic. The text must communicate everything in this instance as in example 3a.

Example 3b

The musical score for Example 3b consists of two staves. The upper staff is for the voice (S) and the lower staff is for the keyboard (Kl.). The vocal line has the lyrics: "Er ist für mich dem Weinen gleich". The score includes various dynamic markings: *p* (piano) for the voice, *ff* (fortissimo) for the keyboard, and *sfz* (sforzando) for the keyboard. There are also performance instructions such as *acc* (accent) and *tr* (trill). The keyboard part features a simple rhythm in the right hand and a more rhythmic pattern in the left hand.

IV. *Den Gelben A stern Ein Lied* (A Song to the Yellow Aster)

<i>Sie blicken durch den Regen hell mich an</i>	They look brightly through the rain at me
<i>So licht, daß sie die Sonne mir ersetzen.</i>	So bright, that they replace the sun.
<i>Und gar nichts von des Regens Trauer</i>	And nothing from the rains sadness can
<i>kann</i>	harm.
<i>Die leuchtend gelbe Freude mir verletzen.</i>	This bright yellow joy in me.
<i>Auflachend neigen sie sich in dem Grün,</i>	Bowing laughingly in the green,
<i>Das rein und frisch ihr Lachen mir</i>	The purity and freshness of their laughter
<i>begleitet- Ich leg' ihnen mein Lied zu</i>	stays with me. I lay my song at your feet,
<i>Füßsen hin, weil sie mir eine Freude heut</i>	Since you have prepared a joyful moment
<i>bereitet.</i>	for me today.

30.6.1941

Number four is entitled, “*Den Gelben A stern Ein Lied*” (A Song to the Yellow Aster). This piece is the most dramatic song of the cycle for both the pianist and the singer. The range extends from the high b3 to the low b for the soprano. The text is painted again through the difficult high note passages in measures 76, 77, 79, 94, and 101 and rhythmic phrases in measures 12 and 33. The text at the highest point has the soprano on a high b3 singing the word “*licht*” or light.

Example 4a

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "Sie bli - cken durch den Re". The piano accompaniment features a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part starts with a forte *sfz* dynamic, then transitions to *ppp* (pianissimo) and *pp* (piano). The bass clef part starts with a *mp* (mezzo-piano) dynamic. A box containing the number "75" is located above the piano part. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "gen hell mich an, So Licht". The piano accompaniment continues with *pp* dynamics, then *sfz* (sforzando) and *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamics. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

In the measure following Example 4a, the text is dictated by the rhythm with the text *So licht, daß sie die Sonne mir ersetzen*, or So bright, that it could almost take the place of the sun.

Example 4b

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in the upper staff, featuring a melodic line with a trill (marked '3') and a descending scale. The lyrics are: "daß sie die Sonne mir — er Setz-en". The piano accompaniment is in the lower staves, featuring a series of half steps on the piano (marked 'ppp') and a descending scale. The score is marked with a box containing the number '80'.

Two other words in measure 100 occur, where the composer instructs the singer to make a *glissando* effect on the word “*lachen*” (laugh) and the word, “*mir*”(me). Thoma shows how both words depict laughter with the *glissando* and use of decorated, chromatic, accented, and a laughing-like descending scale. Simultaneously, the accompaniment has instructions to play forcefully a series of half steps on the piano with the right crossing over the left, while the left calmly interjects measures of interchanging major seconds and minor seconds at a slow descent.

Example 4c.

frisch ihr Lach - en mir beg - lei - tet

100

ppp

sfz

f

pp (fast flüsternd)

gliss.

3

7

sfz mit Wucht

pp sempre

V. Welke Blätter (Withered Leaves)

<i>Plötzlich halt mein Schritt nicht mehr,</i>	Suddenly, my steps shuffle no more,
<i>Sondern rauschet leise, leise,</i>	Rather rustles softly, softly,
<i>Wie die tränenvolle von Weise,</i>	Like a tear-filled song,
<i>Die ich sing, von Sehnsucht schwer.</i>	That I sing, with heavy longing.
<i>Unter meinen müden Beinen,</i>	Beneath my tired legs,
<i>Die ich hebe wie im Traum,</i>	That I lift as in dreams,
<i>Liegen tot und voll von Weinen</i>	Lie dead and filled from crying
<i>Blätter von dem großen Baum.</i>	The leaves from the great tree.

24.9.1939

“Welke Blätter” (Withered Leaves) begins with a long sustained introduction, block chords with an emphasis on the perfect fourth and tri-tone, and some major/minor seconds and major thirds. The dynamic level is very loud and Thoma instructs the pianist to let the sounds ring. In this song, the text is fore shadowed by the rhythm, and tempo. The soprano sings, “*Plötzlich, hallt mein Schritt nicht mehr*” (Suddenly, my steps are heard no more). Thoma uses long notes and a slow tempo to depict the slow steps, or what he wants the listener to perceive as slow, quiet, steps. One could also imagine a trance like state. In the middle of the number five, the interlude for piano is an exciting, but tragically, disconcerting four measures.

Example 5

The musical score for Example 5 consists of two staves. The top staff is for the soprano (S) and the bottom staff is for the piano (p.l.). The soprano line is in treble clef and has a dynamic marking of *pp*. It features a triplet of notes in the second measure and another triplet in the third measure. The lyrics are "Plötz-lich hallt mein Schritt nicht mehr,". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef and also has a dynamic marking of *pp*. It features block chords in the first, second, and third measures, with a fermata over the final chord in the third measure.

The effect directly reflects the text in the measures before: “*die ich sing’ von Sehnsucht schwer*” (that I sing from intense longing).

VI. *Spürst du es nicht* (Do you not feel it?)

+++++

Spürst du es nicht,

Wenn ich um dich weine,

Bist du wirklich so weit?

Und bist mir doch das Schönste,

Das eine, um das ich sie trage,

Die Einsamkeit.

23.12.1941

+++++

Do you not feel it?

When I cry about you

Are you really so far away?

You are to me the most beautiful,

The one, that I carry,

Loneliness.

The sixth song recalls the text from the second song with a different melody. The key scheme is similar, but the melody goes in different directions. The second song is better suited for the higher voice, while in this song a lower soprano or mezzo voice is better suited. It is not as dramatic as number two, but is longer lasting for twenty-eight measures instead of fifteen. The piece contains a three-measure interlude with a three-measure postlude with hands spread out on the keyboard from top to bottom, with the voice in the center for most of the piece. Thoma incorporates the musical signature of Dmitry Shostakovich (1906-1975), in measure 170 of the piano accompaniment in the right hand (D, Eb, C and B). Shostakovich used this musical motive as a dominating theme in his Quartet #8, one he had already composed into his Tenth Symphony.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Sadie, Stanley, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 20 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 17:269.

Example 6

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line (S) is in treble clef and contains the lyrics "das Ei - ne um das ich sie trag - e, —". Above the vocal line, there is a triplet of notes marked with a bracket and the number "3". The piano accompaniment (Kl.) is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). It features dynamic markings "pp" and "ppp". There is a triplet of notes in the bass line marked with a bracket and the number "3". A box with the number "170" is located above the piano part. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and a "Sub" marking in the bass line.

VII. Tragik (Tragic)

<i>Das ist das Schwerste: sich verschenken</i>	This is the most difficult: to give of oneself
<i>Und wissen, daß man überflüssig ist,</i>	And knowing that mankind is unnecessary,
<i>Sich ganz zu geben und zu denken,</i>	To give all of yourself and think,
<i>Das man wie Rauch ins nichts verfließt.</i>	That mankind like smoke, into nothing
23.12.1941	dissipates.

In the last song, one hears the title “*Tragik*” in the introduction that lasts for six long measures. There are double-dotted *fermati* (hold longer) pauses at the ends of some of the introduction measures. There are also triple and quadruple *forte* markings in the introduction.

Example 7

$\text{♩} = \text{ca } 50$

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 180-184) features a vocal line (S) and piano accompaniment (p. kl.). The piano part is marked *fff* and includes the instruction "Langer Halt" (long hold) over a sustained chord. The second system (measures 185-190) features a vocal line (S) and piano accompaniment (kl.). The piano part has dynamic markings *ff*, *ffff*, *ffffz*, and *ppp*. A hairpin crescendo is shown below the piano part, and a hairpin decrescendo is shown above it. The vocal line has a *pp* marking and a triplet of notes. The third system (measures 191-194) features a vocal line (S) and piano accompaniment (kl.). The piano part is marked *ppp* and *sub. ffff*. The vocal line has a *p* marking and the lyrics "Das, — Das".

While the title reflects the introduction as completely as possible, so is the text of number seven skillfully written for the music. This song is the most dramatic of the whole cycle.

The pianist must play octave stretches (eight key spread) in both hands, with the moving line in the middle of the octave chords (see also Example 7).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger was not among the authors forgotten after 1945, because she was not even well known. Her short life, ending in a concentration camp, is all the more significant because it reveals what poetry was lost in the death of this young poet, who was “only” a name among six million other Jewish victims, who also never had a name in literature or anything else. The last line of the last entry in her album written with a red ink pen, describes how she felt, knowing that she would never be able to write again; *Ich habe keine Zeit gehabt zu Ende zu schreiben...*” I had no time to finish writing...)

Because of Xaver Paul Thoma’s discovery of Selma’s heart-wrenching poems and his dedication to the composition of *Ich bin in Sehnsucht eingehüllt*, a part of Selma will never be lost. She will continue to live on through the music of Xaver Paul Thoma and many others.

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