

Michael John Halliwell

'The Space Between':
Contemporary Opera and the Novel - a Study in Metaphrasis.

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Abstract

The process of metaphrasis denotes the translation of a work of art from one medium into another. Opera is fundamentally an adaptive art form and contemporary opera has increasingly turned to the novel as the sophistication and range of the resources of modern music theatre have expanded. This dissertation will examine the contemporary operatic adaptation of five works of fiction. The method employed is a comparison of fictional and operatic discourse and an analysis of the translation of fictional narrative into operatic narrative. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* poses particular narrative problems for operatic adaption while Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* is characterised by its intrusive narrator and a pervasive ambiguity. Joseph Conrad's novel, *Under Western Eyes*, exemplifies many of the narratological complexities of modernism, whereas Patrick White's *Voss*, a seminal postcolonial text, offers the operatic adaptor opportunities for the transcendence of language through music. The final chapter of this study will examine Henry James's tale, "The Aspern Papers", which incorporates many of James's reflections on literature and the literary life. The postmodernist operatic adaptation transmutes this self-reflexive fictional work into an opera profoundly concerned with the ontology of opera itself.

This study will test the thesis that opera's affinity lies with the novel rather than with drama: that the fundamental narrative mode of opera is diegetic rather than mimetic. The main theoretic thrust proposes that the orchestra in opera performs a similar function to the narrator in fiction. As fictional characters exist only through the medium of their 'text' therefore, it will be argued, operatic characters exist only as part of their 'musical' text. Fictional narrative, while frequently conveying the impression of mimesis is essentially diegetic; operatic characters appear to possess a similar autonomy to their counterparts in drama, but can be seen as analogous to those in fiction and as a function of the diegesis of operatic narrative. Operatic characters are 'created' by the orchestral-narrator and have their being only as part of this narrative act.

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Preface

The whole dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work.

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Introduction

1. Words and Music.

Opera is a hybrid art form with a history of perpetual tension between the demands of the text and those of the music. Opera has always attempted to synthesize these two frequently conflicting elements, not to mention the demands made by other genres such as dance, as well as factors such as scenic design and other allied theatre crafts. This fundamental conflict between words and music is as old as opera itself and has, in fact, been the self-reflexive subject of several operas, such as Antonio Salieri's *Prima la musica e poi le parole* (1786). Perhaps the outstanding example is Richard Strauss's *Capriccio* (1942) which deals specifically with the nature of opera and the problems of operatic representation. The critic Peter Conrad (1977:113) regards music as being the "enemy of words, drowning their sense in lyrical sound." However, he finds the genius of opera as lying precisely "in its potentiality for an enriching contradiction between its elements. Rather than a sedate marriage between text and music, it proposes a relationship of unremitting, invigorating tension" (177). The art of opera is the attempt successfully to combine these two conflicting elements which in spite of their fusion still retain their unique features: they are, as Conrad (1977:113) expresses it, "united by antagonisms. Opera is the combination of their warfare by other means" (113). Arguing along similar lines, Cone (1974:44) maintains that the history of opera is a "record of the varying resolutions of the conflict between the demands of the music for self-fulfilment and the needs of the text for projection and amplification." It is the examination of this creative tension at the heart of opera which provides a point of departure for this study.

* * * *

Operatic theorists and practitioners (most notably, Wagner) have persistently attempted to construct all-embracing and unifying theories of opera, usually with little success. The sources upon which opera draws are various, but central to the construction of opera is the libretto. Whether one can regard the libretto as having an independent existence is a matter of some dispute. Some critics maintain that the libretto is autonomous, while others see it as an intermediate stage in a process which only culminates in the finished work of art. The view which has dominated thinking about opera is represented by Kerman (1952:29) who argues that "in the beginning, the *libretto* is the inspiration" (my emphasis), its importance for the composer lying in the fact that his powers only realize their full potential when he sets the libretto to music. More recently, however, Kerman (1988:10) has stressed the *musical* aspect of the operatic binary in even more strongly polemical terms claiming, that opera "is a type of drama whose integral existence is determined from point to point and in the whole by musical articulation. *Dramma per musica*. Not only operatic theory, but also operatic achievement bears this out." An even more extreme position is advanced by Robinson (1988:328) who is loath to recognise any autonomy for

the libretto at all and argues that the libretto "is not a text as we ordinarily understand the term" as the "meaning of opera is at bottom musical."

Other recent theorists seem to favour less absolute approaches. Levin (1994:7) argues that an approach which focuses primarily on the musical aspects at the expense of the verbal, would turn opera into "a pure meta- or prelinguistic form of expression, a nostalgic trip to the imaginary, a vacation from language and the insights of contemporary language-based accounts of textual meaning." Adorno (1994:37), discussing what he regards as the unsuccessful attempt "to promote the pure, unbroken, undialectical closure of operatic form", concludes that if opera is to be considered as having any intrinsic meaning at all, then this meaning might be "sought in contradiction itself, rather than vainly seeking to do away with contradiction in the name of an all too seamless aesthetic unity, the kind that gloomily flounders under the name 'symbolic'." Emslie (1992:57) resists the belief that the problematic "relationship of words and music in opera can be resolved by treating each as a separate discourse", and insists that "they are locked in a dialectical relationship in which meaning and effect depend on a constant instability: a dialectic in which the synthesis is never a single, fixed solution. It is not only words that change *as words* when 'set' to music; music also changes when placed in relation to text." Emslie, celebrating the heterogeneity of operatic expression, reflects a view of opera which is gaining in importance and which sees opera essentially as an "interplay of systems" (Levin:1994:8). The hybridity of opera would seem to favour this broader approach rather than the reductive, homogenising impulse which has hitherto been preferred. Said (1991:46) maintains that despite being the "most formal of the arts", music is "the least denotative". This study will recognise the fact that while 'pure' music is a very imprecise signifying system, recent trends in the study of language have stressed the instability of language itself. Indeed, opera offers a vast area for discursive investigation. Levin sees opera as a "logical vehicle for a critique of discursive homogeneity and stability" (10), and opera is a field of study of increasing interest to musicologists as well as literary and cultural theoreticians.

It remains generally accepted that the verbal text is the starting point for the musical development which, in turn, extends the range and meaning of that text. Lindenberger (1984:125) maintains that the "actual verbal texture of a libretto can exercise a suggestiveness that allows the music to take off on its own [which] would be unpredictable for anybody reading the words alone." He goes on to cite Adorno's apt description of opera as "an interlinear version of its libretto", which Lindenberger then interprets as "a musical commentary on what goes on between the interstices of a dialogue, on what the actual text has not in itself realized ... the composer fills in what the stage directors call the 'subtext' of a play." While this is a useful analogy, one must bear in mind that music functions not only as subtext but is, in fact, an essential part of the main 'text' as well. Corse (1987:14) recognises that the libretto does not have an independent existence; she describes librettos as "lying at the edge of literature", and considers them as "literary works in which the literary qualities have been to some extent stripped away, so they tend to emphasize the communicative function of language rather than its aesthetic function." However, she maintains that

the characteristics whereby language achieves its effects - contrast, repetition, symmetry, balance, control of pace, and multiple relationships among aural elements - are also the characteristics whereby musical structures are built. *So a composer reinvents, in a different medium, the ambiguity and multiple relationships of literary texts.* (14 - my emphasis)

It is this 'reinvention in a different medium' - or *metaphrasis* - that is the main concern of this dissertation: the translation of novels into opera.

2. The Libretto.

2.1 Origins.

Opera is perhaps unique among literary and performative genres in that its origins are well known and well documented. According to Starobinski (1994:23), "it was born at a precise moment in the history of the West, on the uncertain frontier between the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque", and it is perhaps this genesis on a historical and cultural cusp that accounts for its hybridity. A group of Florentine noblemen collectively known as the Camerata believed that through their experiments with a new form of drama which would be accompanied by music they were revivifying ancient Greek tragedy. Theirs was essentially a move away from Renaissance polyphony and the madrigal style towards the use of a solo voice where the words could clearly be heard. In a sense, this emphasis on the text at the expense of the music initiated the often bitter debate about the relative importance of words and music which has fluctuated in intensity for opera's almost four-hundred-year history. In the Camerata's view, the music was there to serve the words and the function of music was to interpret the emotion contained in the words. The first important result of their experimentation was the opera *Daphne* (1598), by Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), to a text by Rinuccini. This was soon followed by Peri's second opera, *Euridice* (1600). In a sense it is a simplification to attribute the 'invention' of opera solely to the Camerata as opera arose out of a synthesis of many ideas current at the end of the sixteenth century, but it was the Camerata which provided

the essential catalyst for the development of the new genre it would never have come about without the heady intellectual debates of the Camerata and its collective originality and experimentation: ironically, it was a group fundamentally Renaissance in spirit which gave rise to the most characteristic art form of the Baroque. (Warrack, J and West, E 1992:112)

Many, however, regard the first 'real' opera as being Monteverdi's (1567-1643) *Orfeo* (1607), first performed in Mantua and, indeed, the opening words of the opera are declaimed by the figure of La Musica, the embodiment of the art of music. Here one can perhaps see the symbolic

origin of the fundamental operatic tension between words and music. The figure of Orpheus is highly significant in the history of opera; in Conrad's (1987:19) formulation: "Orpheus is opera's founder, and he presides over it throughout its history."

2.2. Early sources.

Orpheus, as a musician (together with Apollo, another frequent figure in early opera) and as a figure from Greek mythology, is the quintessential operatic character. It is from classical sources that opera mainly drew during the initial period of its development. Early theorists insisted that only deities of one form or another (or perhaps shepherds) could realistically be expected to sing rather than speak. In the 1640s the first historical figures begin to appear on stage together with a comic element, derived primarily from the comedies of Plautus and Terence. After a slow start, Italian opera developed most spectacularly in Venice, the Venetian composers and poets drawing for their sources on "the romantic epic, Greek, Roman, Middle Eastern, medieval, and ... recent history" (Sadie 1992:1206). Also of significance was the use of the poetic romance and the prose novel, and opera became even more eclectic in its use of source material.

French opera developed along somewhat different lines and the French taste for spoken drama is reflected in the frequent choice of the plays of Corneille and Racine for operatic adaptation, the most celebrated librettist of the seventeenth century being Philippe Quinault (1635-1688) who enjoyed a long and fruitful collaboration with Lully from 1673 to 1687. From its inception, French opera has always placed great importance on the verbal text and it is especially noticeable how French vocal composers have tailored their music to suit the particular inflections of the French language. Perhaps the most famous of all the early librettists, however, was the Italian Pietro Metastasio (1698-1782) who wrote some 27 large-scale librettos and who bridges the transition from the Baroque to the Enlightenment. His librettos were used by many different composers and continued to be set to music well into the nineteenth century.

One of the most important reforms in opera was initiated by Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) who, significantly, returned to opera's primal myth in his most famous opera, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762). (Conrad (1987:22) sees the male protagonist in this work as "the romantic artist, striving to replace an absent god with his own ordaining imagination.") Even after a century and a half of development, myth still occupied a central place in opera. During the eighteenth century it is still the play that is the most fruitful source for librettists, with the Italian dramatist and librettist Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793), being a central figure and Da Ponte's adaptation of Beaumarchais' *Le mariage de Figaro* (1784) for Mozart being paradigmatic for subsequent librettists. It is during the eighteenth century that the novel begins to play a more prominent role in opera. Richardson's *Pamela* (1740-41), dramatised (and versified) by Goldoni (1760), initiated a sentimental element into opera which found many imitations.

2.3. The Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century the novel began to assume greater importance as an operatic source. The nineteenth century saw the rise of Romanticism as a pan-European phenomenon and in the first half of the century opera drew heavily on Romantic sources. The Romantic 'discovery' of Shakespeare was crucial for literary development in general and drama and opera in particular. Second only to Shakespeare as a source for opera were the novels of Scott (1771-1832) and the plays of Schiller (1759-1805) which enjoyed enormous European popularity, and many of which became the sources for opera librettos. Schmidgall (1977:114) sums up the importance of Schiller for librettists as lying in his "passionate and salient heroes and heroines - characters of extraordinary self-consciousness and eloquence." Lukács (1962:34-35) maintains that Scott's "greatness lies in his capacity to give living human embodiment to historical-social types. The typically human terms in which great historical trends become tangible had never before been portrayed so superbly, straightforwardly and pregnantly."

One can see in the Romantic distaste for and withdrawal from the material world and the search in nature for spiritual transcendence an important impetus for the rapid development of opera. Conrad (1989:14) rather flippantly but accurately characterises the music in romantic opera as having "retired inside the head, and [become] the character's overheard monologue." Adorno (1994:29) sees the rise of opera as occurring simultaneously with the rise of the bourgeoisie and he considers opera "the specifically bourgeois genre which, in the midst and with the means of a world bereft of magic, paradoxically endeavors to preserve the magical element of art." Adorno also draws an analogy between the novel and opera and argues that the "bourgeois yearning for freedom" of the nineteenth century, escaped into "the representative spectacle of opera, just as it had escaped to the great novel, whose complexion opera so frequently recalls" (36). Of course, the nineteenth century was the age of the great realistic novel with its large, sprawling canvas, and much of the grand opera of the period can be seen as a reflection of this trend in fiction. The emergence of naturalism in fiction, particularly evident in the work of Emile Zola (1840-1902), finds a parallel in the popularity of *verismo* opera towards the end of the century.

The rise of opera during the nineteenth century can also be seen in terms of the growth in size and power of the orchestra, and it is these new reserves of power which enable composers to turn to the wide range and large scale of the subjects that now become typical of the libretto, and also make it possible for them to probe psychological depths:

What memorable music does to an important situation or subject, especially in 19th-century opera, is to sweep one's mind up in a flood, an eddying vortex of emotion raised by and around the words; only when the flood has receded is one able to reflect upon its cause and consider the subject further.... It is what Burke

called 'the sublime' ... and one's reaction to great poetry or painting, even architecture, is not dissimilar; when we all come together in an opera house, we realize how akin it is to religious experience, and begin to understand how and why 19th-century art, and opera in particular, aspired in their greatest manifestations to invade that part of the psyche which in previous ages had found refuge and release in sacred ritual and religious ecstasy. For that reason it is, if not impossible, largely irrelevant to treat the history of the libretto, in its essential experience, as a type of purely literary, formal or intellectual development. (Sadie 1992:1221)

Perhaps the quintessential combination of Scott, Romanticism and *bel canto* is Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), a work which embodies all the strengths and excesses of operatic practice during the first half of the nineteenth century. Significantly, Flaubert incorporates a scene from the opera at a turning point in his novel, *Madame Bovary* (1857), and it is this performance which symbolises for the heroine an escape from the restrictions of bourgeois life into the romantic operatic world of strong and unrestricted emotion of which Adorno speaks. One finds an increasing number of examples of the depiction of opera in the nineteenth-century novel. The novel, Lindenberger (1984:145) observes, "uses opera as a means of advertising its inadequacies in the face of passion."

It was against what he perceived as the constricting convention of Italian Romantic opera that Verdi reacted in *Macbeth* (1848), and, indeed, the second half of the century is dominated by the towering figures of Verdi and Wagner. A crucial challenge in nineteenth-century opera was posed to the 'number' opera - recitative and aria such as the early work of Verdi - by the innovations of Wagner. Wagner's 'seamless' opera, where both recitative and aria forward the action - developed out of the German *Sturm und Drang* literary movement of the early part of the century, and the essence of this movement is musically reflected in the development of the *singspiel* in opera where the "subject-matter turns on mysterious and magical folk-legends, fantastic tales, or a most un-latinated love of wild Nature and her pagan, unseen agencies" (Sadie 1992:1217). Wagner's early work shows traces of this influence, but it is in his opera, *Der fliegende Holländer* (1841), where one can first discern the beginnings of the mature style. Wagner was virtually unique among great operatic composers in constructing his own librettos, often many years prior to the musical setting, and both his theories and practice reveal the great importance he placed on the libretto. In a sense he revolutionised the whole concept of the libretto which had until then been regarded as a discrete entity upon which music was somehow to be superimposed. Wagner's ideas are embodied in his formulation: *Wort-Ton-Drama*, in which words and music were to be the "simultaneous expression of the same underlying dramatic idea" (Sadie 1992:1218). It is his integration of recitative and aria which is of crucial importance in the subsequent construction of opera: "audiences could now accept an opera without arias, provided that the music allowed the drama to operate in its own timescale" (1218). The importance for later composers lies in the fact that the

Wagnerian technique allows a libretto to be very much longer in relation to the music than earlier librettos (except the very first), and to accommodate explanatory material and fuller discussion of the issues on which the drama turns; the portrayal of character no longer needs to be analytical, arranging the character into a particular psychological pose for the extended moment of the aria devoted to a single emotion, but can become Shakespearean, showing us the whole character all of the time. This allowed for the development of the *Literaturoper*, in which the literary interest is supposed to be as great as the musical. (Sadie 1992:1218)

However, important as Wagner's theory and practice was, the 'number' opera has survived, and indeed prospered, to the present day. Verdi refined and perfected a musical style based on discrete musical units but displaying a flexibility and fluidity which enabled the drama to move swiftly while still allowing room for lyrical expansiveness. His work typifies Italian opera's enduring reliance on melody and this is perhaps best exemplified in his final two works; *Otello* and *Falstaff*, both, of course, with Shakespeare as their source. The 'number' opera has the flexibility to allow the operation of two time scales in which what can be called 'naturalistic' time allows the swift unfolding of event and plot while 'psychological' time allows the investigation of a state of mind or emotion utilising the expansiveness of aria and ensemble. Wagner's influence was pervasive, however, often as much in the reaction against his theories as in any attempt to pursue paths that he had mapped.

2.4. The Twentieth Century

The use of the novel as a source for opera librettos increased dramatically during the nineteenth century with three of the most enduring and popular operas in the current operatic repertoire illustrating this trend: Verdi's *La Traviata* (1852, from Dumas), Bizet's *Carmen* (1875, from Merimée) and Puccini's *La Bohème* (1896, from Murger). This trend has increased during the twentieth century. However, two seminal operas of the first part of the century, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902) and Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925), are both based on plays rather than novels. (They are perhaps the finest examples of what is known as *literaturoper*: a literary work set almost verbatim to music.) As in most other genres, modernism brought about a crisis in opera, and Berg's operas seemed to signal the end of the art form rather than a beginning. The trend in music towards serialism and atonalism presented apparently insurmountable problems to operatic composers. This view can be seen in Strauss's *Capriccio* (1942) which looks back rather than forward and is a meditation on the viability of opera: Conrad (1977:135) describes it as

an opera about the possibility of opera [which] remains skeptical about art. Like the late novels of Henry James, it renders all emotions aesthetic - matter is finally eliminated by form, and all experiences, eating, talking, making love, become subject to the rarefied discipline of art. The characters are words and notes, not people.

Much modern drama tends, as Schmidgall (1977:362) maintains, towards "themes of attrition, stalemate, waiting, retreat, and stasis", and drama, from being the primary source of the

opera libretto, has receded in importance. According to Schmidgall, modern drama "provides no breathing-room for opera; it creates an atmosphere too heavy with metaphysical implications, too elliptical and oblique to produce flesh-and-blood characters - characters who might conceivably sing" (363-4). Conrad (1989:26-27) argues in a similar fashion that twentieth-century opera "often finds itself unable to justify the singing which is the occupation and existence of its characters.... The words of modern opera are increasingly alienated from the music. The society the works describe has vulgarized music as Muzak."

2.5. The novel.

However, almost in reaction against the pessimism which seemed to go hand in hand with modernist trends in opera, a remarkable revival is noticeable in opera since the Second World War. It seems to be as a result of developments in modern drama and fiction that postwar opera has turned to the novel (most frequently the nineteenth-century novel) to find its sources, the number and range of these adaptations perhaps revealing opera's fundamental affinity with the novel as well as a certain conservatism. In turning to the novel, contemporary composers seem to have found a more congenial source than drama. It is the richness of the psychological inner life in the novel allied with the multi-media resources of modern music theatre, including the wide range of expression of the contemporary orchestra, which encourages such frequent adaptation.

On the surface, the difficulties of adapting a novel into opera when compared with drama would seem insurmountable: drastic compression and simplification appear to be absolutely necessary both in regard to plot as well as character. It will be argued, however, that these apparent difficulties are what increasingly seems to attract composers and librettists to the novel, and this study will investigate the theories and methods involved in the process of adaptation from fiction into opera in the period since World War II. Conrad (1977:1) offers some general insights into the affinity between the novel and opera which highlight certain problematic areas as well as fruitful points of departure for this investigation. He argues that

music and drama are dubious, even antagonistic, partners and ... opera's actual literary analogue is the novel. Drama is limited to the exterior life of action.... The novel, in contrast, can explore the interior life of motive and desire and is naturally musical because mental. It traces the motions of thought, of which music is an image. Opera is more musical novel than musical drama.

Just how extensive postwar operatic adaptation from fictional sources has been can be seen from the following list of some of the novels in English that have served as sources for opera during the last fifty years:

The Pilgrim's Progress (Vaughan Williams, 1951), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Tranchell, 1951), *A Tale of Two Cities* (Benjamin, 1953), *The Wings of the Dove* (Moore, 1961), *Our Man in Havana* (Williamson, 1963), *Victory* (Rodney Bennett, 1970), *Of Mice and Men* (Floyd, 1971), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Kox, 1974), *Weir of Hermiston*

(*Hermiston*, Orr, 1975), *Tom Jones* (Oliver, 1976), *Washington Square* (Pasatieri, 1976), *Henderson the Rain King* (Lily, Kirchner, 1977), *All the King's Men* (Willy Stark, Floyd, 1981), *The Confidence Man*, (Rochberg, 1982), *Clarissa* (Holloway, 1990), *MacTeague* (Bolcom, 1993),

3. Operatic and fictional discourse.

There are certain fundamental questions concerning both the nature of fictional narrative and operatic narrative which will naturally arise in the course of this study of the translation of fiction into opera, but certain preliminary comments about fictional and operatic discourse are necessary.

The conceptual framework for this study has been drawn from the American musicologist, Edward T Cone's seminal work, *The Composer's Voice*, (1974) and Carolyn Abbate's frequently oppositional viewpoint in her equally influential 1991 study, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*. While using Cone's work in particular as a basis for discussion, I differ from his analysis in certain important areas which will become apparent. It is Cone's brief and tangential discussion of the narratorial function of the orchestra in opera which becomes more important in my study. Unlike Cone's main theoretic thrust, part of my focus falls on an examination of the function and fate of the fictional narrator during the process of the transformation of fictional narrative into operatic narrative. A central aspect of this thesis can be formulated in the proposition that opera, a unique, and often uneasy, fusion of the narrative and the dramatic, is fundamentally closer to fictional narrative than to drama and that it is diegetic rather than mimetic.

Schmidgall (1977:3) argues that "the subject of literature as opera is largely one of compromise between the excellences of the written or acted word and the unique and separate splendor of musical expression" because "when masterly literature is taken up for operatic treatment, literary values do not necessarily loom importantly in the process." The reasons for a composer and librettist being attracted to a literary source will form an important part of this study: factors that immediately spring to mind are, as Lindenberger (1984:41) observes, "those moments within the narrative that consort well with operatic convention." One can refine this formulation still further to suggest that it is the *nature* of fictional narrative itself which makes it so amenable to operatic adaptation. This study will investigate how far the structure of the fictional work influences the final form of the operatic adaptation, and whether certain intrinsic operatic structures as well as theatrical or performance conventions and imperatives are decisive in determining the main thrust and final form of the adaptation. It will be seen that the operatic adaptation of a literary work can differ radically in structural terms from the original yet still retain much of its essential qualities and vision. The adaptation can, though infrequently, amplify and extend the range and scope of the original. Lindenberger (1984:41) compares the adaptation

of literary works into film and into opera and remarks that "in both instances critics and audiences are more likely to dwell upon losses than on gains and to ground their opinion in traditional literary values without fully considering the difference in media they are examining." This investigation, of course, raises the vexed question of fidelity to the original work and touches on the whole notion of intertextuality.

From its beginnings, the operatic art form has comprised certain fundamental elements. Schmidgall (1977:11) distinguishes three main ones as situation, emotion, and character. The term 'operatic' has connotations of intensity, excess, and conflict, and a librettist will usually choose fictional texts containing situations where these elements are relatively clear-cut (hence the close relationship between opera and melodrama). Lindenberger (1984:53) remarks that "composers on the lookout for suitable operatic subjects have characteristically sought texts ... that have affected them intensely - with the hope that in the process of composition they could achieve even more intense effects." The physical act of singing tends to express emotion at higher than normal levels; the great histrionic range of the human voice facilitates the expression of a wide range of emotion.

Central to any effective opera is character, although there are modern trends which seem to contradict this. Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*, an early postmodernist opera, does not explore character in any conventional sense. It must immediately be noted that operatic characters differ importantly from those in fiction or drama. Operatic characters are essentially larger-than-life. They generally tend, as Schmidgall (1983:69) terms it, to "test, force, sometimes violate ... the standards of normal and customary behaviour. They show us the unimagined possibilities for good and evil" (again the connection with the manichean nature of melodrama is evident here). It is self-evident that operatic characters are drawn with bold strokes and generally lack the subtlety and complexity of those in fiction and, sometimes, in drama. They are, as Lindenberger (1984:43) observes, "obsessed by a single emotion", and he compares them to the humour characters of Renaissance comedy or "those tragic heroes and heroines we sometimes dub 'slaves of passion'." Cone (1974:43) maintains that a good librettist will "flatten out" characters when adapting a novel or a play, because the librettist knows that the composer "must embrace them all in a single inclusive musical style within which he can endow them with a new vocal identity." It will be argued that this "flattening out" does not necessarily mean a diminishing of the dramatic force of these characters, but defines them in terms of one dominant feature.

It is apparent that adaptation from literary sources into opera generally implies some kind of compromise. What then is the nature of this compromise? Lindenberger (1984:31) maintains that "opera establishes its own territory regardless of, often transgressing upon, those literary texts it claims to re-present." The most immediately apparent problem that composers and librettists face is that of duration. Even a play of normal length requires severe pruning for an operatic libretto. Britten's adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which

exactly halves the number of lines in the play but has a comparable running time, exemplifies Schmidgall's (1977:9) observation that "[c]omposers and librettists are almost always forced to reduce a large fresco into a miniature form while somehow - through the amplifying power of music - maintaining the original's expressive magnitude." This raises the fundamental question concerning the nature of musical narrative and its manipulation of time:

A nonmusical drama, whatever its period style, attempts the illusion that the pacing of its dialogue and events corresponds at least roughly with the rate at which things happen in real life. Opera ... generally creates a slowing down of narrative time.... Whenever a play is turned into an opera libretto, only a portion, sometimes even less than half, can be accommodated within the libretto (the slow pace of opera becomes even more strikingly evident when we look at librettos based on whole novels).... Operatic narratives are less important for the precise plot details they give the spectator than for the opportunity they provide to express the essence of a narrative situation in musical terms. (Lindenberger 1984:40)

Twentieth-century opera reveals an increasing emphasis on fidelity to the original text. This study will focus on five postwar operas based on literary works: Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*; Melville's *Billy Budd*; Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*; White's *Voss*; and James's *The Aspern Papers*. The sources of Britten's operas include George Crabbe's poem *The Borough*, plays by Shakespeare and André Obey, stories by Guy de Maupassant, Henry James, Herman Melville, and Thomas Mann. This list may serve to suggest the relative rarity of original librettos in postwar opera and the frequent use of existing literary sources. Of his major theatrical works, only *Gloriana* has an original libretto by William Plomer. Many of the more successful recent operatic adaptations have come from fictional sources rather than dramatic ones, indicating the difficulties composers and librettists have with drama, a 'problem' which Mordden (1978:296) formulates as "finding the musico-dramatic transmission for an organism already profiled for drama."

This gravitation towards fiction rather than drama in modern opera can be linked to the central debate in this study concerning the very nature of opera: whether its affinity is with drama or the novel. It is generally accepted that opera's bias is towards the exaggerated, the two-dimensional, as opposed to the multi-dimensionality of fictional characters, and this bias would appear to preclude operatic adaptation. Schmidgall (1983:69) observes that "opera's metier is not the reality principle but the unreality principle.... Only in novels where certain crucial characters are un-novelistic can composers and librettists achieve some footing". Auden (1964:356) similarly maintains that "opera ... cannot present character in the novelist's sense of the word, namely, people who are potentially good *and* bad, active *and* passive, for music is immediate actuality and neither potentiality nor passivity can live in its presence."

Several critics, however, take the opposite view. Opera is not necessarily or primarily concerned with plot development and certainly cannot compete with spoken drama for action and pace. Its strengths lie in its presentation of intense emotional and psychological situations. Conrad

(1977:122), discussing the Austrian dramatist and librettist Hoffmannsthal, maintains that Hoffmannsthal saw opera as a

musical novel rather than musical drama, dealing in psychological changes and shifts of consciousness, not endeavour and achievement, and that it is the novel's (and by implication, opera's) task to represent the subjective operation of process rather than the objective theatrical business of product and reaction.

The eclectic nature of opera, according to Lindenberger (1984:75), "has proved shameless in expropriating forms of discourse from virtually all other arts to articulate its meanings." Lindenberger sees opera as a dialogue between composer/librettist and the literary text. The audience is invited to participate in the process of generic translation during which it will experience the

older work with that intensity of response that we associate with operatic representation. Moreover, the deviations that the audience notes from the original text serve to assert at once the autonomy of the individual composer in his role as textual interpreter and the autonomy of opera as a medium different in kind from those nonmusical genres with which it happens to share common narrative themes.

Tambling (1987:23) remarks on the process of recontextualisation that takes place in operatic adaptation from an older source. He maintains that the history of a text constantly exhibits the process of the establishment of new relationships, "as it meets other texts, it changes as it is placed in these new positions."

Bakhtin's (1973:4-8) concept of fictional *polyphony*, in which voices of different types and origins collide within a novel, retaining nevertheless their individual characters, may be found useful in the analysis of opera. Modern opera is certainly dialogic in the sense in that it is characterised by the presence of discourses which have their origin in other performative genres - film, television, drama, ballet etc. Both the Bakhtinian "polyphonic" novel and opera share, in Lindenberger's (1984:95) words, a

propensity towards extravagant utterance that sets both off from the various literary and musical genres among which we are to classify them. Indeed, both are so marked by an appetite to absorb and even swallow up other genres that it has often proved difficult to classify them at all. It is no accident that we designate both forms with terms suggesting extremes.

The Bakhtinian novel "allows its multitudinous voices to blend with or assault one another and often to assert their irreconcilability"; yet Lindenberger argues, behind even the most extreme of multivoiced passages in opera "lies a rigidly organized structure capable of exact repetition through the timing, the dynamics, and the other musical cues that the controlling hand of the composer has authorized" (95). Between opera and Bakhtin's polyphonic novel lies the difference between a

[c]eremonial, ritualized form and an open-ended one constantly about to disrupt and subvert whatever ceremonies and rituals it has set up. It is also the difference between, on the one hand, a performative mode that seeks to overwhelm its audience with a show of power and, on the other, a freewheeling mode that encourages its readers into active participation in its carnivalesque exuberance. (95)

The function of language needs to be examined in this comparison between the novel and opera. Central to the whole discussion of the nature of operatic discourse is the question of whether music itself can be regarded as a 'language' - whether it has inherent and independent meaning. Cone (1974:164) maintains that if "music is a language at all, it is a language of gesture", and the vocal line "emphasizes, even exaggerates, the gestural potentialities of its words." Music can symbolize both physical and verbal gesture, yet musical gestures "lack signification, but they can be significant." If there is 'meaning' in music at all, it can only be found in the context in which it occurs; without that context music is 'meaningless', and there is only the potential for meaning. As Scher (1982:230) argues: "the individual word can (and usually does) carry semantic connotations, whereas the individual tone cannot." In opera then, the context is provided both by the words that are sung, the physical gestures of the characters, and the setting. Although Cone's (1974:166) argument tends to focus primarily on the words, the totality of the representation must be considered. Cone insists that music appropriates certain aspects of the text, and "through this borrowed meaning it realizes some part of its expressive potential." The content of accompanied song "emerges from the mutual relations of words and musical gestures, and from the light they throw upon one another.... Words, then, do not limit the potential of music; rather, by specification and exemplification, they may render it more easily comprehensible" (167). Much the same could, however, be said about the staging of opera where the physical aspects of operatic representation play an important role in giving the music 'meaning' (Rossini's famous storm scenes are only recognizable as such after their physical representation on stage).

In relation to the concept of music as language, a further consideration of operatic discourse concerns the question of whether the music in opera can express ideas. Robinson (1985:265-6) argues that through music, opera is able to "address the great subjects of psychological life - desire and fulfilment, anxiety and relief, despair and ecstasy - with unparalleled immediacy." He maintains, however, that opera is able to deal with certain kinds of ideas better than others, concluding that while the "discursive particulars of intellectual life are beyond its reach", it is able to "evoke the structural core of certain ideas - to convey their deepest and most abstract logic." He notes that certain essential elements in musical expression: "rhythm, melody, harmony, volume, timbre - combine to fashion sonic structures that ... mirror the conceptual structures implicit in ideas." He further postulates links between opera and ideas at two "extreme poles of mental life: in the concrete realm of emotion or in the disembodied realm of advanced abstraction", or ideas that are "subverbal on the one hand and supravverbal on the

other." Opera, he maintains, is poorly equipped to deal with what he terms the "discursive or representational ideas condemned to a purely verbal existence, without hope of taking wing in song." This theory has important implications for the adaptation of literature into opera as it would appear to circumscribe the choice of material available to composer and librettist. It also opens up areas of discussion about the nature of a libretto based on a literary source. The success of the adaptation is dependent not only on the libretto, but the final meaning can only become clear when the fusion of words and music is examined in its entirety. As Robinson (1985:328) says: "the meaning of opera is at bottom musical."

An aspect of operatic discourse which has occasioned much recent debate is whether operatic characters actually 'hear' their music and this has obvious importance in understanding the 'meaning' of operatic representation and the interpretation of a particular work. Abbate (1991:119) remarks that operatic characters "often suffer from deafness; they do not *hear* the music that is the ambient fluid of their music-drowned world." She recognizes a duality in opera in which its "fantastic" aspect is the fact that "the scenes we witness pass to music", and its most conventional aspect is the fact that opera "stages recognizably human situations, and these possess an inherent 'realism' that demands a special and complex understanding of the music we hear" (119). The general assumption is that the music is not "produced by or within the stage-world, but emanates from other loci as secret commentaries for our ears alone, and that characters are generally unaware that they are singing." Abbate also makes the important distinction between two fundamental kinds of music in opera: 'noumenal' and 'phenomenal'. She describes noumenal music as the "ambient fluid" which surrounds operatic characters. (Cone considers that music is a subconscious element in a character's mind and that characters are fully aware of the music that surrounds them.) One can argue that Abbate's 'noumenal' music is essentially the kind of music that 'accompanies' (in both the literal and musical sense) operatic characters and therefore that the musical narrator (it will be postulated that this function is performed by the orchestra) consists primarily of this kind of music. Abbate further argues that characters are only aware of 'phenomenal' music, which consists of moments when "opera flaunts itself, representing within itself those who watch it and hear it, who write it, and who perform it, even as it blurs the distinction between these three functions" (119). She defines this distinction in terms of an "oscillation" between the performative and the narrative modes as a

shift between performing narration on one hand and enacting dramatic events on the other, defining a move across a discursive space. Phenomenal narrative song in opera is a (heard) musical performance set against the unheard operatic music that functions (in part) as accompaniment to action, to the unwinding of a simpler form of time.... Any operatic narrative ... creates such a node, a layering of time, in which real elapsed time, the time it takes a performer to perform, is laid over the time represented by the narrative (123).

The most obvious examples of 'phenomenal' music are found in the many literal songs, that is, songs which stand out as songs and which occur with significant frequency in opera - songs which

are conspicuously sung as such in the course of the opera as distinct from the rest of the character's utterance as part of the essentially vocal discourse of opera. During the course of this study it will become apparent that literal song in opera is a vital element in operatic narrative and an essential part of operatic discourse.

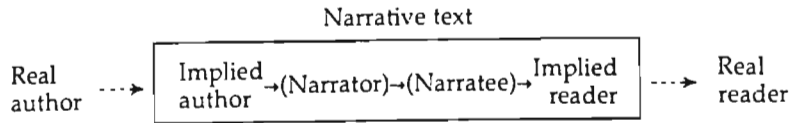
The intrusion of songs into opera discourse emphasises the artifice of the art form and the term 'operatic' itself usually implies some form of exaggeration. As Lindenberger (1984:70) notes, the term implies "an opening outwards, a kind of escape from the boundaries of ordinary literary discourse." Opera has always been the enemy of realism; and it is its consciousness of itself as art which is frequently celebrated, either deliberately or unintentionally, by the art form. Levin (1994:13), in fact, compares opera with professional wrestling. Noting that Barthes saw in wrestling a "celebration of the spectacle of excess" which Barthes maintains has "a grandiloquence that must have been that of ancient theatres", Levin insists that "like wrestling, opera packs a peculiarly hyperbolized and highly stylized punch: it is the artifice that hits you." Adorno (1994:37), in connection with opera's artifice, raises the fundamental question concerning "the contradiction between real, live people who speak in drama, and the medium of singing, which they make use of in the process." Levin refers to Brecht's (Levin 1994:248) excellent formulation of this problem: "The irrationality of opera lies in the fact that rational elements are employed, solid reality is aimed at, but at the same time it is all washed out by the music. A dying man is real. If at the same time he sings we are translated to the sphere of the irrational."

Adorno (1994:37) further touches on this enhancing quality of opera in his discussion of Lukács's view of the novel. Adorno remarks that the central 'problem' posed by the novel is how "in the midst of a disenchanted world" life can "become essential" and he perceives the answer to this question, in operatic terms, as lying in the very act of singing itself: "The singer's voice seeks to catch something of the reflection of meaning for life itself. Indeed, therein lies the specifically ideological element of opera, the affirmative element". Opera, Adorno insists, has to do with "empirical people" who are people "reduced to their natural essence" but who through song are "exalted and transfigured." He observes that

singing, the utopia of prosaic existence, is at the same time also the memory of the prelinguistic, undivided state of Creation.... Opera's song is the language of passion: not just the exaggerating stylization of existence opera is in its element whenever it gives itself over breathlessly to passion. In this 'giving itself over to nature' lies its elective affinity with both myth and the modern successor to the epic, the novel opera fulfils itself perhaps most completely where it ... employs artificial language; the coloratura is no mere form of outward exaggeration, but precisely in it the idea of opera emerges most purely as an extreme. (38-40)

4. Operatic and fictional narrative.

The study of the process of adapting from one narrative discourse to another raises certain important issues, and aspects of both fictional and operatic narrative need to be examined, especially the status of the narrator. Chatman (1978:151), in discussing narrative levels and voices in fiction, offers a diagrammatic explanation of the narrative process:



with the narrator and narratee considered optional. Rimmon-Kenan (1983:88) maintains that the implied author is a construct which can be seen as a "set of implicit norms rather than as a speaker or a voice." She insists that there is a narrator in any narrative situation in the sense that "any utterance or record of an utterance presupposes someone who has uttered it", and defines the narrator as "the agent which at the very least narrates or engages in some activity serving the needs of narration." In the performing arts such as drama, opera, and ballet, the narrator (unless a specific character in the drama, usually used as some kind of framing device) is generally non-existent; one witnesses the action directly (although the concept of 'pure' mimesis is debatable: whether art can ever mirror or describe the real world). In transforming a work of fiction into opera the concept of the narrator has somehow to be dealt with. Cone (1974:3) recognizes that "each art in its own way projects the illusion of the existence of a personal subject through whose consciousness that experience is made known to the rest of us." He suggests that "every composition is an utterance depending on an act of impersonation" (5).

Cone argues that the accompaniment (usually piano in the case of song, and orchestral in the case of opera) in opera can be seen as the equivalent of a narrator in fiction: "not one who is a participating character in his own story, but one who ... describes events in which he does not take part" (12). This view imposes a limitation on the function of the narrator, and while largely agreeing with Cone's general view of the narrative process, I will argue that the orchestral narrator does, in fact, take part in its 'own story', although its participation is obviously limited to the aural rather than the verbal or visual aspects of performance. Cone postulates the existence of what can be seen as the equivalent of Chatman's implied author whom he designates as the 'complete musical persona' which he regards as the "most direct representative of the composer's voice" (12). I understand this 'complete musical persona' as that totality which is apprehensible by the audience at a completed performance. Chatman (1978:148), however, points out that in fictional narrative the real author must not be confused with the implied author. The implied author is

reconstructed by the reader from the narrative. He is not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the

narrative.... Unlike the narrator, the implied author can *tell* us nothing. He, or better, *it* has no voice, no direct means of communicating. It instructs us silently, through the design of the whole, with all the voices, by all the means it has chosen to let us learn.

Cone, in discussing musical discourse, makes a similar point when he argues that the complete musical persona "is by no means identical with the composer; it is a projection of his musical intelligence, constituting the mind, so to speak, of the composition in question" (57). Essentially, then, the complete musical persona is responsible for the value system of the work in question. Cone further remarks that the musical persona is an "intelligence in the act of thinking through words and music alike" (58).

Cone distinguishes the 'vocal persona' from the musical persona: the vocal persona, he says, is "reduced in status to the embodiment of a character quoted by the complete persona" (12-13). This needs further explanation in that the vocal persona consists of both the visual aspect of character - the physical presence of the performer with all his/her attributes of personality, appearance etc. - and the aural which, in turn, is made up of all the sonic components of an operatic character, the particular quality and range of the voice of the singer as well as the vocal line that is sung which is obviously closely linked to the orchestra-narrator as well as being ultimately controlled through the orchestra-narrator by the complete musical persona. It is this complex view of operatic character which will be tested in the examination of individual operas.

Cone compares the novel and opera and comes to a conclusion which is important in terms of the theoretical underpinning of this study:

If all song is narrative, then an opera must be narrative as well - a novel and not a play. The complete musical persona is telling us about the characters, and their parts should be thought of as within quotation marks. On the stage the singer does not portray a dramatic character directly but represents a character in narrative. He is enacting the musical persona's conception of the character; that is, he is quoting rather than talking. (13).

The impingement of the accompaniment on the vocal line is seen by Cone as an impingement of the "outer world on the individual represented by the vocal persona, and the subconscious reaction of the individual to this impingement". He concludes that the vocal protagonist is not aware of the accompaniment, but rather that he is "subconscious" of it. His subconscious both "knows and hears" (36). Even when the accompaniment "appears to be dealing with external circumstances, it is usually revealing their effect on the protagonist" (36). Thus the accompaniment directly influences the vocal line, and it appears that the protagonist is "'composing' his part in response to the circumstances thus symbolized, just as his words are a response to an implicit or explicit dramatic situation" (36). Cone argues that it must appear to be the character and not the singer who appears to "compose" his part. In doing this he produces a

"subconscious musical response to a specific dramatic situation." Cone further expands on this dichotomy:

a singer, like an actor, is both a dramatic character and a real person. As a character, he must move in accordance with the prescriptions of the musico-dramatic situation - that is, he must be faithful to the text. But as a person, he must produce his own interpretation of that text. The tension between these two aspects of the singer's role ... parallels [that] between his tendencies toward freedom as a "person" and the restrictions upon him as an artistic motif. (61-2)

This is directly related to Abbate's concept of the 'presence of the performer' which foregrounds those moments in opera when opera as 'performance' is in conflict with opera as 'drama' - the 'phenomenal' as opposed to the 'noumenal'. These are moments of disjunction when the self-reflexivity of the art form is apparent, when attention is drawn to the artifice behind the performance, moments which occur in some form in all the operas to be examined in this study. (I shall argue in Chapter Five that these moments of self-reflexivity are part of opera from its origins and are essential to the genre.)

Cone (1989:136) later seems to contradict his view of operatic character in an important essay where he proposes that operatic characters are the 'composers' of their own song. The implication in this essay is that the orchestral accompaniment is 'thought' into existence by the operatic character themselves, either consciously or unconsciously. His conclusion is that "while the singers hear the orchestra in the pit, what the characters they enact hear is not that orchestra but the music it plays, which reproduces the music of the imaginary orchestra that they, as composers, perpetually carry around with them" (136-137).

I would argue that neither the singers nor the characters they portray have the kind of autonomy Cone seems to grant them. My thesis rests on the belief that the synthesis of all the elements on the stage (visual, musical, verbal) is the product of the operatic equivalent of the implied author - the complete musical persona - and that the orchestra has a specific function comparable to that of the narrator in fiction (with a similar range of narrative modes available to both). Therefore, just as the characters in fiction are the direct result of a narrative act performed by a narrator (of whatever kind), so too are the operatic characters the result of an act of narration by the orchestra-narrator - they only exist through this narrative act and therefore any autonomy they seem to possess is illusory. Rather than characters 'thinking' their accompaniment into existence (as Cone insists), characters are 'thought' into existence by the orchestra-narrator. Fictional characters exist only in text and operatic characters exist only in the operatic equivalent - music.

Emphasising a similar point in regard to fictional narrative, Rimmon-Kenan (1983:108) remarks that: "no text of narrative fiction can show or imitate the action it conveys, since all such texts are made of language, and all language signifies without imitating. Language can only

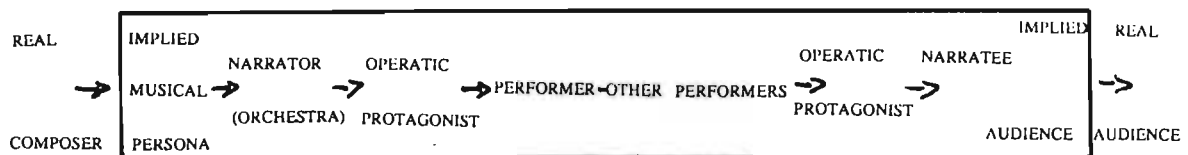
imitate language, which is why the representation of speech comes closest to pure mimesis." She goes on to draw an analogy between the stage and 'reality': "on stage there are characters (actors) who act, make gestures and speak, in a way analogous to people's behaviour in reality. In narrative, on the other hand, all actions and gestures are rendered in words" (107). The fact that characters in opera are 'controlled' by the orchestra-narrator, and exist essentially only in this orchestra-narrator's narrative, suggests that a similar process is in operation in opera as in fiction. The fact that fictional characters 'exist' only in words is paralleled in opera where operatic characters 'exist' only in music - it is the music which constructs the 'reality' as a text. It can be argued that there is no such thing as operatic mimesis in the same way that there is no pure fictional mimesis. From this point of view then, opera's affinity appears to tend more towards the novel than drama.

Operatic characters constitute a vocal line (or lines) which is part of a greater musical whole, creating a synthesis of verbal and non-verbal sound, controlled (or not, in Bakhtinian terms) by the complete musical persona. During moments of greatest intensity the bias of this synthesis moves towards the non-verbal element. In fictional narrative, Rimmon-Kenan asserts, there is a

narrator who 'quotes' the characters' speech, thus reducing the directness of 'showing'. All that a narrative can do is create an illusion, an effect, a semblance of mimesis, but it does so through diegesis. The crucial distinction, therefore, is not between telling and showing, but between different degrees and kinds of telling. (1983:107)

She lists seven degrees of speech representation on a progressive scale ranging from the 'purely' diegetic to the 'purely' mimetic: *diegetic summary; summary, less 'purely' diegetic; indirect content paraphrase (or indirect discourse); indirect discourse, mimetic to some degree; free indirect discourse; direct discourse; free direct discourse* (109-110). Operatic discourse might also be seen as ranging in narrative levels from 'purely' diegetic to 'purely' mimetic. Rimmon-Kenan's lowest level of speech representation is diegetic summary which has its operatic equivalent in musical diegesis where the orchestra-narrator 'describes' a particular situation: preludes, interludes and postludes, or other purely orchestral moments in opera. Her next three levels could be compared to the operatic use of devices such as leitmotif where particular themes or musical figures associated with characters are 'quoted' by the orchestra. On her fifth level is free indirect discourse, which is the equivalent level of most operatic discourse where the 'voice' of the orchestra and that of the character are intertwined. Her sixth level, direct discourse, could be seen to have its equivalent in those moments when the orchestra recedes into the background, only occasionally supplying limited 'commentary' with the singing voice of the character much more prominent. Her highest level, free direct discourse, finds its equivalent in opera when the orchestra disappears altogether and the voice of the singer is completely unaccompanied. It will be seen in this study that complete orchestral silence frequently (and seemingly paradoxically) produces moments of the highest intensity.

Opera's narrative mode is diegetic rather than mimetic. The singer, as I have indicated, is not 'free' as a character and does not 'speak' directly to the audience but is, in fact, part of the narrative process. However, unlike in the novel, the narrator in opera (embodied in the accompaniment) is non-verbal, relying on musical gestures rather than words. The operatic narrator therefore lacks the explicitness of the narrator in the novel; the operatic character however, uses a combination of both words and music. This raises the question of the status of the actual performer as opposed to the created character. The performance aspect of opera is crucial - many would maintain that it is preeminent and that the creation of a believable character on stage is incidental when compared with the importance and quality of the vocal performance. The performer, in fact, may, in the interests of the opera, step out of character. One could construct a communication model as follows:



There are, of course, different levels of intensity in the vocal utterances of operatic characters. The lowest level is 'normal speech' (although it will be seen that the interruption of the musical discourse by speech can create moments of increased intensity), rising in intensity through 'heightened inflection/declamation', 'musical declamation' (*sprechgesang* or *sprechstimme*), 'unaccompanied recitative', 'accompanied recitative', 'arioso', 'aria', and, finally, 'coloratura' and 'high' notes (Schmidgall 1977:11). There is a rising intensity in expression, from the most 'realistic' form which is speech to the most 'unrealistic' which is 'pure' sound where verbal signification disappears and all that is left is the 'voice-object'. Abbate (1991:11) condenses these stages into three main vocal levels. The first she describes as a "rational, text-orientated" one in which the singing voice "retreats before literary elements (words, poetry, character, plot). Recitative is ... the best representative of this mode." The second she describes as at the level of the "voice-object", while the third "consists of moments at which either of the first two are breached by the consciousness of the real performer, of witnessing a performance."

The voice of the singer must also be approached from two perspectives. There is the distinction between the signification of the words uttered, and what Barthes (1977:179-89) has described as the 'grain' of the voice and which Tambling (1987:51) explains as encompassing the "materiality of the voice itself, the sense of the body in the voice as against its use as an instrument for communication purposes." This points back to the continual tension between words and music. One can see in this tension an analogy with what Poizat (1992:199) describes as the conflict between reason and emotion in the appreciation of opera where one feels a "radical antagonism between letting yourself be swept away by the emotion and applying yourself to the

meaning of each word as it is sung." Poizat describes as moments of *jouissance* those instances when "language disappears and is gradually superseded by the cry, an emotion which is expressible only by the irruption of something that signals the feeling of absolute loss, by the sob; finally a point is reached where the listener himself is stripped of all possibility of speech." In these moments music takes over and transcends the usual denotative function of words when language endeavours but fails to express what cannot be articulated.

The power of the sound of the voice itself, stripped of all signification, is an issue that is of increasing concern to recent commentators. Abbate (1991:4) discusses the operatic cadenza - a moment where sheer sound takes over from text - remarking that such moments are disturbing because the sonority of the voice "pointedly focuses our sense of the singing voice as one that can compel *without* benefit of words. Such moments enact in pure form familiar Western tropes on the suspicious power of music and its capacity to move us without rational speech." The verbal text can perhaps be seen as an impediment to the full expression of emotion, indicating, in a sense, the ultimate irreconcilability of words and music. Abbate (1991:10) goes on to talk of the "autonomization" of the human voice that occurs in all kinds of vocal music, remarking that

the sound of the singing voice becomes, as it were, a 'voice-object' and the sole center for the listener's attention. That attention is thus drawn away from words, plot, character, and even from music as it resides in the orchestra, or music as formal gestures, as abstract shape.... When opera allows itself to project this voice-object, it also runs into peril - for ... the 'presence of the performer' may well suddenly emerge to impede the listener's contemplation. We are aware at these junctures - painfully, if the high C is missed - that we witness a performance.

The voice of the singer, however, is but one aspect of the dual layer of expression in opera: the non-verbal musical accompaniment and the musico-verbal vocal persona. Abbate (1991:256) comments that it is generally assumed that "music - whatever form it takes - possesses absolute moral authority, that whatever falsehoods are spoken by a character, the music will speak across and thus expose the lies." But, as she notes, just as "human narrators may also be revealed as immoral by giving tongue to lies" or by being "unreliable, or dubious", her examination of Wagner's *Ring* reveals music that "may ring false." However, "within a world of textual genres that includes performed/heard as well as written/read texts, the former, no matter how fantastic their conceits, have the subversive force of compelling belief" (160-1).

It becomes apparent that the composer speaks with a double voice which "combines the explicit language of words with a medium that depends on the movements implied by non-verbal sounds and therefore might best be described as a continuum of symbolic gesture" (Abbate 1991:17). There therefore exists a synthesis of orchestral sound, vocal melody, and verbal signifiers. The implied composer "governs words as well as music", and the words have become "a part of the composer's message, utterance of his own voice. In a sense, he composes his own text" (Cone 1974:18). This has far-reaching significance for the adaptation of literary works as

the implication is present that even a 'hallowed' text is 'recomposed' in the adaptive process, and this whole question is bound up with the problem of fidelity to the original literary source. Thus the libretto can be seen as a provisional interpretation of the original source, and before it is set to music it has an independent life of its own, however limited and shortlived. This is the first stage in the adaptive process.

But, on the other hand, it can be argued that musical form exerts particular pressures and imposes its own structures on the process of adaptation. The variety of musical discourses available to the operatic composer allows him to impose form and dramatic coherence and give variety to the new work. When music is added further and far-reaching modifications of the original work and the libretto take place as well as inevitable character transformations. Cone argues that in opera the "music transforms the personalities projected by the original poetic text in two apparently contradictory ways: it simultaneously particularizes them and universalizes them" (21). Dynamic markings, vocal pitch and inflection, tempi, and rhythm are some of the ways a composer can individualize a character. Yet, as Cone insists, each character "participates in, and is largely formed by, an all-encompassing environment of non-verbal sound - an environment to which he in turn contributes through his own melodic line and vocal timbre. And because we as audience are bathed in the same sound, we can feel this environment as ours" (21).

Through the music the audience is part of this 'sonic environment' and is drawn into the world of the character: "the vocal character implicates in his own world every sympathetic member of the world of his audience, and every such character shares the character's experience" (Cone 21). The overall musical experience in opera is an equivalent to the omniscient narrator in the novel who is privy to the thoughts and emotions of each character and draws the reader into the world of these characters. The music offers the audience access to the mind of the character, and the evidence gained as a result of this access may support or even contradict his verbal utterance. The range of the narrative function of the orchestra is large: it is omniscient in that it is privy to the thoughts of all the characters it 'describes'. It can, however, deliberately limit its scope and therefore can function both as an authorial narrator or as a figural narrator (thus abandoning the possibility of omniscience), or somewhere on the continuum between these two poles. The possibility of omniscience is illustrated by the famous and frequently quoted example which occurs in Gluck's opera *Iphigénie en Tauride* where, in the words of Smith (1971:148):

The moment when Oreste sings "calm re-enters my heart" ... but the orchestra reveals that he is deluding himself has been seized upon ... by most historians of opera as the symbolic moment when music finally displaced the word as primary. From that time on, music would not necessarily serve to enhance and clarify the meaning of the word ... but it would act as commentary upon it.

Cone makes the point that the musical environment that is created is shared by all the characters: "it surrounds and permeates all equally; it unifies characters, agents, and auditors in a single

world of sound" (155). Frequently in opera the vocal line or the accompaniment of one character insinuates itself into that of another, and one character's 'music' can speak through another character. This is part of the unconscious effect that music has on us. Music occurs in what Cone calls the "perpetually flowing present" (156) as opposed to the verbal aspect of opera or drama: "When we listen to words we can think about them, around them, forward and back, even while we follow them. When we listen to music, whether with words or not, we must follow it as if it were our own thought. We are bound to it - to its tempo, to its progression, to its dynamics (156)."

One can regard the music as the subverbal element underlying the verbal, conscious element within the characters. It is music's unique power to express emotion to the extent that language cannot which prompts Robinson's (1985:264) view that music belongs to an "essentially subverbal realm" in which the emotions lie, "music works its appeal at the same level of experience." Cone describes the subconscious as "a realm of attitudes, feelings, impulses, and motivations, un verbalized either because they are essentially unverbalizable, or because they have not risen to the level of explicit articulation in the mind of the subject" (33)). Clément (1989:166), in an idiosyncratic observation on the nature of opera and the function of the verbal text, describes the music in opera as "the word's unconscious", and claims that

in a world where the unconscious takes up so little room, where so much is made of spoken words, as if they meant what they said, with no past and no roots, we have the opera, where the conscious part, the part played by words, is forgotten. No doubt it is because opera is the place for unformulated dreams and secret passions, a place Brecht saw as the link between pleasure and unreality. Consequently, the less one hears the words, the greater the pleasure. (21)

Music thus provides a commentary on the consciousness and access to the subconscious of operatic characters. It is here that the notion of figural narration is most strongly suggested. When the orchestra closely identifies with one of the characters on stage by, for example, doubling the vocal line or the repetition of thematic material, one can draw an analogy with figural narration which Stanzel (1971:23) describes as a process in which "the image of the narrator is not evoked in the mind of the reader the reader has the illusion of being present on the scene in one of the figures". Such moments occur in opera, and it is as if the orchestra 'disappears' and we experience events through the consciousness of the character - a consciousness which is essentially a synthesis of both musical and verbal elements.

At such points the orchestra-narrator can be seen as 'presenting' the vocal line which directly expresses the thoughts and emotions of the vocal protagonist. However, as Cone remarks, the accompaniment "may also refer to the environment of the character, or to his actions, gestures, and physical condition" (35). The orchestra-narrator is thus aware of character as a narrator in a novel must be. This enables it to "present either the character's point of view or its own, or a combination of the two" (35). This has important implications as regards operatic

form since the accompaniment makes the accompanied ensemble possible: the orchestra-narrator, "like an omniscient author, understands the motivations of all the participants", and therefore the 'voice' of the orchestra-narrator can be seen as exerting a final dominant control over all expression (35). Of course, the operatic ensemble, including the use of the chorus, is fundamental to opera itself and is the aspect of the art form which most distinguishes it from other performance modes and suggests an affinity with the novel rather than with drama. In the ensemble, conflicting emotions can be expressed simultaneously and this obviously opens up possibilities not available in other genres. This naturally has important implications for the study of discursive translation with which this study is directly concerned.

Abbate's (1991:11) views of musical narrative have had a profound effect on recent opera analysis, and while her examinations are concerned mainly with musicological matters, certain aspects of her theories have a direct bearing on this study. In a sense, her analyses deconstruct much of what Cone expresses in his book. She describes Cone's view of voice as essentially monologic and monophonic in Bakhtinian terms, and argues that through the presence of the performer or performers there is a resistance to this overall authority: "As a consequence of the inherently live and performed existence of music, its own voices are stubborn, insisting upon their privilege." Abbate warns that any theoretical discussion must take cognisance of the fact that "music (like theatre) is live: it exists in present time, as physical and sensual force, something beating upon us. The text of music is a performance. Thus music is fundamentally different from the written texts that have for the most part shaped critical theory."

There are particular moments of reflexivity in operatic narration where the action itself is held up which Abbate isolates from the general forward-moving 'action' of the opera. These are moments which, as she notes, "generate for most listener-spectators some sense of deflation, of having been abandoned by *action* on one hand and *music* on the other" (61). She further distinguishes between "monaural" narration which she describes as "operatic narration designed to convey concisely an accurate and unfictionalized report of real events": information "necessary for either the audience or one of the characters on stage" (63), and "reflexive" narration, which "conjuges up its own content, demonstrating that while it enables us to *imagine* events, it can also *produce* them as the narrator speaks" (64). These moments may constitute an "interlude of reflexivity, during which the narrative performance reflects upon the greater performance in which it is embedded", (62) and these are moments of "vibrancy" in the "listener's mental movements between the small narrative performance and the events (the greater performance, as it were; the enacted drama) in which it has been set" (67). These are moments which approach Dallenbach's (1989:8) concept of the *mise-en-abyme* (which he defines as "a means by which the work turns back on itself, appears to be a kind of reflection") in literature. Many such moments of reflexivity occur in the operas to be examined in this study, and this reflexivity is epitomised by the opera-within-an-opera in Argento's *The Aspern Papers*, where opera approaches what could be called meta-opera.

5. The novel and postwar opera.

The choice of the particular operas to be examined in the study is determined by the distinctive literary challenges posed to these adaptations. The comparative analysis of two operatic versions of *Wuthering Heights* allows for the exploration of the adaptational methods employed in translating that novel's complex narrative structure, with its striking mixture of different discourses, into opera. The prominence of Gothic and Romantic elements in the novel proves to be particularly interesting in this regard as it is largely to these elements that both versions respond in an essentially conservative manner. Both, however, fully utilise the conventions of the art form and they can be characterised as neo-romantic responses to Brontë's text. Melville's posthumously published novel, *Billy Budd*, presents different challenges to the opera-maker: its early-modernist characteristics call for an operatic response to the profound ambiguity of Melville's text, as well as to the difficulty posed by the presence of an obtrusive and self-conscious narrator. Consisting of a large, all male cast, the opera has its antecedents in the vast choral operas of the nineteenth century, but it will be shown that it is concerned with the exploration of the nature and disintegration of language, reflecting in microcosm the fundamental tension between the verbal and the musical elements of opera.

Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* also offers a sophisticated challenge to the operatic adaptor with its complex modernist narrative characterised by pervasive ambiguity and irony. The novel is a psychological exploration of an act of betrayal and its consequences. This particular operatic adaptation is strongly in the romantic tradition but nevertheless illuminates important aspects of the contemporary representation of psychological states in opera. It is concerned with the depiction of the anti-hero, a typical figure in much twentieth century opera. Equally complex narrative questions are posed by White's *Voss*, adapted by Richard Meale and David Malouf, including issues dealing with postcolonial fictional discourse. The operatic portrayal of the outsider has attracted composers who, as Adorno (1994:35) notes, have shown "an endless love for those characters who are of foreign blood or are otherwise outside." All these characters, he maintains, are "ostracized or outsiders, around whom passions explode and come into conflict with the established order." In most of the adaptations examined in this study, the figure of the outsider is prominent, be it Heathcliff, Billy, Razumov or Voss. Also conspicuous in the adaptation of *Voss* is the exploration of the transcendence, in operatic terms, of space and time, and the opera, taking up issues prominent in *Billy Budd*, investigates the transcendence of language through music.

The final chapter of this dissertation will analyse the operatic adaptation of James's tale, "The Aspern Papers", a work which is characterised by a self-reflexive examination of literary life. Argento's operatic version of the tale deals explicitly with many of the problems facing

contemporary operatic composers and can be seen as the most recent and challenging of a succession of operas which examine their own status and the art form itself as part of the wider postmodernist debate. The thematic and symbolic use of myth (evoked through both the figure of Orpheus and the Medea myth) in this opera is prominent. The fact that the first great operatic figure, Monteverdi's Orfeo, is a singer suggests to Conrad (1989:13) that opera can be seen as "drama *about* music, not just accompanied by it." In many ways *The Aspern Papers* crystallises many of the issues of operatic self-reflexivity apparent in the other adaptations examined in this study, and it can be seen as marking a point in operatic development in much the same way as Strauss's *Capriccio* did some fifty years before. In the same way that the earlier work seemed to look back critically yet nostalgically to several centuries of operatic development, so too does *The Aspern Papers* reflect on what Adorno (1994:27), speaking of the 30s, described as the "opera crisis", and it is in a work such as this that operatic representation closest approaches what can be called meta-opera.

Each chapter in this study will briefly examine the origins and thematic concerns of the fictional work and the respective structures of both novel and opera will be compared. The purpose is not to offer an original interpretation of the literary work; rather, a wide range of critical opinion will be drawn on so as to establish the spectrum of interpretative and narrative difficulties presented by each work of fiction. The primary analysis will take the form of a detailed, diachronic investigation of the specific fictional challenges that are presented and the resulting operatic response. As part of this examination, the nature of fictional discourse and operatic discourse will be analysed and the thesis that the orchestra is central to operatic narrative will be tested.

Chapter One: *Wuthering Heights*

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) exists in two operatic versions, by the American composers Carlisle Floyd (1958) and Bernard Herrmann (1965). Neither, however, is part of the current operatic repertoire, and Herrmann's work has never been staged although it has been commercially recorded. Despite the fact that both operas are characterised by a conservative musical idiom compared with other works in this dissertation, they nevertheless present ingenious adaptational solutions to the problems posed by Brontë's complex text. They serve, therefore, as a useful starting-point for this study of the transformation of fictional discourse into operatic discourse, and of the ways in which fictional narrative can be rendered in opera.

A comparative analysis of the two versions of *Wuthering Heights* offers important insights into the discursive practices of two post-war operatic composers who are evidently still strongly influenced by the conventions of romantic opera and are certainly not part of the operatic avant-garde. Herrmann's opera belongs to the tradition of the 'number' opera, as will become apparent in the examination of the many songs and 'closed' musical forms which he employs. Floyd's opera, however, follows a divergent operatic tradition with its origin in the 'seamless' music dramas of Wagner in which the division into discrete 'numbers' is concealed or disappears completely. These two operas can, therefore, be regarded as representative of two dominant operatic forms of the twentieth century. The first part of this chapter will outline the challenges presented by Brontë's text to potential operatic adaptors and identify those features that make it amenable to adaptation. To do so it will selectively draw on a range of established critical views of the novel.

* * * *

1. Fictional discourse: heterogeneity.

Wuthering Heights occupies a unique place in English literature and the difficulty in situating it satisfactorily within the genre of the novel has long been recognised. Part of the problem has been whether to regard it as a novel at all. Frye (1957:304-305) maintains that the "conventions of *Wuthering Heights* are linked rather with the tale and the ballad", and he regards it as belonging to romance rather than the novel. The romancer does not attempt to create 'real' people so much as "stylized figures who expand into psychological archetypes", whereas the novelist "deals with personality, with characters wearing their personae or social masks." There is much common ground between characters in romance and those in opera with its own origins traceable in romance and myth. Perhaps this problem of classification can best be resolved by reconciling the genres and seeing the novel as a work which, as Holderness (1985:54) says, "employs within itself widely differing conventions" and which synthesises "the commonsense

'realist' perspective, in the form of Nelly Dean's narrative", and "strains of folk tale, ghost story and Gothic romance" (55). He argues that the novel "breaks the boundaries of the conventionally 'real', the familiarly 'known', the self-evidently and palpably 'true'. And this is why, right to the very end, 'romantic' conventions are constantly qualified, limited, criticized or supported by the conventions of 'realism'" (62).

There is much here that reminds one of a central tension in opera: the conflict between heightened operatic discourse and opera's gravitation towards the naturalistic mode. The constant striving for naturalism is reflected in the philosophy underlying many operatic productions in which sets, costumes and other technical elements are employed to achieve an illusion of reality which, however, is frequently undercut by the essentially exaggerated and artificial nature of the form itself. The simple fact that characters in opera sing rather than speak their dialogue must of itself hinder any attempt to create an appearance of reality. Many operas, furthermore, deliberately draw attention to their own artificiality.

The sources of *Wuthering Heights* are many and varied and among those most frequently cited are two which have also been pivotal in the development of opera. There is evidence to show that Brontë had from an early age read Scott whose influence Hewish (1969:120) claims, "bequeathed Emily Brontë a feeling for atmosphere, as well as, perhaps, hints of the function of narrators." Hewish also makes a large claim for the influence of Shakespeare: "To encounter English Romantic literature is generally to be conscious of the influence of Shakespeare, but *Wuthering Heights* is more indebted to Shakespeare than perhaps any other English novel" (123). Considering the ending of the novel, which has provoked much critical debate, Hewish concludes that the "romantic resolution of the tragedy ... by means of the younger generation owes something to the late plays" (125), and many other commentators have noted that the play that exerts the greatest influence is *King Lear*.

The influence of German literature on Brontë's novel, particularly the works of E T A Hoffmann, has also frequently been noted, and this adumbrates another aspect of its affinity with opera. This particular type of literature is a source of the *singspiel* which strongly influenced a composer such as Wagner. Knoepfmacher (1989:28) comments that in *Wuthering Heights* the "combination of broad comedy with elements of the fantastic yields a generic mix quite similar to that found in German novellas, frequently reviewed and translated in *Blackwood's Magazine*, which the Brontës regularly read." Pykett (1989:73-74) perhaps best summarises the trans-generic nature of the novel:

Wuthering Heights straddles literary traditions and genres. It combines elements of the Romantic tale of evil-possession, and Romantic developments of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel, with the developing Victorian tradition of Domestic fiction in a realist mode. Its use of ballad and folk material, romance forms and the fantastic, its emphasis on the passions, its view of childhood, and the representation of the romantic quest for selfhood and of aspiring individualism,

all link the novel with Romanticism. On the other hand, the novel's movement towards a renewed emphasis on community and duty, and towards an idealization of the family seem to be more closely related to the emerging concerns of Victorian fiction. Emily Brontë's novel mixes these various traditions in a number of interesting ways, sometimes fusing and sometimes juxtaposing them.

The novel's many different literary antecedents assist the potential operatic adaptor in that these various literary genres have their loose equivalents in the multiplicity of styles and operatic discourses on which a contemporary operatic composer can draw. In both adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* there are aspects of the drama of Verdi, the Romanticism of Weber and Wagner, the lyricism of Puccini, and the tortured emotional outbursts of Berg, as well as a broader reflection of nearly four hundred years of operatic development.

Arising from the novel's heterogeneity and resistance to categorisation is its ability to resist any final interpretation. Holderness (1985:83) remarks that, "[w]ithout that potentiality for plurality of meaning, the novel would not be able to survive beyond its own historical and cultural context." Knoepfelmacher (1989:108) maintains that while the Victorians tried "to tame the energies they recognize[d]", the modern trend is to "stress the novel's anarchic or libidinal powers", and it is surely these powers that have been the inspiration for adaptators.

Pykett (1989:2) notes Charlotte Brontë's attempt in her Biographical Notice which introduced the edition of 1850 to "interpret and domesticate" the novel "for an unsympathetic and potentially hostile Victorian audience" by "constructing a portrait of the female genius that would not seriously disrupt the prevailing ideal of the feminine." However much Charlotte would have liked to see a more refined novel, she recognised something of the unique and inviolable power of the work and attributed this power to Emily's closeness to nature and her rejection of many aspects of civilization. Charlotte seemed to perceive the novel's genesis in some primal source of energy located in youth and adolescence, and she was aware of Emily's refusal to pander to the tastes of the ordinary reader. Emily's apparent intransigence was excused by Charlotte's description of characters such as Nelly Dean and Edgar Linton who for her seemed to possess certain redeeming features: "For a specimen of true benevolence and fidelity, look at the character of Nelly Dean; for an example of constancy and tenderness, remark that of Edgar Linton" (Brontë 1990:321). Charlotte's attempt to ameliorate the powerful and disturbing effect of the novel appears to provide for the ordinary reader an easier access into its unique and sometimes shocking world.

Charlotte's Preface itself was commented on in the *Examiner* of December 21, 1850, which described the book as "strange but powerful" (Brontë 1990:325), while the *Leader* of December 28, 1850, felt that the "great" public "would *not* be amused with these strange wild pictures of incult humanity", but admitted that these pictures were "painted with unmistakable power" (325). Although it cast doubt on the artistic validity of such an enterprise, claiming that

one cannot "sup off horrors without indigestion", the writer conceded that "we cannot deny its truth: sombre, rude, brutal, yet true" (325-326). The writer saw the morality of the book as lying in its recognition that the "fierce ungoverned instincts of powerful organizations, bred up amid violence, revolt, and moral apathy", could be condemned without the realization that "such brutes we should all be ... were our lives as insubordinate to law; were our affections and sympathies as little cultivated, our imaginations as undirected" (326). In this review there is, nevertheless, an early attempt to define the fascination that Heathcliff and Catherine have continued to exert: "Heathcliff, devil though he may be, is drawn with a sort of dusky splendour which fascinates, and we feel the truth of his burning impassioned love for Catherine, and of her inextinguishable love for him" (326).

This sense of some indefinable primal energy has surely contributed to the wide appeal of the novel and been the motivation for its frequent adaptation into other genres. The amoral energy emanating from a character such as Heathcliff is essentially operatic in nature and accords with Conrad's (1987:11-12) view of operatic characters as those who "obey neither moral nor social law." He insists that "music buoys up and bears along these clamorous creatures" who "give voice to the promptings of the underground unconscious." An archetypal operatic character such as Don Giovanni, for instance, who functions as a disruptive yet fascinating force in Mozart's opera, has many parallels with the presentation of Heathcliff in the novel who is equally disruptive and who, like Giovanni, resists to the end any form of repentance while retaining his appeal. Brontë's depiction of Heathcliff's relationship with Catherine has many essentially operatic elements as well, not the least being its embodiment of an intense, transcendental passion. Opera thrives on such relationships. Conrad (1987:12) insists that "living subliminally, people in opera are proud to be amoral", and one needs only to look at some of the relationships in the operas of Wagner to find parallels with Catherine and Heathcliff (for example, the dubious relationship between Siegmund and Sieglinde in *Die Walküre*).

Probably the most provocative recent criticism of Brontë's novel is feminist, which, as Pykett (1989:131) states, has examined the "complex relations of the woman writer to the dominant, patriarchal literary tradition" and which seeks to "trace a specifically female literary tradition; not the marginalised separate sphere of the nineteenth century, but one which is autonomous and self-defining, and purposely and collectively concerns itself with the articulation of women's experience." Much of this criticism includes Brontë in "an active and oppositional sub-culture of woman's writing which is oppressed by, but also resists, the limitations of the patriarchal tradition" (131). Knoepfelmacher (1989:26) considers that in this novel written by a woman, "to resist the invitation of the female is to remain a spectator and an outsider. The strange tale that Lockwood was on the verge of deciphering must be wrested away from him and assigned to female narrators, Nelly Dean, Isabella Linton, and Catherine Earnshaw herself." The ostensibly patriarchal world of opera, with few exceptions, has, paradoxically, always been dominated by its vocally powerful female protagonists - despite their frequent status as victim -

the female voice being generally regarded by composers as a more expressive instrument than the male, even though there are many more male characters in opera. It is striking how both operatic versions of Brontë's novel increase the prominence of a character such as Isabella while giving Catherine vocal dominance over Heathcliff.

Two essential elements of nineteenth century romantic opera, Gothicism and melodrama, are strongly evident in Brontë's novel. Although there is much detailed description which gives the novel a concreteness and actuality over and above its metaphysical quality, its larger-than-life central characters are the life-blood of opera. Pykett (1989:76) remarks that "Gothic is usually taken to be the dominant genre of the first generation plot of *Wuthering Heights*, and is associated with its Romanticism, its mystical, fantastic and supernatural elements, and its portrayal of wild nature." She goes on to identify the particular sub-genre of Female Gothic which is characterized by an investigation of "women's fears about the private domestic space which is at once a refuge and prison. Indeed, Catherine Earnshaw's story might almost be read as an archetypal example of the genre" (76-77).

Not only does the portrayal of Catherine have elements of the Gothic, but Heathcliff too is represented in a number of ways as a Gothic villain. Pykett describes him as a "demonic, almost otherworldly figure" and remarks that this "fantastic, demonic version of Heathcliff is reinforced by the melodramatic scenes surrounding Catherine's death", particularly the last part of the novel where he appears to be "communing with the spirit of the dead Catherine in preparation for a removal to her sphere" (75-76). Lindenberger (1984:167) sees within Gothic fiction a reflection of the 'high style' which is so characteristic of opera, a style from which, with the exception of *Wuthering Heights*, literature has generally retreated: "the one form of fiction that pursued the high style systematically in the last two centuries was the Gothic novel, which, like opera, was a popular form whose public recognized its artifice and its distance from ordinary life, on the one hand, and, on the other, its power and immediacy of effect." (The story of Heathcliff and Catherine is well known to even those who have not read the novel and its continuing appeal to popular imagination has resulted in its frequent adaptation into plays, films and operas. Interestingly, a popular twentieth century novel, Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, which owes much to the Gothic elements of its models, *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre*, has, in addition to the film version, also been successfully adapted as an opera.)

Within the pervasive Gothicism of the novel, its distinctively melodramatic quality helps to explain its relatively easy transformation into the profoundly melodramatic world of opera. Brooks (1976:4) describes melodrama as the "desire to express all", in which characters "give voice to their deepest feelings, dramatize through their heightened and polarized words and gestures the whole lesson of their relationship. They assume primary psychic roles, father, mother, child, and express basic psychic conditions. Life tends, in this fiction, toward ever more concentrated and totally expressive gestures and statements." The melodramatic exaggeration and

distortion inherent in the novel accord well with operatic discourse. As Graham (1975:60) has remarked: "A modicum of distortion in literature ... is only another means of implicating the reader's imagination - exciting it to participation and entry into the work by reminding it directly of its own transformative powers." Probably the most important factor in terms of the novel's operatic viability is the melodramatic nature of the presentation of the two central characters, as well as the triangular conflict between Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar, which reflects the typically melodramatic operatic confrontation between soprano heroine, tenor lover, and baritone villain. Pykett (1989:92) sees Catherine as the quintessential woman-as-victim, caught between opposing forces: "Catherine's story vividly illustrates the fact that no matter how powerful and ruling her personality, a woman, as defined in nineteenth-century ideologies of gender and the family, must always cede definition and control to others and she is always, at least potentially, a victim." Catherine's situation in the novel might be seen to reflect what Tambling (1987:52) describes as the traditional hierarchy of nineteenth century Romantic opera which

finds itself on the symbolic order that belongs to the family: soprano, contralto, tenor, bass, evoke the family, fully constructed in gender terms, and suggest that the condition of the coloratura soprano, so frequently enacting a struggle against an oppression, belongs to the moment of bourgeois insistence on the family, and registers the need, displaced in most opera plots, to break free from that symbolic order and the law of the father.

Clément (1989:33), in describing the subjugation of women in opera, locates the source of the soprano voice in "paternal violation", the soprano inevitably in the role of victim. Therefore, it seems appropriate that both operatic adaptations under consideration here cast the role of Catherine with a lyric soprano.

Brontë's Heathcliff, of whom Drew (1970:245) remarks, his "whole career is one of calculated malice", combines both Byronic and romantic elements with certain aspects of the demonic - a mixture of Othello, Don Giovanni, Mephistopheles and Iago. Heathcliff can also be seen as a threat from 'outside' to the family unit which receives him with violence and which will be the recipient of violence from him. Holderness (1985:20) describes the popular conception of the Byronic figure as someone,

usually a wanderer, exiled from his native land, bearing the burden of some enormously wicked but nameless and mysterious crime an early example of ... an 'anti-hero' ... a rebel, a criminal, a transgressor of moral codes and social conventions embod[ying] an important experience of alienation, self-conscious separation from social norms, rejection of moral and social convention.

This 'outsider' figure has a long history in opera, featuring importantly in Verdi's operas, for example, and in the two quintessential twentieth-century characters of Wozzeck and Peter Grimes. Both versions of *Wuthering Heights*, significantly, cast Heathcliff with a baritone, the medium and lower voices usually being both the preserve of the villain as well as, to a limited

extent, the lover, which accords with Pykett's (1989:113) view of Heathcliff in the novel as being "at once hero and villain, the oppressed and the oppressor, who is simultaneously the bearer of the novel's progressive forces and the embodiment of its contradictions." His vocal line in both operas lies relatively high, partially approximating that of the tenor, which is the traditional vocal range of the operatic lover. The brilliance of this vocal range conveys the power and virility of the romantic aspect of Heathcliff while, to a certain extent, countering the menace and ruthlessness which is traditionally the preserve of the lower voices.

The dramatic qualities of the novel have long been evidenced by its many theatrical adaptations. Hewish (1969:141) observes that in *Wuthering Heights* "there is no direct comment by the author and a minimum of reflection divorced from action as 'scene' follows 'scene' and the characters are hastened to their various fates. There is nothing like this in nineteenth-century literature until Ibsen." Allen (1954:198) also relates this dramatic quality in the novel to the narrative method employed:

The device of plunging us into the action while it is well under way is as old as epic, but it always dramatizes it and keys up the suspense: our curiosity is piqued as Lockwood's was. We are compelled to identify ourselves with Lockwood, and the effect of our seeing everything partly through his eyes and partly through Nelly Dean's is, as it were, to see the action framed, almost as though on a stage; while the enormous curiosity of the sophisticated southerner and the awe of the simple peasant woman become themselves a tribute to the intensity of the drama whose unfolding is being reported; they serve not merely to heighten the drama but to underline its significance and its scope, for Lockwood and Nelly are essentially spectators. That is the role forced on us, the readers, and their comments, their function as chorus, become ours too.

According to Holderness (1985:5), the self-conscious narrative method involves, on the one hand, an "emphasis on the devices of story-telling", and on the other, a story in which "every word is spoken by a character in the story". The author does not intrude and the novel combines the "objectivity of impersonal narrative with the subjectivity of the first person." In a sense the subject of the novel is the act of narration. This curious mixture of subjectivity and objectivity in the novel parallels an aspect of the nature of operatic discourse which is central to this study. Opera is perhaps unique in offering a synthesis of the apparently objective presentation of 'action' on stage in combination with an almost novelistic subjectivity, which is the result of the interaction between words and music and is embodied in the function of the orchestra-narrator. As has been pointed out, opera is seen by some commentators as musical novel rather than musical drama; it more effectively deals with psychological action rather than with physical action.

The complexity of the novel's discourse is described by Kavanagh (1985:15) in terms of the "markedly heterogeneous effect of the text's language, its ability to evoke the most exact sense of 'realistic' detail alongside the most passionate sense of 'romantic' excess" - a formulation

that could equally well apply to much opera. Added to this is the complexity of the method of narration in the novel: "its nested framing as a story the reader receives through a second-hand report of a report - passed through the first-person voices of two participant-observers." These embedded voices introduce a Bakhtinian 'polyphony' to Brontë's fiction which invites its return to music (from where the term has originally been imported), particularly opera, that most 'polyphonic' of musical forms.

2. Narrative structure.

Bernard Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights*, with libretto by Lucille Fletcher, was completed in 1965. It is divided into four Acts and a Prologue, and has, as epigraph, a quotation from Matthew Arnold:

Unquiet souls!
In the dark fermentation of earth,
In the never idle workshop of nature,
In the eternal movement,
Ye shall find yourselves again!

Indeed, the whole flavour of the opera is self-consciously 'literary' or even 'poetic', Fletcher having used much of the dialogue from the novel itself, modifying it only occasionally when absolutely necessary from a dramaturgical point of view. Fletcher has, furthermore, skillfully integrated several of Emily Brontë's poems into the opera, particularly when an aria or extended set-piece is called for.

Carlisle Floyd's version, with libretto by the composer, was first performed in Santa Fe in 1958 and was revised in 1959 for its performances at the New York City Opera. (I will examine Floyd's opera second, as it is couched in a less conventional and more contemporary musical idiom.) Consisting of a Prologue and three Acts, it is a gritty, 'realistic' version of the novel, retaining much of its plot structure and focusing strongly on its inherent drama. Floyd's libretto is far less consciously poetic than that of Herrmann. It retains most of the theatrically effective incidents that occur in the first part of the novel and is characterized by a less lyrical but more flexible musical language, and is structured in generally shorter scenes than Herrmann's.

The narrative development of the two operas can be compared diachronically with that of the novel in the synopsis below.

Novel
(By chapter)

1. Lockwood tells of visit to W.H. Hostile reception.
2. Return to W.H. Forced to stay the night.
3. Lockwood dreams, tapping on window. Resists a hand trying to get in. Heathcliff's passionate reaction.
4. Nelly explains relationships at W.H. Tells of arrival of Heathcliff. Cathy's attraction to Heathcliff.
5. Mr Earnshaw's illness. Cathy estranged. Death of Earnshaw. Cathy and Heathcliff distraught.
6. Cathy and Hindley visit Thrushcross Grange. Attacked by dogs. Cathy stays.
7. Cathy returns. Heathcliff humiliated. Throws soup into Edgar's face. Heathcliff vows revenge for Hindley's treatment.
8. Francis dies. Hindley illtreats Heathcliff. Edgar calls. Cathy quarrels with Nelly and Heathcliff. Hindley arrives drunk.
9. Hindley drops Hareton and Heathcliff catches him. Cathy tells Nelly she cannot marry Heathcliff who overhears. Cathy becomes ill - Thrushcross Grange. Returns. Nothing heard of Heathcliff for 3 yrs. Cathy and Edgar married.
10. Heathcliff returns. Heathcliff to stay at W.H. Isabella becomes infatuated with Heathcliff. Edgar warns her.
11. Nelly sees Heathcliff and Isabella embracing, tells Edgar who finds Cathy with Heathcliff. Both treat him with contempt. Edgar hits Heathcliff. Cathy locks herself in room.
12. Cathy becomes ill. Doctor holds out little hope. News of Heathcliff's elopement with Isabella.

Hermann

Prologue
(Bedroom, W.H.)
Lockwood finds Cathy's diary. Sleeps restlessly. Rushes to window. Tells Heathcliff of nightmare. Heathcliff calls out to Cathy.

Act I Sc i
(W.H. 20yrs before)
Cathy and Heathcliff sing of love. Hindley banishes Heathcliff to fields. Joseph reads from Bible. Heathcliff and Cathy prepare to leave.

Act I Sc ii
(W.H. Christmas)
Cathy and Lintons arrive. Heathcliff humiliated by Edgar. Hindley and Heathcliff fight.

Act II
(W.H. next spring)
Cathy humiliates Heathcliff. Edgar arrives. Cathy quarrels with Nelly. Hindley drops Hareton, Heathcliff catches. Swears revenge on Hindley. Cathy tells Nelly of Edgar's proposal. Heathcliff overhears and disappears

Act III
(Thr.Gr.3yrs later)
Heathcliff returns. Plan to get W.H. Isabel attracted to Heathcliff. Cathy quarrels with Isabel. Tells Edgar of true feeling for Heathcliff. Nelly attempts to comfort her.

Act IV
(W.H. next March)
Isabel married to Heathcliff.

Floyd

Prologue
(W.H. Living room)
Lockwood arrives at W.H. Forced to stay. Reads Cathy's diary. Hears voice. Heathcliff rushes in. Heathcliff out calling to Cathy.

ActI Sc i
(W.H. Feb.1817)
Hindley illtreats Heathcliff. Hindley and Earnshaw quarrel. Death of Earnshaw. Strong bond between Cathy and Heathcliff.

Act I Sc ii
(W.H. Apr.1817)
Joseph reads from Bible. Quarrel with Hindley. Heathcliff and Cathy leave house. On moors. To Thrush. Gr. Edgar takes Cathy in, Heathcliff leaves.

Act II Sc i
(W.H. May 1817)
Cathy returns. Heathcliff humiliated. Throws tea at Edgar. Hindley beats Heathcliff who tells Cathy of his love for her.

Act II Sc ii
(W.H. June 1817)
Edgar arrives. Cathy quarrels with Nelly. Edgar proposes. Cathy tells Nelly and of love for Heathcliff who disappears.

Act III Sc i
(Thr.Gr.3yrs later)
Party. Chorus sing of Heathcliff's arrival. Heathcliff attracts Isabella. Heathcliff wins W.H. from Hindley. Cathy tells Nelly of her continuing love for Heathcliff.

Act III Sc ii
(Thr.Gr. Sept1820)

Edgar severs ties with her.

13. Cathy pregnant. Isabella writes of marriage to Heathcliff who blames Edgar for Cathy's illness.

14. Nelly visits W.H. Isabella in bad way. Heathcliff demands meeting with Cathy.

15. 4 days later Heathcliff bursts in and embraces Cathy. Forgive each other. Edgar enters. Heathcliff says he will remain in garden.

16. Cathy dies at midnight after birth of girl. Heathcliff says he cannot live without her. While Edgar sleeps, Heathcliff enters. Cathy buried in corner of churchyard.

17. - 34. The next generation sees the unification of the Heights and the Grange in the marriage of Cathy and Hareton.

Isabel tells Hindley to kill Heathcliff. Heathcliff fights with Hindley and throws him out. Heathcliff rejects Isabel's advances.

Interlude

Cathy goes to W.H. Mutual forgiveness between her and Heathcliff. She feels her approaching death. She says she will wait for him. He taunts her to haunt him. She dies. Storm. Voice of Cathy heard. Heathcliff implores her to return. Voice disappears and Heathcliff sinks down beside the window.

Isabella tells Nelly of her love for Heathcliff who arrives. Cathy forbids Isabella to go with him. Edgar disowns Isabella and Cathy challenges Edgar to throw Heathcliff out. He cannot and Cathy is left alone with the realization of her loss.

Act III Sc iii

(Thr.Gr. Apr 1821)

Cathy, about to give birth is very ill. She asks Nelly to take her to window. Heathcliff arrives and she tells him of her love. She dies in his arms. He calls on her to haunt him for the rest of his life.

As can be seen in the above comparison, the plot structures of both operas retain most of the significant features of the novel although both use essentially only the first sixteen chapters with the occasional limited use of material from later parts of the novel. Both operas commence with a Prologue which encompasses the first three chapters of the novel but simplify and condense quite drastically. One of the most fascinating aspects of the novel is its complex narrative method which has often been likened to a series of boxes-within-boxes, an effect which is achieved by using several different narrators as well as through the different chronologies of the narrative which Knoepfelmacher (1989:47) describes as "time schemes to suit the different subjectivities" of Brontë's characters. This temporal structure is discussed by Pykett (1989:78) in terms of a "dislocated chronology", while Holderness (1969:116) describes the narrative ordering as "historic time enclosed in and juxtaposed with present time." These narratives: Lockwood's, Nelly's, Catherine's, Cathy's, Heathcliff's, and Isabella's, are all incomplete, and none of these narrators possesses complete knowledge of events. Hodge (1990:57) remarks that Brontë "appears to have constructed a structure of narrators like a house of cards, narrative within narrative, each chained to the other, mimetically constructing a reassuring society of communicators, each numbingly normal in their inability to comprehend what the novel is about." But Hodge further observes that the fact of having two principal narrators (Lockwood and Nelly) "signals the instability of this structure, which exists to collapse into a significant pattern of ambiguities about gender and class, love and death" (57). Holderness (1985:5) describes the novel as being "pervaded by a radical *uncertainty* about the story that is told. It displays a quality of ambiguity

flowing not just from the presence of ghosts and mysteries, but from the absence of any reliable narrative *authority*." Although the narratives of Lockwood and Nelly are largely linear, Knoepfmacher (1989:52-53) notes that Brontë "relies on voices other than theirs for the counter-narrative of Heathcliff's interactions with Catherine." He has isolated eight such narrative elements which, amongst other things, reveal Brontë's skill in plotting her novel. His table (54) which follows, illustrates the function of these eight narrators as well as the complexity of the time frame in which the narrative is housed:

Date	Speaker	Subject-matter	Chapter
Nov 1777 [Nov 1801]	Catherine	records account of her revolt with Heathcliff in her diary [which is read by Lockwood]	3
Nov 1777	Heathcliff	reports separation from injured Catherine he left at the Grange	6
Summer 1780	Catherine	tries to define her competing loves for Edgar and Heathcliff	9
Jan 1784	Catherine	wishes to be a girl again	12
Mar 1784	Isabella	writes to Nelly from the Heights	13
Mar 1784	Isabella	reports flight from Heathcliff after his frenzy upon Catherine's death	17
Nov 1800	Cathy	admits meeting Linton Heathcliff at the Heights	24
Sep 1801	Heathcliff	links earlier exhumation of Catherine's grave in 1784 to his recent uncovering of her coffin	29

It is apparent that the complexity of the narrative structure presents particular difficulties for operatic adaptation. Rimmon-Kenan's (1983:94-96) typology of narrators is useful in distinguishing the narrative function of the various narrators in the novel. Lockwood, who narrates the events which constitute the novel while also participating in these events, would be considered an "intradiegetic" narrator of the second degree. Nelly, who narrates the bulk of the events to Lockwood, but who is, in turn, 'narrated' by Lockwood, is a narrator of the third-degree - a "hypodiegetic" narrator. The other narrators: Catherine, Heathcliff, Isabella and Cathy, who narrate their own stories to Nelly, must be considered narrators of the fourth-degree: "hypo-hypodiegetic" narrators. Lockwood, who appears to be a conventional first-person narrator, is soon revealed to be an unreliable observer: he makes a series of mistakes in his initial encounter with Wuthering Heights and its inhabitants and his own perceptions are shown to be coloured by his assumptions and prejudices. Both Lockwood and Nelly appear to be 'normal', common-sense observers, but they are revealed as inadequate to their task. Vogler (1968:6) maintains that

[e]verything is contained within the mind of Lockwood, who begins the novel with his curious poking about the Heights, entering it ... trying to understand and interpret what he sees.... He ends up thoroughly confused, and turns to Nelly Dean for explanation.... Nelly is like Lockwood, both in her need to understand and in having staked her comprehension of life on the objective level of empirical reality. She lives in a world of things and of rational, causal explanations of events anything not reducible to this level of existence is, for both Nelly and Lockwood, a threat to their hold on reality.

Kettle (1965:141) stresses the 'normality' of both Lockwood and Nelly, maintaining that they help to make the novel believable in that their function

is partly to keep the story close to the earth, to make it believable, partly to comment on it from a common-sense point of view and thereby to reveal in part the inadequacy of such common sense. They act as a kind of sieve to the story, sometimes a double sieve, which has the purpose not simply of separating off the chaff, but of making us aware of the difficulty of passing easy judgments. One is left always with the sense that the last word has not been said.

Eagleton (in Kavanagh 1985:xi-xii), in describing the complex narrative method of "texts-within-texts, narratives of narratives", explains the novel's form as

rigorously 'framed' in more than one sense of the term, by the dominative narrative control of Nelly herself. To narrate is to exercise power, not least when, as with Nelly, it involves a tendentious editing and revising of other's interpretations.... Heathcliff, the 'Romantic' voice of the text, is himself 'uttered' and encompassed by that very different voice of sober bourgeois realism which is Nelly's.

2.1. Operatic narrative.

2.1.1. Prologue: narrative exposition.

It is virtually impossible to indicate in an opera in the same way as in the novel that Lockwood is the initial narrator, that the narrative has various levels, or, indeed, that the narration passes from one character to another. In operatic terms we have a single narrator - the orchestra - and all complexities must be suggested by that single, albeit powerful 'voice', and all characters are contained within this narrative act. Obviously most of the effect and significance of the juxtaposed narrative levels, as well as much of the ambiguity and intricacy of the novel's narrative method itself, has had of necessity to be sacrificed (the use of *leitmotif*, as will be seen later, can function as a narrative device in a strictly limited way). As Herrmann's opera opens Lockwood is already in Wuthering Heights, while Floyd depicts him "lurching and staggering" (Floyd 1961:2) up to the front door of the house. (There is a significance in this: Kavanagh

(1985:17) describes entrances as being very important in the wider context of the novel and comments that "our entrance to the novel coincides with Lockwood's entrance to Wuthering Heights". Lockwood's initial impressions are of great importance to the reader: he has a "symptomatic tendency to *misinterpret* what he sees and hears" (18.)

Herrmann (1965:1-2) has a brief orchestral prelude which can be seen in terms of its function as narrative. It uses themes and musical figures, the significance of which later become apparent, in very much the way a narrator would set the scene in the opening of a novel. The vast dynamic range of the operatic discourse of the first two pages is a correlative of the emotional range of the novel. Fletcher uses description from the novel itself for Lockwood's first lines which are essentially diegetic: "Wuthering Heights! It is well-named for Heathcliff's dwelling. On this bleak hill top, the earth is hard with a black frost.... No wonder the grass grows up between the flags, and cattle are the only hedge-cutters" (3-4). Lines such as these, taken from Chapter One, show how Fletcher often adapts descriptive passages from the novel as dialogue in the opera. One immediately notices another radical change: it is Nelly who greets Lockwood rather than Zillah, and she describes Heathcliff (with a line from Chapter Four) as "Rough as a saw-edge and hard as a whinstone" (4). The brevity and simplification necessary in opera is illustrated in her conversation with Lockwood as well as the logistical necessity to conflate fictional characters in adaptation.

Unlike Herrmann who starts *in medias res*, Floyd (1-2) is intent on setting the scene more fully from the beginning. His opening pages have less of Herrmann's portentous quality and there is the strong sense of a forward impulse in the tempo of the music. Lockwood is met by Joseph at the door and is grudgingly ushered into the living room of the house where he finds both Heathcliff and Isabella. Both librettists impose radical changes on the chronology of the novel: this scene is supposed to take place in 1801 but the stage direction in Floyd's opera describes it as a "winter evening in 1835." According to the chronological structure of the novel, Isabella would have been dead four years (June, 1797) by the time Lockwood arrived at the house. As we see later, Floyd has updated the setting some thirty-four years. (Fletcher's libretto states that her first scene takes place in 1840, indicating that the the Prologue occurs twenty years later: 1860.) Having Isabella there, however, makes good theatrical sense (as well as well as creating a more theatrically viable role as the audience's knowledge of her 'present' situation will affect their reaction to the 'earlier' events of the opera which are still to come). Lockwood, in Floyd's opera, soon perceives, in much the same way as in the novel, the strained relationship that exists between Heathcliff and his wife: he remarks to Heathcliff that his wife is "very pretty" and Heathcliff's reply, "her?", is described as being delivered "with revulsion". Lockwood's reaction is understandably "bewildered" (10). Floyd overcomes the difficulties inherent in staging Lockwood's dream by having him being offered a blanket by the fire. The 'problem' of Catherine's diary is addressed by Isabella offering Lockwood "some books if you can't sleep" (11), after which he "crosses to the window-seat and gets under the blanket."

Herrmann's opera follows the novel closely in that Lockwood's discovery of Catherine's 'diary' appears coincidental, although neither opera uses Lockwood's reading of the three names, "Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, Catherine Linton", or his subsequent brief dream. Floyd also has Lockwood idly paging through several books until his eyes light on one which "arrests his attention". Herrmann has Lockwood intone his reading of the diary, initially on a repeated note, gradually falling in semitones. When he starts the account of Hindley's illtreatment of Heathcliff, the singer is urged to "evoke the feeling that Cathy's grief still hauntingly pervades the room" and the musical indication for the following text:

"How little did I dream that Hindley would ever make me cry. Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and says we must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house ... Poor Heathcliff, my dearest one, goodnight." (9)

is described as *Andante con tristezza*, the voice supported by a plaintive string melody in the orchestra:

(Ex. 1.)

LOCKWOOD

sotto voce *p*

"How lit - tle did I dream that Hind - ley would ev - er make me cry.

Soli Vins. I Soli Vins. II

pp espr. Solo Vln. (Solo Cello)

Poor Heath - cliff! Hind - ley calls him a vag - a-bond, and says

Soli Vins. I Soli Vins. II

Solo Vln. Solo Cello

Here one sees an example of the voice not being used for verbal signification only, but the emphasis lying more on the utilisation of the quality of the voice to create atmosphere.

Floyd, however, has Lockwood speak his text from the diary:

Tomorrow I shall become the bride of Edgar Linton and will leave my beloved Wuthering Heights to live with him and his sister, Isabella, at Thrushcross Grange. Edgar is sweet and gentle and loves me more than his own life and Isabella is pretty and worships me but she is very spoiled. I should be happy tonight but my heart is like lead. Heathcliff, where are you? Where are you? You are more myself than I am and you have left me. How am I to live without Heathcliff, wherever you are, come back! (13-14)

The text is spoken over a sparse musical accompaniment that gradually becomes more expressive and agitated, culminating in the sound of the wind outside:

(Ex. 2.)

(Speaking)

LOCKWOOD: [15] then opens the

Lock. "Diary of.. Catherine Earnshaw.. Catherine Heathcliff.. Catherine Linton."

book at random and, leaning closer to the fire, read.)

Lock. "To - morrow I shall become the bride of Edgar Linton and will leave my beloved

Wuthering Heights to live with him and his sister, Isabella, at Thrushcross Grange. Edgar is sweet and gentle and loves me more than his own life and

The orchestra plays a more subservient role when compared with the equivalent moment in Herrmann's opera. One can perhaps draw a preliminary conclusion about the narrative methods of the two composers. Herrmann seems to have responded to Lockwood as focaliser - the musical impulse appears to originate in his perception of the situation, while Floyd's method could be compared, in a limited way, to that of an authorial narrator who is, in a sense, 'above' the scene.

Floyd distorts the chronology somewhat as Cathy's diary entries in the novel occur long before her marriage to Edgar. However, having Cathy voice her misgivings about her impending marriage functions proleptically as subsequent events in the opera are coloured for the audience by this knowledge. As Knoepfmacher (1989:82) says of the novel: "these entries ... point to the imminent loss of a childhood Eden which the ensuing chapters then dramatize." He also makes the point that "it is no coincidence that Catherine ... should materialize in Lockwood's dream. He is, after all, sleeping in the 'oak case', that curious panelled 'structure', that was once her bed; and he has been reading the rebellious diary she wrote when she and the boy Heathcliff were still unsundered" (15).

Musically the methods of the two composers again differ significantly. Herrmann uses a rather lugubrious melody for Lockwood's reading from the diary. Floyd, however, has Lockwood speak his lines against an orchestral accompaniment (Ex. 2.) - much in the tradition of melodrama. The musical discourse up to this point in Floyd's opera had been dominated by a flexible melodic recitative and this interruption of the dominant discourse and intrusion of a new discursive effect heightens the dramatic presentation of the information contained in the diary as

well as making it completely understandable for the audience. We are made both visually and aurally aware that this is a diary entry with the added advantage of the intelligibility of a spoken text. Lindenberger (1984:88-89), discussing this kind of effect, describes Wagner's reaction to hearing the word "tot" which is spoken rather than sung in the quartet in Beethoven's *Fidelio*:

This juxtaposition of opposing modes of discourse affected Wagner in a manner that he felt compelled to describe in the language of Romantic metaphysics: the intrusion was like 'a sudden plunging from one sphere into the other, and its sublimity consisted in this - that, as with a stroke of lightning, we gained a momentary insight into the nature of both spheres, of which one comprised precisely the ideal, the other the real.' From Wagner's point of view the ideal sphere is that music can only achieve sublime effect if it intersects occasionally with the "real" sphere of an alien discourse.... A moment of direct speech that interrupts a thickly orchestrated musical continuum can help confirm an audience's acceptance of the high style with which the drama is trying to work its effect. (88-89)

Paradoxically, these moments of apparent stasis can also be seen as musical climaxes "because of the fact that the music [in *Fidelio*], which has maintained an unrelentingly lofty style throughout, has come to a temporary halt" (87). The importance of the text is underlined here in *Wuthering Heights* as in *Fidelio* by this change in mode which, through juxtaposition, deliberately 'points' that particular section of text. This device is frequently employed in opera.

The methods used by the two composers to suggest the ghostly presence of Catherine also differ significantly. Hewish (1969:140) remarks on the "celebrated opening" of the novel which makes "integral use of such well-worn properties as the visit of the stranger to a mysterious house and the dream", but notes how the dreams are related to the "work as a whole, to its central situation and themes." He considers that the Gothic elements of the episode are not used gratuitously but with "great imaginative power":

Lockwood's prying into Catherine's journal and decipherment of the writing on the window ledge establish her childhood attachment to Heathcliff, their rebellious natures, and her tragic choice (in the alternating names, Catherine Earnshaw - Catherine Heathcliff - Catherine Linton). His discoveries also provide the waking basis for the dream of her ghost, thus linking the planes of the real and the supernatural. (140-141)

Herrmann uses predominantly orchestral means to suggest this collision of the real and the supernatural (for a composer renowned for his film-scores for Alfred Hitchcock such as *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, *Marnie*, and *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, effects such as these pose few problems). He employs drum-rolls followed by jagged orchestral outbursts to create an ominous feeling of suspense, very much in the tradition of film music:

to be 'tracing' the physical events depicted by the characters on stage (yet, paradoxically, these characters are 'narrated' by the music); operatic discourse can be regarded as essentially diegetic. (In a sense, the actors on stage in opera are part of what is known in narratology as the 'surface structure' while the orchestra-narrator could be seen as the 'actant': as "a fundamental *role* at the level of narrative *deep structure* (Prince 1988:1).) Part of the problem that twentieth century opera faces is that this 'tracing' of events by the musical accompaniment can become an end in itself. Opera has tended to oscillate between two poles of musical representation: from the one extreme of bel canto melody, which, superficially, appears to have little to do with the drama of the situation, to the opposite extreme of music imitating and underlining every action on stage. There is the danger of creating what Kerman (1988:222) ironically describes as "enervated" music which "contorts itself so strenuously at every detail of action that one loses interest in discriminating between the tremendously dramatic, the stupendously dramatic, and the merely earth-shakingly dramatic."

The violence of Lockwood's reaction to his dream in the novel has frequently been noted. Van Ghent (1970:177) considers that "the image is probably the most cruel one in the book", while Knoepfmacher (1989:90) remarks that "there remains something curiously excessive about Lockwood's terrified repudiation of the dream-child who tries to creep into his bed". Kavanagh (1985:22) sees the "sadistic, infanticidal violence of Lockwood the dreamer" foreshadowing Heathcliff's "wide-awake violence." The two dreams in the novel function in a different way: the first being seen as a 'realistic' and hardly a disturbing one, while the second is one in which, as Holderness (1985:60) maintains, the "mind seems exposed to a genuinely supernatural order of reality." The effect of these two dreams is "to explore the experience of a rational man brought to the very limits of his knowledge and understanding" (61). Herrmann demands that the singer imitate the voice of Catherine "in a ghostly voice - quasi falsetto", the vocal effect being bizarre and estranging with a certain, unfortunate, comic element as well.

Floyd opts for the more theatrical (yet perhaps more difficult) depiction of what actually happens during the dream. The stage directions state that

the shutter of the window above the window-seat bangs against the pane. Lockwood starts and raises himself to a sitting position. As the banging continues, Lockwood gets to his knees and raises the window to fasten the shutter. As he does so, a chalk-white hand and arm reach through the open space and the outstretched fingers convulsively clutch at the warm air of the room. Lockwood screams and jerks away from the window. Then there is the unearthly sound of a woman's voice, near, then distant, like the sound of wind. (15)

All this occurs to the accompaniment of rushing scales in the orchestra. The actual physical depiction of what happens is perhaps more effective in Floyd's opera than Lockwood's account of his dream in Herrmann's opera in that, as well as the brevity he achieves in physical representation as opposed to narration, Floyd actually uses the voice of Cathy rather than the

slightly grotesque effect of a bass voice imitating a female voice which Herrmann calls for. The sound of Cathy's voice is also 'fixed' in the audience's aural memory even though ghost-like effects are used to 'estrangle' it somewhat. Floyd also has Lockwood briefly recount to Heathcliff what has happened thus doubly reinforcing the impact of this event in the audience's minds and indirectly conveying some of the narrative process of the novel.

The final parts of the prologues of both operas also differ substantially. In Herrmann's opera Heathcliff wrenches the door open (in the novel it is the window) and calls out to Cathy. The composer uses thematic material which first occurred in the opening pages of the opera and which will again occur at the very end:

(Ex. 4.)

and wrenches it open

Lento (in 4) molto sost. e tempestuoso

The snow and wind hurl in

qui - et!

Horns con sord.

ff

Tutti

Brass Sig. = 5-3-2

Cello & Db. ff

calling out into the storm

Molto appassionato

On - Ca - thy!

ff

Harp

Vlns. sf

This recurrence of thematic material throughout a work is an operatic convention which, of course, crystallised in the operas of Wagner and has become a staple of twentieth century operatic discourse, part of the whole architecture of musical development that gives an opera its structure. This technique also plays a part in the overall dramatic effect that opera strives to create and differs substantially from the dramatic principles underlying spoken drama. Rather than being structured in relatively short scenic modules, as in much spoken drama, many operas consist of larger scenic units which owe their coherence and structure to predominantly musical means (sometimes making use of the equivalent of large symphonic structures), using the many kinds of musical discourse available to the composer to impose form and dramatic structure and give variety to his work. As Lindenberger (1986:54) suggests: "The intensity that operatic composers seek can be linked to an illusion of inevitability that opera is able to create with greater ease than spoken drama. An opera evokes this sense of inevitability less through the dramatic plot it follows than through its musical development." Lindenberger further notes that opera seems more philosophical than spoken drama "to the extent that the composer subjects human actions to the tight logic of musical form and seems to raise these actions to a mythical, more universal level than they achieve through purely verbal expression."

This inevitability that Lindenberger speaks of can perhaps best be seen in macro-narrative terms: the thematic and harmonic drive towards final resolution can give an opera an overall sense of structure as well as closure, much as the momentum which frequently seems to drive a narrative towards a final inevitable conclusion. (Britten's outstanding use of thematic variation in *The Turn of the Screw* is a well known example of a work in which purely musical means can create this sense of narrative and dramatic inevitability: Kerman (1988:224) talks about the "musical web grow[ing] quietly obsessive".) The equivalent in narratology is the *macrostructure* which is the "abstract underlying structure of a text" and which is further defined as "the *deep structure* of a text defining its global meaning" (Prince 1988:49). The controlling force behind these larger musical structures is the complete musical persona, within whose control the function of the operatic character is circumscribed: the character is 'narrated' by the orchestra-narrator. One is aware that opera is a curious mixture of apparent mimesis and diegesis, of the dramatic and the narrative and this could perhaps be seen as a central tension in opera: the dramatic elements (which find their equivalent in spoken drama) in opposition to the narrative elements (which have their equivalent in fictional discourse).

The stage directions for the conclusion of Herrmann's Prologue are explicit:

Heathcliff holding the lantern aloft, vainly searches out into the storm. The winds echo his cries. The lantern light is blown out. Darkness engulfs the room, except for the window which remains constantly radiant through which the whirling snow can be seen. Only Heathcliff's silhouette is seen, as the curtain slowly falls. (23-24)

The question is left hanging: has there really been a ghost or is it a figment of Lockwood's imagination? Holderness (1985:60-61) speculates whether Catherine's ghost is really there in the novel and concludes that

[t]he answer isn't quite as simple as it may appear to be. Once awake, Lockwood talks of ghosts and goblins; but for him the dream and 'real life' are obviously separate and mutually exclusive worlds.... For Heathcliff, that separation of dream and reality does not exist: having heard Lockwood's account he, in full waking consciousness, throws open the window and cries his anguish out into the night.... Lockwood interposes irony between himself and what he has just witnessed: for Heathcliff, the dream is perhaps more real than his waking life.

Certainly the operatic 'reality' tends towards the authenticity of the ghost rather than suggesting Lockwood's ironic view, especially as the audience can hear a voice in Floyd's opera which seems to indicate a ghostly presence of some kind. However, the 'reality' of the portrayal of the ghost can depend greatly on the imaginative staging of this scene. In productions of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, for instance, where the physical presence of the ghosts appears to sacrifice some of the ambiguity of the tale, theatrical means are frequently used to suggest the view of the

ghosts as manifestations of the governess's overheated mind. Yet, as Kerman (1988:224) suggests, it is the music which sustains illusion and it is the "musical web" that is constructed which "makes this story not only credible on stage but arresting" (225). It is the power of the musical narrator - the orchestra - which sustains this credibility.

Both operas omit the last part of Chapter Three which deals with Lockwood's final hours at Wuthering Heights and his return to the Grange, events which would not have added much to the theatrical effectiveness of these scenes. Herrmann has Heathcliff staring imploringly out of the "radiant" (23) window, a visual image that is repeated almost exactly at the end of the opera. The importance of the symbolic use of windows in the novel has provoked much critical comment. Van Ghent (1970:178) remarks that the "window-pane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the 'inside' from the 'outside', the 'human' from the alien and the terrible 'other', and sees the 'meaning' of the window as "a separation between the daemonic depths of the soul and the limited and limiting lucidities of consciousness, a separation between the soul's 'otherness' and its humanness." Vogler (1968:12) also comments on the importance of the window in the symbolic context of the novel:

What Lockwood fears and resists is what Heathcliff and Cathy have a remarkable ability to achieve. Heathcliff easily wrenches open the lattice that stopped Lockwood, "Bursting, as he pulled at it, into an uncontrollable passion of tears." Simultaneous with the opening of the window is the loss of what Lockwood calls "apparent sense," a surrender to passion which he finds embarrassing to watch and beyond comprehension. Heathcliff's final surrender to passion comes with his death. He dies before this same window - the lattice open and the rain coming in, his hand on the sill - confident that his death will be the recovery of the happiness he had glimpsed as a child. In this scene, as in the others, the window suggests a threshold of vision and functions as a touchstone of identity.

Herrmann's Prologue conveys a similar sense of Heathcliff's realisation that his identity lies outside in the storm rather than in the room with Lockwood - 'reality' is with Catherine, and Fletcher has obviously realised the drama inherent in ending the scene with Heathcliff calling out into the night after Cathy. In both operas, but particularly in Herrmann's, the prologue acts as a framing device with both visual images and motivic musical material being repeated at the end of the opera - an equivalent of Lockwood's 'framing' role in the novel.

Floyd has a different set design in mind and he exploits this by having Heathcliff rush out of the house in pursuit of this ghostly presence. We have the theatrical (and melodramatic) image of Heathcliff standing, "arms outstretched, silhouetted against the sky over the moors" - an image that will also bring the curtain down at the end of the opera. Herrmann's scene comes to a formal musical ending:

reminds us that none of her witnesses can aspire to total knowledge which the implied author at best allows us to approximate. The various narratives - Lockwood's and Nelly's, Catherine's and Cathy's, Heathcliff's and Isabella's - remain partial strands.... Though more capacious as a container than Lockwood's, Nelly's narrative only compels us to reopen the box labelled "Lockwood's Dream". (41)

This limited knowledge to which each narrator is privy is difficult to suggest in a visual and aural medium such as opera, and any ambiguity can only obliquely be suggested by the orchestra through technical devices such as tonal ambivalence (as Britten uses to great effect in *Billy Budd*) and lack of musical resolution. Thus the narrative complexity of the novel is necessarily simplified for the different imperatives of the lyric stage.

3. Act One: narrative development.

3.1. Herrmann

After their respective prologues both operas move back in time, with Herrmann's first scene taking place in "The Main Hall" at Wuthering Heights in 1840, twenty years earlier. Floyd returns to the same setting as in his Prologue, but it is 1817, eighteen years earlier. Hermann's staging has Heathcliff and Cathy returning from the moors to an *Allegretto pastorale* which gives the music a lilting, waltz-like quality imparting a tranquil atmosphere. Cathy sings some lines from a Brontë poem:

I have been wandering through the green woods
And 'mid the flowery, smiling plains.
I have been listening to the dark floods
To the thrush's thrilling strains
I have gathered the pale primrose
And the purple violet sweet
I've been where the asphodel grows
And where lives the red deer fleet. (27-28)

Her vocal line has a smoothness and elegance which complements the text and which effectively conveys her happy state of mind. One enters here the realm of lyrical romantic opera with the voice imitating the trilling of the birds she sings about and, in turn, being imitated by the flute (an echo of countless nineteenth century Italian operas!):

(Ex. 7.)

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line (soprano) with lyrics "flow'r - y smil - ing plains. I have been list - 'ning to the dark" and a piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics "floods. To the thrus's - thrill - ing strains. Ah!" and includes a "Solo Vies." section. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *pp*. Performance markings include "Solo Vies.", "poco rall.", and "douce."

Heathcliff takes over her vocal line, expressing similar sentiments with continually rising vocal phrases suggesting his ardour:

Look, Cathy, how the sunset has turned all to gold,
 And how the shadows lie upon the hills.
 See how the distant moors are broken into dusky dells.
 And how splendid the heather.
 Proud heather -
 It shines and lowers and swells and dies.
 It changes forever from midnight to noon.
 Its like the evening sky come down to earth. (30-32)

This scene evokes a feeling of pastoral bliss in sharp contrast to the darkness and violence preceding it (variety in the deployment of musical discourse is essential in opera). There is naturally little awareness as yet of the intensity and passion of the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff as depicted in the novel, and the music is very much in the traditional mould of romantic expression with few of the dark undercurrents of the novel. (Floyd's first scene, in contrast, immediately plunges the audience into the violence of the Heights.) This romantic mood is briefly interrupted by a teasing speculation from Cathy about Heathcliff's origins. Fletcher has taken material from Chapter Seven (this librettist frequently takes lines from sections of the novel which are not directly related to the events for which they are used) in which Nelly attempts to comfort Heathcliff after the embarrassment of Cathy's return from Thrushcross Grange:

Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors, and brought to England. (44)

(Again Herrmann's expertise in scoring for films is evident from his use of suitably 'Chinese' flavoured music). In the novel this is Nelly's attempt to bolster Heathcliff's wounded self-esteem, whereas here it is used by Cathy (and fits the scene rather well) to convey a sense of mystery about his origins as well as to enable him to proclaim his free spirit:

I know not where I came, or who I am, but I was born to rule, and to be fierce and free. The hawks that wheel, the wind that blows all proclaim my kinship with the proud. I'm one with them. I'm the gaunt crag. I'm the radiant sky (40-41).

It is a typically operatic (and dramatic) credo in which characters frequently reveal thoughts and emotions as much for the audience as for themselves or other characters on stage, and it conveys something of the passion of Heathcliff. Cathy proclaims her complete identification with him: "Oh, Heathcliff. I too am one with them"(41), and they then resume their former lyrical mode and end with a rapturous duet while they stare out of the window as "the sunset breaks forth in its final expiring splendour" (51):

(Ex. 8.)

The musical score for Cathy and Heathcliff is presented in three systems. The first system shows Cathy and Heathcliff singing in a duet, with Cathy's part in the upper staff and Heathcliff's in the lower staff. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Molto meno mosso (molto largamente)'. The second system continues the duet, with Cathy's part in the upper staff and Heathcliff's in the lower staff. The tempo is marked 'rall.' and 'ff'. The third system shows the piano accompaniment, with the right hand in the upper staff and the left hand in the lower staff. The tempo is marked 'rall.' and 'ff'. The piano part features a prominent melody in the right hand, with the left hand providing a harmonic accompaniment. The score is marked with various dynamics and tempo changes, including 'rall.', 'ff', and 'Molto meno mosso (molto largamente)'.

It is in a scene such as this that Herrmann's opera reveals its affinity with nineteenth-century romantic opera. Considering the date of its composition, a duet like this is particularly conservative in style (both harmonically and structurally) and there is the danger of trivialising the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff. The conventionality of the musical discourse is reminiscent of countless similar moments in late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century opera, especially Bellini and Puccini, and tends towards cliché. Its lush romanticism, at times, swamps

the elemental nature of the story of Heathcliff and Cathy which seems to call out for more vividly distinctive music. This harking back to earlier models has no hint of parody or self-reflexivity as in an opera such as Argento's *The Aspern Papers* where the intertextuality is always evident.

Something of the latent violence which exists at Wuthering Heights and which permeates the novel is briefly suggested by both the demeanour of Hindley and Joseph who enter and this is emphasised particularly by Hindley's music which has a violent, craggy quality:

(Ex. 9.)

The image shows a musical score for a scene from an opera. The top system is for Hindley, with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked *ff* and has the lyrics: "Wu - the - ring Heights is mine! Mine! Mine!". The piano accompaniment includes a section for "Tutti" marked *ff*. Below the vocal line, there is a section for "Timp. 8 hasta" and a section for "HINDLEY 25" with the lyrics: "ad lib. Do you hear you beg - gar's wneip? From hence - forth you shall do as I say!". The piano accompaniment for this section is also marked *ff*.

Hindley is seen to be a drunkard and Joseph a hypocrite, masking his cruelty beneath a veneer of piety. Interestingly, although Joseph's reading from the Bible might be an opportunity for the composer to satirize this hypocrisy, his religious fervour appears to be taken at face value and the singer is given the musical instruction, *Andante religioso*, to be sung with "deep emotion" (61), thereby dissipating a satiric element of the novel. Joseph finally falls asleep and Heathcliff and Cathy once again gaze out of the window, this time at the risen moon, and the music of their earlier 'love duet' once again almost programmatically swells up in the orchestra, and to the accompaniment of a long orchestral postlude they slip out of the window as the orchestra gradually subsides. The primary function of this scene is to depict the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff as well as Heathcliff's precarious position as the threatened and threatening 'other' in the Wuthering Heights household. The lyricism of the music of Cathy and Heathcliff tends to negate the complexity of their relationship as it is depicted in the novel. The hardness and brutality of both the natural world and that of the inhabitants of the house, although occasionally suggested, are more frequently subsumed in the general lyrical expansiveness of the musical discourse and the latent violence of the situation remains submerged.

3.2. Floyd

Floyd, in his first scene, opts for a radically different format. He has Earnshaw present, as well as Nelly, Cathy, Heathcliff and Hindley. In contrast to Herrmann, who is not specific on

this point, Floyd gives detailed instructions (perhaps impossible to fulfil) how Cathy should appear: "She is a girl of seventeen whose dominance as a personality is apparent as soon as she enters. There is something slightly uncouth in her dark, imperious beauty, and her animated, intense eyes and loose black hair should be the features one notices most immediately" (22). Despite this attention to detail, she still tends to emerge in the opera as the conventional romantic operatic heroine (usually a consumptive victim, a long lineage in which Herrmann's Cathy, although not consumptive, undoubtedly also fits). As the scene unfolds, the relationship between Cathy and Nelly appears troubled, Nelly being impatient with Cathy's imperious ways. Similarly, the relationship between Hindley and his father is depicted as full of resentment on Hindley's side towards what he perceives as his father's preferential treatment of Heathcliff. One senses throughout this scene, in contrast with Herrmann, a stronger feeling of subliminal violence, largely due to the less lyrical musical discourse:

(Ex. 10.)

Hind: *mf* EARNSHAW: You
 Earn: No one will pun-ish Heath-cliff! I don't see that he's been wrong.
 Hind: nev-er see! You're blind! The or-phan is al-ways right.
 Earn: I'll
sempre crescendo e più marcato

One can see illustrated here Floyd's typical use of short vocal phrases which give the scene a more conversational quality as well. Earnshaw's treatment of Heathcliff is not presented uncritically, and the stage directions state that his manner towards Heathcliff is "cajoling and fond". There seems to be a certain justification for Hindley's resentment which is the driving emotion in this scene, and it finally forces a confrontation with his father. Cathy attempts to play a conciliatory role but to no avail. Hindley forces the confrontation to its conclusion and Earnshaw strikes Hindley with his cane which Hindley seizes: "I am now master here". (43) His words are spoken, another example of the spoken word in operatic discourse having a unique effectiveness, interrupting, as it does, the dominant preceding melodic discourse. To a quiet, yet agitated orchestral figure, Earnshaw "continues to look at his son a moment longer in disbelief and then he suddenly clutches his chest, his face contorts in pain, and, staggering, he falls to the

floor" (44). Hindley, "with great deliberation...turns to Joseph and Nelly" and again, in complete orchestral silence, speaks: "He's dead. Help me take him upstairs" (45).

This is obviously the climactic moment in this scene and one is aware of a different musico-dramatic conception operating in Floyd's work when compared with Herrmann's. Herrmann, still firmly rooted in the romantic tradition, seems compelled by the convention which finds it necessary to support (and sometime overwhelm) dramatically expressive moments with loud and expressive orchestral accompaniment, much as in film music of the 50s and 60s. Floyd, however, adopts a different approach, trusting that the drama of the situation will find expression as much in the events on stage as in the orchestra. Of course he has radically changed the events surrounding Earnshaw's death, opting for a melodramatic confrontation which makes dramatic sense in the context of the opera but has no basis in the novel. His orchestra acts more as a commentator on the drama on stage, while most of the actual drama in Herrmann's opera occurs in the orchestra where the orchestra-narrator functions almost as another character. In a sense the orchestra-narrator in Herrmann's opera is the equivalent of a first-person, intrusive narrator, while Floyd's orchestra-narrator is a much less intrusive authorial presence. One further sees in a moment such as this differing conceptions of what music drama means. Herrmann is still strongly in the tradition of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century operatic composers, a tradition culminating in the operas of a composer such as Alban Berg. Although vastly different in musical idiom, Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* seems to belong to the world of *Wozzeck* - a dissonant and 'difficult' work, yet one which still can be placed firmly in the late romantic tradition.

Floyd, on the other hand, is representative of much of the post-war trend in musical drama. Although his musical idiom, like that of a composer such as Britten, is relatively conservative when compared with some of the more radical European operatic composers, one can still sense a definite break with the late-romantic tradition; dramatic values receive as much attention as purely musical ones and the orchestral accompaniment is much 'leaner', less lushly romantic, and more subservient to the drama on stage. There also seems to be a different conception of the role of the orchestra-narrator in opera between the two composers. In Herrmann's work, most of the drama is built up symphonically in architecturally complex musical structures which often span an entire act. The drama achieves fulfilment in the resolution of musical questions as much as dramatic ones, while Floyd uses much shorter musical segments with a less overtly apparent sense of larger structures.

In Floyd's opera it is the theatrical 'business' on stage which actually appears to drive the orchestral accompaniment and, in this particular confrontation, most of this 'business' occurs virtually as mime, with the orchestra supplying the accompaniment and commentary on the events on stage. Again the analogy between a first- and third-person narrator can be made, with Herrmann's orchestra-narrator being more obviously 'present' in the action while Floyd's 'authorial' narrator seems less conspicuously part of the action. The music in Floyd's opera

unobtrusively presents the action: the death of Earnshaw, his clutching of his chest and his face contorted in pain, as well as his few staggering steps before he collapses, are illustrated in the orchestra, especially in the series of staccato chords and the repeated notes which convey his faltering heartbeat:

(Ex. 11.)

Joseph and Nelly. Heathcliff looks on without any trace of sentiment. Hindley is sobered for a moment. Then he

quickly crosses and kneels down in front of Cathy who has taken her father in her arms. She rocks back and forth,

sobbing quietly. Hindley leans over and puts his ear, and then his hand, over his father's heart. Slowly and with great deliberation he turns to Joseph and Nelly who have stood over him watching anxiously)

(Speaking)
 Hind. He's dead. Help me take him up-stairs.

colla voce *ff marcatis. ma cantando*
colla voce *ff marcatis. ma cantando*

(Joseph stoops laboriously and he and Hindley lift Earnshaw in their arms and move towards the stairs)

Thomson (1989:65) maintains that the musical depiction of an event can, in fact, be stronger than its visual depiction: "Music is warming, emotional, acoustically surrounding, a bath. The visual always keeps a certain distance, hence is cooler than the musical experience." However, partly in contradiction to this, Floyd ends the scene in a traditionally romantic manner. After Hindley exits, on the line: "Death changes nothing. Things will be as I said." (46), Heathcliff and Cathy embrace and sing of their love for each other:

We still have each other and that can't be changed, and as long as we are on this earth together you must never leave me or let me go. We'll let nothing separate us here. Nothing, nothing in all the earth. And nothing can part us after death, for there is no death in heaven. (47-50)

Although their brief duet ends quietly rather than with a traditional 'double forte' flourish, it does establish the romantic nature of their relationship in the audience's mind. The traditional view of Cathy and Heathcliff as a 'romantic' pair is too powerful to be easily subverted:

(Ex. 12.)

diminuendo e ritardando al fine

Cathy: there is no death, there is no death, no death in

Heathcliff: there is no death, there is no death, no death in

pp

Cathy: heav - - en.

Heathcliff: heav - - en.

pp

(Nelly has watched Cathy and Heathcliff from the door and as they cling to one another, she lifts her apron and covers her face)

(The curtain falls)

Nelly has watched the final moments of this scene and the stage direction states that she "lifts her apron and covers her face". (50) Her action suggests that this ending is not merely that of a conventional love duet (as in Herrmann's work), but that there are undercurrents and resonances implicit in this scene. Floyd allows himself his moment of quasi-romantic expressiveness (and, indeed, these moments are the life-blood of opera) but underlying it is a consideration of the dramatic imperatives as well as the wider implications of the novel - that this is no conventionally romantic relationship but one fraught with many other issues.

3.3. Herrmann.

Both operas have two scenes in Act One: Herrmann's second scene takes place at Wuthering Heights on the Christmas following Scene One, while Floyd's is also set in the house and occurs two months later (April, 1817). Both scenes open with Joseph; in Herrmann's work he is dourly singing from his hymnbook, while Floyd has him reading from the Bible. Here is an instance of the operatic form imposing its own structural imperatives on the source. In Herrmann's opera, many of the crucial events of the novel occur 'off-stage', and are 'reported' in some way by various characters, so that prior to this scene, Earnshaw has died and Cathy has been at Thrushcross Grange with the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights expecting her home at any time. Much of this information is not made available to the audience. Joseph's hymn is a dirge culminating in the doleful lines: "Compassion reigns a little while./Revenge, eternally" (74-75),

rather inappropriate fare for Christmas time yet aptly reflecting the situation at Wuthering Heights!

Nelly, who is nursing young Hareton, attempts to liven up the atmosphere and to a gently lilting melody sings of "a different Christmas" when "the old Master was alive" (76). Her following lines continue to inform the audience what has happened in the meantime: she sings of "poor Heathcliff! The old master loved him like a son and it would grieve his heart to see him neglected and forlorn." It is obvious that the opera needs to provide essential information to the audience concerning the events in the interim period and here one briefly sees Nelly in the operatic equivalent of her role as principal narrator of the novel. Heathcliff is present and Nelly encourages him to smarten himself up before Cathy arrives, but Heathcliff insists that "Cathy will take me as I am" - a line with ironic overtones. Nelly compares him favourably with Edgar Linton but Heathcliff insists on his individuality and independence. He cannot believe that Cathy would prefer Edgar to him:

You think Cathy would like Edgar Linton? Or that I would wish to be like him?
Ah - I'd not exchange for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar's, at
Thrushcross Grange - not if I might have the privilege of flinging Joseph off the
highest gable - and painting the house-front with Hindley's blood. (82-83)

Heathcliff's violent language, supported by an agitated orchestral accompaniment, reflects something of the latent masculine violence at the Heights which Pykett (1989:111) observes "is so extreme as to become almost parodic":

(Ex. 13.)

HEATHCLIFF
44 *Molto agitato* *furiously*

You think Ca - thy would like Ed - gar Lin - ton? Or that

Molto agitato (sost. e largamente)

ff Voice *Exp.* *ff* *f* *ff*

I would wish to be like him? Ah! I'd not ex - change for a

ff *ff* *ff* *ff*

thous - and lives my con - di - tion here for Ed - gar's at

ff *ff* *ff* *ff*

Nelly again tries to soften Heathcliff's mood by leading him to a mirror to show him how good-looking he is. The passage is taken directly from the novel:

Do you mark those two lines between your eyes? And those thick brows, that instead of rising, arched, sink in the middle? And that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk, glinting under them, like devil's spies? (84-85)

This results in Heathcliff's "looking intensely at himself in the mirror" (85), with its obvious symbolic overtones. (Heathcliff's looking into the mirror will be paralleled by Catherine shortly before her death where, feeling herself alienated and imprisoned, she is unable to recognize her reflection in the window pane.) This moment would seem to call for greater intensity and a heightening of the level of discourse, and the librettist fuses two poems of Emily Brontë's into an arioso which captures something of the mood-swings which are so much part of Heathcliff's nature. The first poem is full of long vowels and is set to a plaintive melody, with the performing instruction *Adagio con molto espressivo e triste* (somewhat counter to Heathcliff's character as it emerges in the novel where there is very little self-pity in his make-up):

(Ex. 14.)

HEATHCLIFF
46 *Adagio con molto espr. e triste*

pp *con sord.*

pp

Solo Viol.

pp

I am the on-ly
being whose doom no tongue would ask, no eye would mourn. I

The aria assumes a brighter, more lyrical quality in the second verse where the mood changes with the use of shorter, brighter vowels:

I'm happiest, when most away
I can bear my soul from its home of clay.
On a windy night, when the moon is bright,
And the eye can wander through worlds of light.
When I am not, and none beside,
Nor earth, nor sea, nor cloudless sky,
But only spirit, wandering wide
through infinite immensity. (87-88)

Although this lyrical outburst is not separated in formal musical terms from the surrounding music, the fuller orchestral sonority enhances the impression of increased intensity, arias of this

The final tableau is described in the stage direction:

Edgar makes a futile gesture of comfort towards her. She pulls herself away from him, and rushes up the stairs, Isabella goes to the foot of the stairs, and looks up curiously. Hindley descends the stairs, adjusting his clothes and goes to the sideboard, where he pours himself a drink. The curtain slowly falls, as the Carollers finish: 'It is now Christmas.' (102-103)

This is a Christmas with seemingly little cheer. One sees here how much of the 'drama' of this scene is visual - pantomime - but there is also supplementary narration by the orchestra. The entire scene is structured in an arc and the music rises in intensity with Joseph and Nelly's brief ariosos being followed by Heathcliff's more impassioned outburst. The climax is reached with the quarrel between Heathcliff and Hindley and Heathcliff's curse, and the tension subsides with the sound of the carollers outside.

3.4. Floyd

Floyd's second scene in Act One also opens with Joseph, this time reading from the Bible. His text is singularly appropriate for the situation:

"As for the man who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not for disputes over opinions. Let not him who eats despise him who abstains, and let not him who abstains pass judgment on him who eats; for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on another? It is before his own master that he stands and falls. And he will be upheld, for the master is able to make him stand." (51-52)

His text is spoken on one tone, almost in liturgical parody and, in contrast to Herrmann's equivalent scene, there is a pointedly satiric aspect to the music: Joseph's hypocrisy is obvious: (Ex. 16.)

62 *Largo* (♩ = 58)

JOSEPH:

Jos. "As for the man who is weak in faith, disputes over opinions. Let not welcome him, but not for him who eats despise him

who abstains, and let not him him who eats; for God Who are you to pass judgment who abstains pass judgment on has welcomed him. on another? It is before

simile

There is an altercation between Joseph, who is supported by Hindley, and Cathy and Heathcliff, who are banished to the kitchen. Heathcliff proposes a "romp on the moors" (60) and they exit stealthily from the kitchen and emerge onto a part of the stage suggesting Peniston Crag. The music immediately takes on a more lyrical quality as Cathy exclaims, "Oh, Heathcliff, I can breathe again! My lungs are not enough to drink in the air", (63-64) a line that carries ironic overtones as it will return, using similar thematic material, in the final moments of the opera (281) as Cathy is dying:

(Ex. 17.)

73 (Suddenly ecstatic) *f*

Cathy Oh, Heath-cliff, I can breathe a-gain! My

f *sempre poco f*

There then follows an ecstatic scene commencing with a bravura aria for Heathcliff culminating in the baritone's high A flat on the line, "Heather, heather for Cathy, my queen!" (67-8). The high-lying 'tessitura' of this arioso (and much of his other music) emphasizes Heathcliff's function as the romantic male lead in the opera which is at the expense of the demonic aspect of his nature. The role obviously calls for a young and virile singer to match the novel's Heathcliff who, as Pykett (1989:116) remarks, is "all libidinal desire and phallic energy". Cathy takes over from Heathcliff, using the central image of the freedom of the lap-wing. (This expressive and 'romantic' music will return again with great poignancy at the end of the opera under very different circumstances.) It is as if the passion in the orchestra overflows onto the stage and the orchestra-narrator becomes more prominent in foregrounding the emotion on stage. The depth of the feeling between the two is suggested by the stage directions:

Cathy runs to him and they embrace, their arms around each other, their faces together. Suddenly Cathy turns and kisses Heathcliff playfully on the cheek and, as she does so, he leans forward to kiss her on the mouth. Cathy instantly pulls away and takes a few steps back, looking at Heathcliff quizzically. After a strained moment, Cathy smiles and takes Heathcliff's hand. (72-73)

This is obviously a highly charged moment between the two with a strong sexual element (and is paralleled by a more intense one at the end of the first scene in Act Two). Floyd remains faithful to the novel which does not depict or even imply any overt sexual relationship between them, but this scene in the opera does, however, imply a passion that could erupt at any moment. Hewish

(1969:150) remarks on the "taboo on direct representation of sexual relationships" in Victorian novels often resulting in "incongruity", but observes that in this novel it "produces an element ... of uncertainty in the relationships of the characters the more closely one reads the less definite in certain respects is what is happening." The opera is less ambiguous than this in that the physical presence and movements of the characters on stage inevitably strongly suggest the physical attraction between them.

Cathy breaks the mood on stage by pointing to the lights of Thrushcross Grange and she suggests that they "go and see what the Lintons are doing" (73). They peer into the windows and Cathy is enraptured by Isabella's beautiful appearance. One notices the narrative device in the novel of presenting the Grange from outside rather than inside: in the opera, too, Heathcliff is established as the essential outsider and we recall Cathy's attempt's in the Prologue to get in through the window at Wuthering Heights. However, they are discovered and Heathcliff is left alone on stage murmuring Cathy's name as the curtain falls. In comparison with Herrmann, Floyd, depicts this crucial incident at Thrushcross Grange which makes Cathy's subsequent behaviour on her return to Wuthering Heights and her estrangement from Heathcliff more plausibly motivated. This is the first direct reference in the opera to Thrushcross Grange. The contrast between the two houses has great symbolic value in the novel. Hewish (1969:138) talks about the contrast between the 'stormy' and the 'calm' families while Pykett (1989:111) contrasts "the masculine world of hard work and the battle with physical nature at the Heights and the feminine world of luxury, leisure, culture, and the domestic ideal at the Grange", which Holderness (1985:30) puts into perspective by pointing out that the world at the Heights, "rough though it is" appears to contain more "humanity" than that at the Grange. Certainly all the 'passion' in the opera comes from the inhabitants of the Heights.

This scene also provides an opportunity for an important lyrical interlude on the moors which deepens the audience's understanding of the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff, indicating the latent sexual crosscurrents. One must never lose sight of the fact that theatrical factors usually outweigh the concept of fidelity to the original work in operatic adaptation. The fact that both these operas emphasize the 'romantic' aspect of Heathcliff and Cathy at the expense of any investigation of wider social or even metaphysical issues, is indicative of the dramaturgical need for lyrical moments in contrast with the more overtly dramatic ones. Floyd, here and elsewhere, reveals an economy of method which eludes Herrmann with his more expansive and lyrical musico-dramatic idiom. In these first two scenes, Floyd manages to capture much of the violence of Wuthering Heights, the passion of the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff, and more of the actual events of the novel, while still retaining the traditional operatic structures of aria and duet and melodic recitative. Herrmann's music, while often very beautiful and well constructed, somehow seems too unwieldy and lush to achieve the same tautness and elasticity necessary for the changing dramatic requirements. There is a sense of his moving from one musical set-piece to another with the drama being 'narrated' mainly through the music - it

remains on the psychological plane rather than on both the psychological and the physical level, as in Floyd's opera.

4. Act Two: psychological revelation - the aria.

4.1. Herrmann.

The second acts of both operas show striking similarities in that the dramatic and musical trajectory moves towards extended arias of revelation for Catherine. Again, one sees a convergence of dramaturgical imperatives with structural aspects of the novel. In the first scene of Act Two of Herrmann's work, whose second act takes place the following day, Cathy and Nelly are in conversation while they await the arrival of Edgar, and Cathy describes to Nelly the opulence of Thrushcross Grange. Into this domestic scene bursts Heathcliff wanting Cathy to join him on the moors (an action which Floyd achieved in combination with their visit to Thrushcross Grange). Here is a good example of the difference in musical and dramatic conception of the two composers in that Floyd, in the equivalent scene, has Heathcliff invite Cathy to join him, uttering the brief line, "The sun's just right for a romp on the moors" (60), to which Cathy instantly agrees. This whole exchange takes place within the space of six bars of music. Herrmann, however, has Heathcliff launch into an extended lyrical description of the moors:

Come, Cathy - it's a wild fresh afternoon. The turfs and paths are rustling with moist leaves, and the cold blue sky is half hidden by clouds. The two dwarf apple trees near the southern wall are in full bloom. And the grass on the moors is as green as showers and sun can make it. All sparkles and dances in glorious jubilee. (108-110)

- his invitation requiring more than three times as much music.

After quarrelling with Cathy, Heathcliff leaves and upon Edgar's entrance there is a semi-spoken exchange between Cathy and Nelly with Cathy attempting to get Nelly to leave the room. Accompanied by sustained chords interspersed with rapid figures in the strings, this *sprechgesang* effectively conveys Cathy's furtive asides to Nelly while she tries not to attract Edgar's attention: (Ex. 18.)

14 Moderato
CATHY *half-spoken* *p* (Nelly goes about her tasks. Cathy rushes up to her)
No. *Whispering with malice* *sotto voce* What are you doing there Nel-ly?
NELLY *half-spoken*
calmly My work, Miss.
pp *sempre colla voce* *(pp)* *(pp)*
Solo Hp.

Edgar follows Cathy out after they quarrel, and Nelly shortly afterwards observes him and Cathy outside and cynically comments: "Ah, as I thought. There will be no saving him. He's doomed and flies to his fate. There they go, making it up" (123-4). This is uttered to the sound of Cathy and Edgar singing a wordless vocalise off-stage:

(Ex. 19.)

This is one of those moments in opera during which, as Abbate (1991:4) notes, the sound of the voice itself, stripped of verbal signification, exerts its own power. One can perhaps hear both Cathy's and Edgar's ultimate fate reflected in this wordless music with its 'suspicious' power. Their relationship is doomed, as is that between Cathy and Heathcliff. There is no 'saving' Edgar or Cathy; all Nelly's apparent common sense and rationality cannot combat the mysterious power of this elemental attraction between Heathcliff and Catherine which finds its symbolic expression in this ambiguously wordless music.

The sound of their two voices is interrupted by the child Hareton rushing in and attempting to escape from his drunken father and seeking refuge with Nelly who placates the child with the opening lines of a ballad from the novel in a rocking six-eight beat:

It was far in the night, and the bairnies grat
The mither beneath the mools heard that.
Sleep, poor bairn. Poor bairn, sleep. (138)

Several critics have made specific reference to the ballad tradition which permeates the fabric of the novel. (Pykett (1989:100) describes Nelly as "in part, the wise and canny rustic of the ballad tradition.") Cathy enters and after being questioned by Nelly about Edgar, replies: "In my heart, and in my soul I am convinced I am wrong" (144). She asks Nelly whether she ever dreams "queer dreams" to which Nelly replies, "Now and then" (145). (This comes from Chapter Nine.) All this leads into a set-piece for Cathy and while she sings her aria, the sky darkens with the approach of a thunder-storm. Nelly's brief song with its gently rocking 6/8 rhythm has musically prepared the way for this more extended and passionate aria with its harp arpeggios

accompanying a vocal line continually rising in intensity. It is Cathy's first real moment of self-revelation:

I have dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me forever - and have gone through and through me, like wine through water, and have altered the colour of my mind. I dreamt once that I was in Heaven, and that Heaven did not seem to be my home. And I broke my heart with weeping to see the heath again. And the angels flung me back to earth, and Wuthering Heights, where I awoke sobbing with joy. (145-148)

The heightened, flexible language of the novel, evident in a passage such as this, is admirably suited to the aria form; its fictional language is both poetic and powerful, yet simple and intelligible. Thomson (1989:66) considers that a libretto needs "poetic language. Not pompous language, not florid, nor overloaded with imagery. But nobly plain, if possible compact, and somehow appropriate to myth-size characters."

For the audience this is the first real insight into Cathy and her feelings for Heathcliff, the conventional operatic aria still serving its primary function as a means of access into the innermost thoughts and emotions of an operatic character. Poizat (1992:6) sees the function of the aria in opera as alleviating "the passions by giving them free rein at the moment when they reach their greatest intensity." The first part of the aria is interrupted by Cathy's observation to Nelly: "I have no more right to marry Edgar, than I have to be in Heaven." The interruption of this higher discourse breaks the intensity momentarily - a necessary strategy to sustain the interest, enabling the composer subsequently to increase this intensity. This structure is typical of the nineteenth century aria/cabaletta form and further illustrates how Herrmann's opera utilises many traditional elements of Romantic opera. A crucial theatrical moment occurs as Cathy utters the line, "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now", which is overheard by Heathcliff who leaves in a rage observed by Nelly. Cathy then resumes her aria:

My greatest miseries in this world have been his miseries. My one thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I would still continue to be. And if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. My love for Edgar is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath. He's always always in my mind. Not as a pleasure, but for my own being. Nelly - I *am* Heathcliff.(152-154)

This is taken directly from the novel and the sinewy, clear language is again ideal for operatic purposes. The images are direct and the thoughts expressed concisely and plainly. The whole aria leads smoothly and inexorably to the climactic final line. One has the sense that during this aria Catherine is almost unaware of the listening Nelly. Her utterance is virtually a credo and, as Knoepfelmacher (1989:53) remarks of the equivalent scene in the novel, "it would seem that the reader, rather than Nelly, is intended to be the prime auditor." Holderness (1985:41) maintains that Cathy's words here in the novel "seem to express the most absolute degree of devotion and

commitment" while Hewish (1965:149) describes it as "a cry from the prison of the self rather than as an expression of love." Eagleton (1988:101-102) sees this speech in more problematic terms:

'I am Heathcliff!' is dramatically arresting, but it is also a way of keeping the outcast at arm's length, evading the challenge he offers. If Catherine is Heathcliff - if identity rather than relationship is in question - then their estrangement is inconceivable, and Catherine can therefore turn to others without violating the timeless metaphysical idea Heathcliff embodies ... Heathcliff, understandably, refuses to settle for this.

This is, of course, one of the most important moments in the opera and is a moment of recognition for Cathy that she is forever bound to Heathcliff. The opening bars of the second part of the aria are preceded by a short orchestral passage which depicts the growing storm outside (orchestra-narratorial description rather obviously symbolic of Cathy's emotional state) and her aria resumes with an even greater intensity than the first part. The music surges towards the climax of the aria in continually rising phrases and then suddenly 'stops' as Cathy utters the words: "Nelly, I am Heathcliff!" The singer is instructed to utter these words "with utmost intensity" and room for individual interpretation is left to the performer as the orchestra is *colla voce* and has to wait for the singer. The abrupt change of tempo has a similar effect to that achieved by sudden speech - it makes for greater dramatic intensity and focuses the attention on this crucial phrase as the movement of the music comes to a sudden halt. Rather melodramatically, as if to emphasise her statement, there is a vivid flash of lightning: (Ex. 20.)

The entrance of Joseph effects a lowering of the level of musical discourse and Cathy realizes that Heathcliff has overheard much of what she has said. In the novel her reaction at this moment is described as follows: "She jumped up in a fine fright, flung Hareton onto the settle, and ran to seek for her friend herself, not taking leisure to consider why she was so flurried, or

how her talk would have affected him" (64). In the opera, Cathy rushes out into the storm calling after Heathcliff using a semi-tone falling phrase which echoes Heathcliff's call in the Prologue and his final anguished cry at the end of the opera, giving a strong architectural structure as well as narrative cohesion to the opera:

(Ex. 21.)

This musical phrase functions explicitly as a leitmotif for the elemental passion and longing and subsequent loss which characterize the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy. The use of leitmotif in opera is complex: it can merely serve to remind the audience of the original context in which it occurred, but also, as Lindenberger (1984:138) observes, helps the audience to "[re]interpret] the motif against the developing dramatic action". In this case the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff is viewed in the light of what has just happened. But, according to Lindenberger, leitmotif can have even more important musical functions: "If thematic repetition provides interpretive cues, it also works to guarantee the narrative cohesiveness and temporality of a musical work, as well as to remind us that music can make dramatic statements and that these statements gain new significance in the course of the work" (138). In considering the semiotics of musical theatre, one must bear in mind, however, that any 'meaning' that the music has must be seen in the context of the drama on stage. Cone (1974:16-17) emphasizes this point when he acknowledges the existence of musical meaning but limits its power:

The message of the accompaniment is direct, for it is not mediated by the words of a specific personality but is communicated through the gestures of the music alone; yet for this reason it seems veiled by comparison with the message of the voice. In the vocal line the persona speaks only through a dramatic character that expresses itself in words as well as in musical gestures, but as a result this line enjoys an explicitness that the mute instrumental part lacks.

The visual aspect is also of importance. The shape of this long scene could be seen in terms of a gradually ascending line of rising intensity which reaches its highpoint with Cathy's extended

aria. However, the tension continues to grow and the long orchestral passage which closes the act, if anything, increases the intensity. The visual picture is one of an empty stage with the storm reaching its climax as the curtain comes down and the unspoken emotions tormenting Cathy are symbolized by the violence of the storm and the orchestra. The 'meaning' of the orchestral accompaniment lies in the context of what has happened on stage and not in any intrinsic meaning. The equivalent scene in the novel leads to Cathy's fever, during which she convalesces at Thrushcross Grange, as well as to Heathcliff's disappearance from the story for three years. There is something of this suggested by the orchestra even if it remains ultimately unarticulated, illustrating the limits of the effectiveness of the orchestra-narrator. This act also essentially refocuses the attention on Thrushcross Grange rather than on Wuthering Heights.

4.2. Floyd.

Act Two, Scene One (this act is really one long scene divided by a musical interlude) in Floyd's opera takes place four weeks later than his previous scene (May, 1817). The scene opens with Nelly and Heathcliff awaiting the arrival of Cathy who sweeps in, very much in command. She soon inquires after Heathcliff and, on his entrance, all her airs and graces disappear and "she throws her arms around him, forsaking, for the moment, her new role" (84) (which more closely reflects the novel than Herrmann's opera does). She remarks on his rumpled appearance which offends him and he strides out of the house. He soon slinks back in with the request to Nelly to make him "decent" (89). As in Herrmann's opera, Nelly attempts to bolster Heathcliff's self-esteem. Once again one sees how Floyd as librettist is influenced by the text of the novel but does not follow it literally. Nelly remarks that he is "more lucky" than anyone she knows as, not knowing his parents, he can choose to be anyone he wishes to be, and adds almost too prosaically: "And while you're about it, why not be the best?" (95) This heralds the return of Cathy's party and, very much the 'grande dame', accompanied by music described as *pomposo*, she invites Heathcliff to join them for tea. Edgar, who has "grown increasingly angry at being excluded from the ladies' attention", inquires of Hindley whether Heathcliff always holds the cup that way which infuriates Heathcliff who flings its contents into Edgar's face.

After being humiliated by the rest, Heathcliff swears revenge: "I don't care how it's done or how long I must wait but I'll pay him back if it's the last thing I do" (104-5). Cathy re-enters and notices Heathcliff's bruised and bleeding appearance and she throws her arms around his neck as Nelly exits. She proceeds to bathe his cuts and begins to cry. The final moments of the scene are described as follows:

She deliberately sets the cloth on the bowl, sits back on her heels, and, with her eyes closed against the tears which streak her face, she lifts her arms and slowly begins taking down her hair. An expression of infinite tenderness and gratitude comes into Heathcliff's eyes as her hair falls, dark and lustrous, to her shoulders.
(107)

The sexually charged nature of these final moments is obvious, and is endorsed by the music; it is a moment where the passionate intensity of this relationship is explored in some depth. Significantly, this exploration is non-verbal: the actions on stage suggest the tenderness with which Cathy bathes Heathcliff's cuts and bruises as well as indicating Heathcliff's reactions visually, but the deeper 'meaning' of their relationship is depicted in the orchestra - a moment when the non-verbal and elliptical power of music is able to express more than words can, when we are, in fact, listening to the 'voice' of the narrator:

(Ex. 22.)

and slowly begins taking down her hair)

poco rit. 128 Lentissimo (♩. 40)

sempre pp

poco rit. (An expression of infinite tenderness and gratitude comes into Heathcliff's eyes as her hair falls, dark and lustrous, to her shoulders) a tempo (The curtain falls)

ppp estinto

B H Bk. 428

This is an example of a scene where the actual climax or crux occurs without verbal text. It is depicted visually (opera is, after all, *also* a visual medium), but even more importantly, this climax occurs in the orchestra - an example of the equivocal status of verbal signification in opera. Knoepfmacher (1989:81-82) makes the interesting point that in the novel whenever "Heathcliff and Catherine try to articulate the nature of their bond, they become elliptical and find themselves forced to rely on the indirection of similes, metaphors, and symbols rather than on the denotative power of language." One can perhaps see at this point in the opera a moment where language fails and its function can only be performed by music - music expressing more directly the 'meaning' of the scene, conveying feelings and emotions that cannot be articulated, perhaps appropriating some of the denotative function of the verbal text of the novel as well as performing music's usual connotative function. This is surely a moment of 'pure' authorial narration.

After an orchestral interlude, the second scene in Floyd's opera opens in the kitchen of Wuthering Heights one month later (June, 1817). Heathcliff is concerned about the amount of attention that Cathy lavishes on Edgar compared to the time she spends with him. The following comparison illustrates how the two operatic versions adapt the text of the novel at this point:

Novel

"What are you on the point of complaining about, Heathcliff?"

"Nothing - only look at the almanac on that wall." He pointed to a framed sheet hanging near the window, and continued -

"The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons, the dots for those spent with me. Do you see? I've marked every day."

"Yes, very foolish; as if I took notice!" replied Catherine in a peevish tone. "And where is the sense of that?"

"To show that I *do* take notice," said Heathcliff.

"And should I always be sitting with you?" she demanded, growing more irritated. "What good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb or a baby for anything you say to amuse me, or for anything you do, either!"

"You never told me before that I talked too little, or that you disliked my company, Cathy!" exclaimed Heathcliff in much agitation.

"It is no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing," she muttered. (54)

Hermann

CATHY (in a temper)

What are you complaining about, Heathcliff?

HEATHCLIFF

Nothing. Only look at the almanac on that wall. The crosses are for the evenings you have spent with the Lintons. The dots for those spent with me. Do you see? I've marked every day!

CATHY (coldly)

Yes. Very foolish. As if I took notice. And where is the sense of that?

HEATH (furiously)

To show you that I do take notice.

CATHY (angrily)

And should I always be sitting with you? What good do I get? What do you talk about? You might be dumb or a baby for anything you say to amuse me.

HEATHCLIFF

You never told me that I talked too little, or that you disliked my company.

CATHY

It's no company at all, when people know nothing and say nothing. You should be out working in the fields! (112-116)
(44 bars)

Floyd

HEATHCLIFF

You know very well what I'm talking about and I haven't complained.

CATHY

"Complain?" Why *should* you complain?

HEATHCLIFF

Because of this - do you know what it is?

CATHY

Of course, it's a page from a calendar.

HEATHCLIFF

Do you see those crosses and those few dots?

CATHY (exasperatedly)

Of course I do!

HEATHCLIFF

The crosses are the evenings you've spent with him and the dots are the one's you've spent with me.

CATHY

As if I noticed such things.

HEATHCLIFF

I just want you to know that I do.

CATHY (turning on him angrily)

And why should I spend my evenings with you? You might as well be dumb for all you ever say. At least Edgar amuses me and doesn't just sulk and stare!

HEATHCLIFF

You should have told me that I don't talk enough if you no longer like my company!

CATHY

"Company?" Can you call it that when you know nothing and have nothing to say! (115-119)
(34 bars)

Although the extract from Herrmann's opera appears to be shorter as printed above, it is, in fact, considerably longer (ten bars of music) in performance time. Floyd's less formal and more conversational style in these kinds of passages enables him to utilise much more text. In this extract his musical language is clearly seen to be more flexible and it adapts more easily to these conversational passages when compared with that of Fletcher. One also sees that in his adaptation

of the actual text (which Herrmann imports directly from the novel), Floyd retains the basic outline of the conversation but simplifies grammatical constructions and locutions, aiming at all times for clarity and intelligibility.

Floyd has Heathcliff fling a bowl to the ground in his exasperation with Cathy's unwillingness to bend to his will. This gesture also has a wider symbolic value as it is the same bowl that was used by Cathy in the previous scene to bathe Heathcliff's cuts and bruises. That scene ended with a moment of almost innocent tenderness gradually being overwhelmed by the powerfully passionate nature of their feelings for one another, and this gesture of Heathcliff's seems to shatter it. Edgar's entrance sets in motion the battle of wills between Cathy and Nelly, similarly explored in Herrmann's opera. It follows a similar course with Cathy first pinching Nelly and then slapping her in exasperation. Edgar, of course, is shocked and prepares to leave but Cathy stops him by "falling into a chair, sobbing bitterly" (127). (Floyd's Cathy reveals her operatic antecedents very strongly at such a moment. Her sudden mood-swings and passionate outbursts reveal her kinship with a Tosca or a Musetta.) Edgar is moved and draws back, and the softening in his attitude is expressed by his actions, but even more strongly by the orchestra. He takes Cathy in his arms and asks her to marry him, promising her a new life away from Wuthering Heights. Cathy agrees, but her words are spoken, not sung (again, the change in discourse deliberately draws attention to the manner in which these words are uttered and her obvious uncertainty), and as she speaks, "there is a flash of lightning and the distant, ominous sound of thunder as Edgar looks joyously into Cathy's face and then kisses her" (133). Edgar's joy is mirrored in his vocal line with its bouncy rhythm, but this is undercut by ominous rumblings in the orchestra which indicate, perhaps, Cathy's misgivings.

Here we see how, in opera, conflicting emotions can be expressed simultaneously, the one, temporarily dominant discourse undercut by the other. As Edgar leaves, the orchestra takes up his music, but in a more violent way, gradually subverting it into the sound of thunder: (Ex. 23.)

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system begins with the instruction "pre crescendo" and shows a series of chords and moving lines in both hands. The second system is marked with the number "165" in a box, followed by "Andante con moto (♩. 63)" and a fortissimo "ff" dynamic. It features more complex, rhythmic patterns. The third system is marked with the number "168" in a box and a fortissimo "ff marcato" dynamic, showing a continuation of the intense, rhythmic texture.

Both composers occasionally use orchestral interludes to comment on what has transpired as well as on what is to come (a device used with great skill by Britten in *The Turn of the Screw*). In this instance, the apparent surface 'happiness' which exists between Cathy and Edgar is contradicted by what the orchestra 'says'. Edgar's music had a strong rhythmic impulse and lightness dominated by triplets in a 3/4 meter, but the orchestra overwhelms this with its powerful chords and alternation between 3/4 and 4/4. Again, much of the 'meaning' of the music is achieved in conjunction with lighting and sound effects which suggest the approach of a storm as if the narrator were simultaneously illustrating Edgar's mood while commenting on it. The depiction of the storm is not an arbitrary melodramatic attempt to heighten the 'drama' of the situation, but it is integrated logically into the action while not losing its wider symbolic (and theatrical) value.

Cathy then attempts a reconciliation with Nelly who remains initially unresponsive, and when Nelly asks Cathy what the obstacle to the marriage is, Cathy finally bursts out: "It's *here*, or perhaps *here!* (Cathy turns, her face anguished, one hand on her forehead, the other at her heart) Wherever the soul is, my trouble is there! In my heart I'm convinced I'm wrong" (145-6). Nelly is surprised and Cathy attempts to explain her feelings. Floyd, not suprisingly, uses Cathy's expressive explanation from Chapter Nine of the novel: "I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas; they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind" (62). Floyd now takes all of Cathy's subsequent aria verbatim from the novel. Up to this point he had, in fact, used very little of the actual text itself, but adapted it rather loosely to suit his own musical and dramatic needs. Here, however, the heightened style of Cathy's novelistic discourse is admirably suited to the needs of a formal and expressive aria where operatic convention allows the composer room for lyrical expansion, and Floyd uses the text virtually unchanged, with only a few slight alterations and repetitions. Musically, the aria is prepared for by the preceding passage which is lightly scored and free-flowing, in contrast to the music of the aria which immediately raises the level of intensity:

(Ex. 24.)

(Turning suddenly to Nelly)

183 Più agitato

CATHY: *mp* *And away again*

If I were in heav-en, Nel-ly, I'd be ex-treme-ly mis-er-a-ble. For I

sf p

Allegro moderato (♩ = 72) *sempre*

Cathy dreamt once — that I was there but

mp marcato

Novel

I was only going to say that heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights; where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. (62)

Floyd

If I were in heaven, Nelly, I'd be extremely miserable. For I dreamt once that I was there but heaven didn't seem to be my home and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth. And the angels were so angry that they flung me out into the middle of the heath, on the top, on the top of Wuthering Heights where I woke sobbing for joy, for joy! So I've no more business to marry Edgar than to be in heaven. And it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now. (After a moment we see the shadow of Heathcliff leave the house. Nelly glances towards the door and then, her face anxious, she turns back to Cathy). So he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same. His and mine are the same. And Edgar's soul is as different as a moonbeam from lightning or frost from fire. (149-155)

A flash of lightning and crash of thunder rouse Cathy from her almost trance-like state and she inquires after Heathcliff's whereabouts. The storm is used to break the intensity of the mood and the music becomes lighter and more flexible. Nelly informs Cathy that Heathcliff has left the house and again there is lightning and thunder as Cathy runs outside screaming Heathcliff's name. The act ends on a highly theatrical note: "Nelly arrives at the front door as the storm breaks and the stage becomes a tumult of thunder, lightning and rain. Nelly, distraught, covers her face with her hands as she hears the increasingly distant sound of Cathy crying Heathcliff's name" (158).

It is significant that both operas end the central act at a similar point after an extended scene for Cathy. It is a moment of great crisis in the novel and a turning-point in the narrative. One of the two central characters disappears for three years and the circumstances at both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange change. In both operas, one senses a crucial stage having been reached in the action, the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy is at a point of crisis and in theatrical terms, the disappearance of Heathcliff, and Cathy's anguish after her revelatory aria, are an emotional and dramatic highpoint and accord with the operatic convention of ending the central act with a suitably theatrical flourish. (Nineteenth-century opera would frequently consist of a large choral scene or an extended ensemble of some kind with the chorus witnessing or commenting on some crisis that had occurred to the principals in front of them.) It is also remarkable how similar in structure these two operas are; certainly one has the impression that in the case of *Wuthering Heights*, it is the structure of the novel as much as operatic convention which finally determines the structure of both operas. The central feature of the

second act in both operas is Cathy's extended aria, a fact which is dictated by the importance of this speech in the novel, used as the basis of the aria, as well as its obvious verbal and dramatic suitability for operatic treatment (and the necessity for an extended 'set-piece' for the female protagonist). Also, the intensely theatrical image of Cathy crying out forlornly to Heathcliff, which is the final visual image of both operas (and which is an inversion of the Prologue of both operas), is an operatic flourish (with its basis in the novel) using the full orchestral forces, and is the kind of climactic moment essential to opera.

5. Act Three: opera as psychological novel.

5.1. Herrmann.

Both operas set Act Three at Thrushcross Grange approximately three years later - the period of Heathcliff's mysterious disappearance - and their final acts probe even more intensely the psychology of the two protagonists. Herrmann commences with the description of the "twilight of an autumnal day" (162) with Isabel heard playing a rather simple piece on the piano. The stage direction requires the singer to play, "if possible" and the prosaically 'domestic' sound of the piano contrasts with the more exotic 'normal' operatic discourse, effectively conveying this feeling of domesticity. (It is somewhat unusual to have a performer as instrumentalist on stage in opera though singers appearing to accompany themselves with various instruments occurs more frequently.) Isabel mentions Wuthering Heights, which disturbs Cathy, and Edgar intercedes by asking Cathy whether she is happy at the Grange to which she replies by taking his hand "tenderly" and they look at each other "with deep affection". This contrasts markedly with Cathy's relationship with Edgar in Floyd's opera where a strong sense of indifference on Cathy's part is evoked, particularly in the second scene of Act Two where she is described as returning his kisses "without ardor" (133), and she waves him goodbye "abstractedly" (136). Floyd's version perhaps more accurately reflects the attitude of Catherine in the novel. This is a cue for Edgar to launch into a lyrical effusion, again based on one of Bronte's poems. The musical setting is unremarkable: marked *Andante tranquillo*, and set to a lilting twelve-eight rhythm, its very conventionality perhaps suggesting the ordinariness of Edgar's love when contrasted with the relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff:

(Ex. 25.)

2 Andante tranquillo
mezzo voce
EDGAR Now art thou dear, my gold - en June. All tem - pest still'd, all

Sign.
Hp. pp

The opening stanza contains a certain amount of irony, the indication from the previous exchange between Cathy and Isabella being that the tempest within Cathy's heart is far from stilled. Herrmann aptly fits his music to the rather conventional poetic language and this song suits the tranquil domestic mood which he is striving to achieve:

Oh, could it thus for-ever be
That I might live and thus adore.
I'd ask for all eternity
To make a paradise for thee.
My love, and nothing more. (167-168)

The irony in this final stanza lies in the knowledge that the reappearance of Heathcliff is imminent and the seeming "paradise" that Edgar has attempted to create for Cathy will soon turn into a 'hell'.

Isabel's playing of the piano and Edgar's 'singing' a song once again disrupt the 'normal' discourse of the opera. According to Lindenberger (1984:140), "the songs a character is portrayed singing occupy a special status, for they provide singers an opportunity to refer to, as well as exploit, the very medium in which they are expressing themselves." This opera, like most of the others in this study, exploits opera's 'self-referentiality', its "mimesis of familiar musical forms" (139). Herrmann, like Argento in *The Aspern Papers*, deliberately draws attention to opera's artifice in the way he changes musical style for particular moments such as these. There is a conscious evocation of the musical style of the earlier period in which the opera is set. Lindenberger (1984:141) identifies several methods in which an 'actual' song is contrasted with the dominant discourse: "it is usually marked off from its surrounding musical context through its more obvious lyricism or its use of a conspicuously earlier style or of a more popular idiom." He compares the use of song in opera with the convention of the play-within-a-play in drama, and maintains that "at such times the performing that singers do when they pretend to "really" sing becomes an emblem of the artifice and exaggeration characteristic of that more spacious song we call opera" (141-142). (This is, essentially, an aspect of what is known as *mise-en-abyme*, or the 'mirror in the text'. There is the fairly frequent use of the opera-within-the-opera as well: Britten's setting of "Pyramus and Thisbe" in his adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where he satirizes the conventions of nineteenth century Italian opera, is an example of a play being turned into an opera. Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* is probably the most outstanding example of an opera-within-an-opera.) The fact that Edgar, as a tenor, sings this lyrical song helps to establish him as a romantic lead, but, as soon becomes apparent, a flawed one. He is portrayed as an unworthy opponent of Heathcliff, his rival for the position of romantic lead in the opera. However, he is not to be dismissed completely, the lyricism and 'sincerity' of his song exclude any hint of parody here.

As expected, the tranquillity of this opening is soon interrupted by Nelly's doom-laden line: "A person from Gimmerton wishes to speak to you" (169), ominously intoned on one note. At the mention of the name "Heathcliff", a great agitation seizes Cathy and the familiar falling phrase is used for her remark "He's come back!" (171) (this particular phrase has quickly become associated in the audience's mind with the relationship between Heathcliff and Cathy). Rapid figures in the strings indicate her nervous excitement. Edgar is naturally less pleased with the news and his line is "sarcastically" (172) *parlando*, rather than sung. Poizat (1992:79) discusses these moments when the dominant discourse of opera is disrupted in terms of a "locus where a multiplicity of modalities and compromises between language and music cohabit, commingle and vie with each other whenever the composer's expressive intentions so dictate", and he describes *sprechgesang* as a "kind of culmination point where the distinction between speech and music becomes so tenuous that conventional musical notation proves incapable of transcribing it unequivocally." *Sprechgesang* is frequently used in this opera (as in many others) to indicate moments of particular stress or expressiveness for a character when they are unable or unwilling for a particular reason to use their usual mode of discourse.

Heathcliff is described as having "only eyes for Cathy" (174) but remains very much in command of the situation, in stark contrast to earlier scenes in the opera where he was generally portrayed as a victim. The contrasting styles of musical discourse are significant. Edgar's coldness and resentment are suggested by his speaking rather than singing, the lack of tone indicating his distaste for the situation. Heathcliff's vocal line is unremarkable; its vocal range is small and there is little vocal effort required, again suggesting that he is master of this situation. Cathy's vocal line, however, is agitated as well as wide-ranging, with high-lying soaring phrases indicative of her agitation and the turmoil of emotion that she is experiencing. The orchestral accompaniment is sparse, the orchestra-narrator content to 'observe' the drama of the situation on stage. In this scene one notices the juxtaposition of several separate events which parallel the construction of this chapter in the novel, distinguished by an alternation of what Henry James termed 'scene' and 'picture' in his own writing. One could translate this into musical terms as scene and interlude with the scenic element roughly corresponding to the mimetic, and the interlude to the diegetic (here the operatic form again parallels the novelistic, there being no real equivalent of 'scene' and 'picture' in spoken drama).

Alone with Heathcliff, Isabella, with hesitant musical phrases, approaches him. Her naiveté and nervousness are evident in her vocal line, and she offers to sing for Heathcliff who continues to ignore her as she crosses to the piano. Her song is a setting of one of Brontë's best-known poems, "Love and Friendship", and in the context of this scene is very effective. Again, as in Isabella's earlier song, the setting is simple, with the musical instruction being, "slowly and freely in ballad fashion", and the wish expressed that the singer accompany herself. The setting has a folk-like quality and complements the simplicity of the words:

There is an extended exchange between Heathcliff, Cathy and Edgar concerning Isabel's relationship with Heathcliff which finally results in an estrangement between Edgar and Cathy who remains alone. It functions as preparation for a long and complex scene during which Cathy gradually appears to undergo a mental breakdown and it is here that the opera enters into an investigation of Cathy's psychological state. This kind of scene, where the soprano pours her heart out to a confidante has a long history in opera and is particularly prominent in nineteenth century *bel canto* opera. It is a useful device for the composer in that he can use the confidante as a foil for imparting information of all kinds while still retaining much of the intimacy and revelatory power of the solo aria. Hewish (1969:142) describes Nelly's role in the novel as "choric", seeing her as Catherine's conscience: "She not only posits more austere values, but hints at the largely fortuitous aspect of social relationships." This aspect of her role in the opera is less developed and she is more sympathetic than in the novel.

The scene commences with Cathy gazing out of the window at Wuthering Heights (Cathy this time looking out of the windows of the Grange instead of in). The atmosphere of the room is described as "strange and eerie" (194), and Cathy complains of the feeling of 'burning', an indication of her growing fever, and expresses a desire to be out of doors which prefigures her wish to escape the room in the final scene. She then harks back to her youth. The basis of this exchange is taken from Chapter Twelve of the novel where Cathy tells Nelly of her feelings during the three days she has spent alone in her room in a state of virtual delirium: "I wish I were a girl again, half savage and hardy and free and laughing at injuries, not mad'ning under them. Why am I so changed? Why does my blood rush into a hell of tumult at just a few words?" (193-4). Pykett (1989:90) describes this speech in the novel in terms of a persistent yearning for the "self-consistency of the girlhood state that pre-existed the self-divisions induced by her education into the class-gender role of the genteel lady." Knoepfelmacher (1989:62) maintains that Catherine "knows that she can no longer be contained at the Grange, where she will die, or the Kirkyard, where she will be buried, or even the Heights, where she will haunt Heathcliff." For Catherine, the Grange has become a physical and psychological prison. As Apter (1976:214) says: "Her sense of being stifled by illness and emotional conflict, her vision of the Heights as she leans out of the window, set her within a world impossibly out of contact with the world in which she must live." In Herrmann's opera, there is a short orchestral passage during which, as the stage direction indicates, the "shadowy outlines of Wuthering Heights on the distant hilltop are visible" (195) - a constant 'presence' during this scene.

The aria proper is also interesting from a musical point of view. The musical indication is *Adagio (con malinconia)* and the singer is instructed to sing it "sadly and wistfully" (195). The tempo is slow, with long sustained chords interspersed with rapid figures in the woodwinds and percussion which are taken over by other instruments. The vocal part contrasts with this slow underlying tempo, consisting of disjointed phrases, indicative, perhaps, of Cathy's growing agitation and mental breakdown:

(Ex. 27.)

CATHY
23 Adagio (con malinconia) *sadly and wistfully* *p*

pp *pp* *f* *p*

There's my room with the can-dle in it, and the trees sway-ing be-fore it.

The vocal line is reflective, with the agitation occurring in the orchestra-narration. The text originates in a later part of Chapter Twelve of the novel where Nelly finally becomes convinced of the authenticity of Cathy's delirium. The soprano mad scene in opera has a long history beginning in the seventeenth century but reaches its zenith in nineteenth-century *bel canto* operas such as *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Anna Bolena*, and *Linda di Chamounix* by Donizetti, as well as Bellini's *I Puritani* and Thomas's *Hamlet*. Clément (1989:87) expressively describes the typical mad scene as follows:

When the thread draws taut, when it stretches the whole length of anguish, and when it breaks, releasing the tension and discharging its effect, the girl flies so far, so far that it drives her crazy. A frantic, abandoned madwoman, her body displayed before an audience glued to their seats, she sings words that make sense only to her. That is called delirium, an "unreadable."

Of course these scenes are also exploited as opportunities for vocal display in addition to their dramatic effect, pointing to the tension between the imperatives of drama and the imperatives of performance. As Lindenberger (1984:38) observes: "opera depends on showpieces that vie with their nonmusical originals in the dramatic intensity they can display."

In the novel Nelly observes that no light shines, yet Cathy, in her increasingly agitated state insists that she can see Wuthering Heights:

"Look!" she cried eagerly, "that's my room, with the candle in it, and the trees swaying before it; and the other candle is in Joseph's garret. Joseph sits up late, doesn't he? He's waiting till I come home that he may lock the gate. Well, he'll wait a while yet. It's a rough journey, and a sad heart to travel it; and we must pass by Gimmerton Kirk, to go that journey! We've braved its ghosts often together, and dared each other to stand among the graves and ask them to come.

But Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you venture? If you do, I'll keep you. I'll not lie there by myself; they may bury me twelve feet deep, and throw the church down over me, but I won't rest till you are with me. I never will!" (98)

The text of this speech is repeated verbatim in the opera: the spiritual presence of Heathcliff is strong throughout this scene.

At this point in the opera, Nelly enters and the mood changes. The musical instruction is *Piu mosso (agitato con fantastico)* (the typical nineteenth-century mad scene is apparent in the construction of this scene with its frequent and abrupt tempo changes) and Cathy half-sings about a face at the window which Nelly assures her is Cathy's own reflection. This increases the growing awareness of Cathy's instability. As Pykett (1989:93) says of the novel, "she regresses to a childhood state, to the Edenic unproblematic period of undivided and undifferentiated selfhood before she became a battleground for conflicting versions of womanhood." Nelly urges Cathy to sit on the sofa and bemoans the fact that Cathy has seen Heathcliff and pleads with her to "forget the past. Forever" (200). Cathy has not listened and in the meantime has started to pull feathers out of a pillow on her lap. The parallel of this scene in the novel with Ophelia's madness is obvious and Cathy's growing delirium in the opera is indicated in the instruction to sing "in a vacant and crooning fashion" (200). The musical style is disjointed, effectively contrasting lyric moments with broken phrases:

(Ex. 28.)

Animato (con delirio)

CATHY wildly *f*

picking one up That's a tur-key's taking another and another And this is a w.w. And here's a moor-ock's. And, this pi-geon's. And, this

ff *ff* *f* *ppp*

rall.

This harks back to Cathy's wanderings on the moor with Heathcliff and their frequent mention of birds, particularly the lap-wing which has a special significance for them. Her question whether the bird is dead obviously points symbolically towards her own death.

As Cathy scatters the down, Nelly describes it as looking like snow. This leads into the final part of the aria, marked *Lento assai e triste*, as Cathy slowly sings of the winter snow, "Its'

blowing down the moor. It's blowing over my grave ... Oh dear. I wish I was at home, in the old house ... and the wind sounding in the firs" (203-4), the reference to her imminent death becoming more explicit. Nelly finally persuades Cathy to go upstairs and as they leave the room the sound of Isabel singing "Love is like the wild rose-briar" is heard from outside. The return of Isabel's song illustrates the connotative power of music - the song functions like a *leitmotif*: the audience will assume that Isabel is with Heathcliff. One hears the music but with the added knowledge of what has happened in the meantime. As Kerman (1988:220) says: "When music comes back in an opera ... the dramatic function is generally to show how one event or action is experienced in terms of another". Cathy rushes to the window to listen and agitatedly calls Nelly over to look. Nelly persuades Cathy to go upstairs but she turns round once more to the window with the line: "Oh, Heathcliff. You have betrayed me, and now, I'll break your heart by breaking my own. Ah..." (206). The distinctive, falling semi-tone phrase is heard once again as the curtain falls:

(Ex. 29.)

Cathy goes with her. At the doorway, Cathy turns and looks towards the window.

CATHY

weeping bitterly

Oh. Heath-cliff. Oh. Heath-cliff. You have be-trayed me.

Thos.

pp

pp Sigs Hns. (sempre colla voce)

and now, I'll break your heart by break-ing my own. Ah

Sigs. mp

pp

It is a much quieter ending than that of the previous scene and is full of foreboding with the imminent probability of Cathy's death. Cathy's final plaintive cry at the end of this scene can very well be seen as falling into that category of vocal emission which Poizat (1992:78) defines as the "most *immediate* manifestation - in other words, the manifestation most unmediated by any system of representation whatsoever - through which 'the essence of things' offers itself to knowledge or at the very least gives a sign of its presence." One has the sense of reaching a point in the opera where its essential core of meaning is being approached. The relationship between Cathy and Heathcliff, in which they really exist only for each other, seems to have been irretrievably destroyed, which therefore means the end of their 'existence'. Cathy's 'madness' perhaps reflects a view that through madness one can approach some essential 'truth' or knowledge which normally remains veiled for the 'sane'.

5.2. Floyd.

In stark contrast to the placid domestic setting of Herrmann's Act Three, Floyd commences his third act with a party scene at Thrushcross Grange, three years after the disappearance of Heathcliff. This is perhaps his most radical departure from the novel where the very isolation of both houses from any communal activities is such a strong feature. As in James's *The Turn of the Screw*, the sense of the world outside is kept to the barest minimum in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, which increases the claustrophobic atmosphere. The use of a chorus can perhaps be justified by the necessity for colour and variety, and its use to comment on dramatic incidents is a long-standing operatic (and dramatic) convention, yet it does perhaps diminish the intensity of the dramatic relationships that have been created by dissipating the focus and turning what is essentially almost a chamber work into a larger-scale opera. One advantage that this has for the composer and librettist is that the audience can be informed about what has happened in the interim period - thus the three-year interval is conveniently bridged. The whole history of Heathcliff's disappearance and recent arrival in the district is explained by the chorus, as is Heathcliff's growing mastery over Hindley by means of Heathcliff's exploitation of Hindley's addiction to gambling. Heathcliff's name, however, is only mentioned at the end of this first chorus section, creating an element of suspense.

As Hindley, followed by Heathcliff, enters, Cathy, oblivious of all in the room, flings her arms around him but Heathcliff's demeanour is restrained and ironic as he draws Cathy into a dance. Cathy is excited and sings of her joy at seeing him again, not noticing that he is much less animated. He suddenly interrupts her with the line: "I havn't come back here to live. I've come back to take you away with me" (184) which deflates her buoyant mood. (In a strange way, this scene is also reminiscent of the final party scene of *Eugene Onegin* where Onegin begs for Tatiana's forgiveness and urges her to leave with him. Many nineteenth-century operas have similar scenes which exploit the tonal variety provided by a chorus as well as the visual possibilities inherent in these large-scale scenes.) Heathcliff has a brief yet passionate outburst similarly urging Cathy to leave with him:

It would not degrade you to love me now. I have ev'rything you married him for. I've cheated and lied. I've soiled my name. But I'm now a man of power and wealth. And I did it all, I did it all for you! I've worked till my hands were pulpy with blood. I've been in pain from hunger and half-crazed with cold. But I won! I won! I've become a gentleman. And it's all for you! I did it all for you! But the triumph was hollow I remained the same. With wealth and power I remained the same. I am still Heathcliff. I've remained the same and you will never change, never change. We were meant to exalt the moors, to shout at lap-wings and drink the rain! Apart we're imprisoned, together we're free. Leave now and escape this prison with me. (185-189)

(One can see in this extract the amount of repetition that even the average aria consists of. Its essential meaning could well be expressed much more concisely but the repetition is necessary musically as well as for reasons of intelligibility.) Cathy firmly but kindly reminds Heathcliff that she is married but this does not deter him. At this moment Hindley bursts in calling on Heathcliff

for a game and offering *Wuthering Heights* as the stake. Deaf to Cathy's entreaties, the two prepare for their game during which there is whispered conversation between Cathy and Edgar, who is concerned with the way Isabella fawns over Heathcliff. The scene develops into a large-scale concerted number with solo voices and chorus. (Again this is reminiscent of many similar scenes in opera, particularly, perhaps, the gambling scene in *La Traviata*. Intertextuality is an essential aspect of opera.) The climax of the scene is reached with the chorus, "watching breathlessly", describing the cards that Heathcliff lays down. It is soon apparent that Hindley has lost and there is general consternation. Hindley's final degradation is reached with his entreating Heathcliff to kill him, and his final line as he exits expresses his anguish: "Oh, God, what have I done!" (203).

As the guests begin to leave, Isabella reveals her obvious attraction to Heathcliff. A brief conversation follows between Heathcliff and Nelly who, however, remains cool towards him and Heathcliff bids farewell to Edgar and Cathy, who invites him to visit them soon. As Heathcliff leaves, Edgar forbids Cathy to see him again but she scornfully rejects his command. Edgar, shocked, turns to go to bed with the sound of Cathy's line: "We will all be friends. I'm sure of it!" (208), ringing in his ears. Cathy turns back to Nelly, who is busy clearing away the remains of the party, with the line: "Nelly, my life is complete again. I have been buried for three lost years" (209). Nelly is intent on pointing out all the difficulties inherent in the resumption of the relationship. Her reasons for this advice and her understanding of the situation are skillfully condensed into a short aria. One must never lose sight of the fact that demands such as viable display opportunities for singers play an important role in determining the shape and structure of the libretto, and if these demands can be integrated into the structure of the work without disturbing the dramatic coherence then the librettist has succeeded in his task. This aria gradually evolves into a duet for Cathy and Nelly and it is characteristic of Floyd's opera that he makes extended use of traditional operatic structures such as ensembles and chorus scenes without ostensibly reverting to the 'number' opera format. This duet illustrates opera's ability for characters in ensembles consisting of two or more characters to express their individual thoughts and emotions with these being simultaneously intelligible to the audience. This duet, in fact, ends the scene with the final line of Cathy's, "Heathcliff must do as I say" (217) rising to an emphatic high B flat, indicative of her determination and resolve but also with an air of desperation. In a sense the duet comes as something of an anti-climax after the excitement and drama of the large-scale choral scene but it does serve to focus the attention once more on Cathy.

5.3. Herrmann.

Herrmann uses a four-act structure, and his final act is, in fact, one long scene divided into two sections. It opens with a long orchestral introduction and is set in the main hall of *Wuthering Heights* in the March following the previous scene. Isabel is seated, writing a letter which is transferred directly from the equivalent letter in the novel. The letter is a stock operatic

device in which information can be imparted to the audience. The opening section of the vocal line of the letter consists of *sprechgesang* supported by a tremolo in the strings while the next section is "half-sung", and as she launches into reminiscence of her home, her full voice comes into play and the letter takes the form of a lyrical aria marked *Andante mesto*, "sadly and tenderly". (One sees here virtually the full range of modes of vocal discourse available which, in turn, is but a small part of the vastly wider range of musical discourse available to the composer.)

The convention of the letter is established at the outset but then the performer puts down her pen for the bulk of the aria, only taking it up at the end to suggest once more that she is, in fact, imparting information to the recipient. Her mood is sombre and she "weeps bitterly" (214) at the end. The letter functions also as a moment of psychological insight into Isabel. Hindley, who has been lying in a drunken stupor in the background, awakens, brandishing his pistol and threatening to use it against Heathcliff. One hears in Hindley's music how important the use of *sprechgesang* is for contemporary operatic composers. It approximates the speed and rhythm of speech while still retaining a tenuous position in the musical continuum and here effectively conveys his mixture of cruelty and bluster. Hindley indicates to Isabel what he will do when Heathcliff arrives and begins a "morbid" drinking song. It is marked *Brindisi*, and again calls to mind many such drinking songs in opera, particularly Iago's mirthless song in *Otello* or the harmonically distorted songs in *Wozzeck*, rather than Alfredo's song in *La Traviata* or Escamillo's in *Carmen*. This particular song is very much part of the conservative musical discourse of the opera, both rhythmically and harmonically, and ends with Hindley's triumphant invocation: "Down with the bastard son of shame! Wuthering Heights will be mine again" (221).

At this point Isabel sees Heathcliff approaching carrying a bunch of crocuses. She realizes that Heathcliff has come from Cathy and calls on Hindley to kill Heathcliff, stating: "It's time to make an end" (222). Hindley fires at Heathcliff who wrenches the pistol from him and they fight, with Heathcliff flinging Hindley out of the room and turning "savagely" on Isabel. In response to her pleas for him to love her (which are almost a musical parody of the motif associated with Heathcliff and Cathy), he replies: "Love you! What madness. I never loved you. I never said I did. The passion was wholly yours" (225). Isabel persists but is once again rejected and she tears off her wedding ring and flings it into the fire and rushes out of the room. (Kavanagh (1985:66) remarks of Heathcliff's relationship with Catherine in the novel: "His vicious - 'sexist' is hardly an adequate word - and vaguely perverse treatment of Isabella forms a grotesque parody of his obsessive pursuit of Cathy".) These scenes in Act Four contain some of Herrmann's most violent and effective music.

Heathcliff, left alone, slowly retrieves the flowers from the ground and sings a slow, dirge-like passage: "Poor blossoms. Blossoms that the west wind has never wooed to blow. Scentless are your petals. Your dew is cold as snow. Wither flowers, wither. You were vainly given. Poor blossoms wither" (228-9), which offers a striking contrast to the violence of the

immediately preceding music. He slowly lets the blossoms fall (with a repeated falling figure in the orchestra) as "a light snow begins to fall" (230). This moment of tenderness for Heathcliff, although consistent with the operatic character, once again favours the romantic aspect of the character at the expense of the demonic. There is then an orchestral interlude, described as a "meditation" which effectively divides this scene into two.

5.4. Floyd.

Floyd's second scene in Act Three is set one month later at Thrushcross Grange (September, 1820). Isabella, after some initial exchanges with Nelly, begins a substantial aria:

Oh, Nelly I've fallen in love with him. Heathcliff has shattered my quiet life. He's exploded my world. I'm defenseless now. I can only adore him, this welcome intruder. Is he mortal, Nelly, or is he half-god? Whichever he is I am mute with worship. For Heathcliff has quickened my heart. And I must weep with wonder. Nelly, he's like a wounded thing, snarling to hide its hurt. But I could love the pain away and bring him trusting back to the world. And also I'm in love with his name, a name as singular as the man: forbidding, alluring, glow'ring, kind. A name that pierces and floods my heart. Since I love him, he will soon love me. If I love him enough, I shall break her hold. And he'll be free then, free to love me. Oh, Nelly, I'm bursting with love for him. He has entered and shattered my life. He's exploded my world; I'm defenseless now. The adored intruder is welcome here. (224-229)

She reveals herself as a more passionate character than her counterpart in Herrmann's opera who remains rather wistful and melancholy. This is largely as a result of their musical personalities rather than what they sing - the important characterisation takes place musically rather than textually. Having two major soprano roles is most unusual in opera and both Isabellas have extended arias and play pivotal roles in the musical and dramatic structure of both operas. Cathy has overheard much of the exchange between Nelly and Isabella and a battle of wills ensues between them which is soon joined by Heathcliff. (Knoepfmacher (1989:71) observes that in the novel, "[s]trife and competition mark all of Heathcliff's interactions with Catherine after his return.") Heathcliff then makes it plain to Cathy after Isabella has left that he does not love Isabella and tells Cathy that their "souls are bound" and they can "never escape" (238). Cathy threatens that if he marries Isabella she will never see him again, and Heathcliff counters with the threat that if Cathy rejects him again he will "crush" everything around her.

Isabella enters, followed closely by Edgar, who demands to know where she is going. Cathy and Heathcliff begin a passionate exchange and Edgar orders two servants to throw Heathcliff out. Cathy taunts him to do it himself and flings the key to the room into the fire. Cathy "watches his impotence with revulsion and disbelief" (249) and utters the damning line: "And to think I am going to bear your child. Please God may it wither and die!....Edgar, all you had in me is dead and Heathcliff, I never want to see you again. Now get out and leave me alone" (249-250). Hewish (1969:143) remarks on the two triangular encounters between

Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar in the novel, noting that "Catherine's sickness and delirium follows the first meeting, and her death the second." In Floyd's opera the conventional triangular confrontation between soprano, tenor and baritone is joined here by a mezzo in an extended quartet with the four characters expressing different thoughts and emotions.

Heathcliff and Cathy

Doom is the thread that binds our lives,. It was ordained, it was darkly ordained that we be fugitives all our lives. For in our cradles we already began the reckless flight of the doomed. Doom has driven and doom has pursued us until we are trapped at last. Desolation will drown me now. No hope is left to stave it off. How useless all our feeling was! Useless! The word is cleaving my heart! The pall of doom has fallen now. The Kingdom of moors and wild, free life: What happened to them? Were they only vain dreams? We drank in the air: the taste was sweet. Bitter now is the taste of despair (251-261)

Nelly

God help them now; they cannot help themselves. I have dreaded but known that this hour must come. Could I have done more to postpone this day? Could a mere human keep them apart? Can each not love in the other's heart anything but the evil there? God help them now; they cannot help themselves. (255-261)

Edgar

What have I done to warrant this? I don't understand what I have done? Have I been blind? Was it there to see? But what use are questions? My wife and sister are lost to me. My world is destroyed. Oh God, was Job more tried than I! to think I arose today with no hint of loss in my heart. Doom is the threat that binds our lives. (253-261)

Floyd shows his preparedness in this opera to exploit traditional operatic devices. One must bear in mind that it is not only the words of the four characters which convey meaning but also the orchestral accompaniment. Here one can directly compare the function of the orchestral accompaniment to that of the narrator in fiction, yet able to achieve more than a fictional narrator can in that the thoughts of four characters as well as the narrator's controlling 'voice' are 'heard' simultaneously, in contrast to the essential linearity of fictional narrative. In this instance, the orchestra-narrator, as frequently occurs in Floyd's opera, is unobtrusive, allowing the individual characters full 'voice' and only occasionally drawing attention to itself.

During this quartet, first Edgar then Heathcliff leave the stage. There is a sudden passionate outburst from Cathy: "Nelly, how can I live without Heathcliff? I am Heathcliff and he is my soul! I cannot live without my soul! Help me to die, Nelly, help me to die!" (263-264), which ends the scene, the final image being that of Cathy in the arms of the comforting Nelly - a crucial moment of psychological insight for Cathy where perhaps for the first time she begins to understand the magnitude of her loss. Even in a large-scale scene such as this, opera can achieve, despite its ceremonial and 'public' nature, these essentially private moments of recognition and understanding.

6. Narrative closure.

6.1. Herrmann.

The final scenes in the two operas are similar in many ways, the dominant and potent image being the death of Cathy and the despairing yet defiant Heathcliff. Herrmann has Cathy enter as Heathcliff stares out at the falling snow. (How the dying Cathy finds herself at *Wuthering Heights* is not explained, however!) Heathcliff tries to embrace her but she pulls away, singing his name on the now familiar falling semi-tone phrase and he echoing her name using the same musical material. Cathy asks him to take her in his arms and she embraces him. The composer calls for a curious musical effect to illustrate how Cathy envisages the future once she is dead:

(Ex. 30.)

The musical score for Example 30 consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line with the lyrics "Will you say twenty years hence. — That's the grave of Catherine Earnshaw." and a piano accompaniment. Above the vocal line, there is a tempo/mood marking "24" and a dynamic marking "p". A note above the piano part indicates "to be sung in the manner of a plain chant". The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "I loved her long ago, and was wretched to lose her. But it is past." and the piano accompaniment. A note above the piano part indicates "Celli pp".

The instruction: "to be sung in the manner of a plain chant", creates a quasi-religious effect. The intrusion of this different kind of musical discourse results in the listener recognizing a musical style which may be extremely far removed from the operatic, but immediately identifiable; 'religious' music, particularly moments calling for large choral effects, is very much part of operatic discourse. This 'plain chant' passage illustrates that music can function proleptically - the words indicate the way Cathy sees the future after her death: the music has a dirge-like quality. However, the 'normal' discourse is soon resumed with a passionate duet between the two. Finally Heathcliff urges her, "Kiss me and don't let me see your eyes. I forgive what you have done to me" (238). They embrace as the sound of the intensifying storm grows louder. Cathy is drawn to the window and begs Heathcliff to open it: "Open the window. Let me breathe the wind. It comes straight from the moors" (239). Cathy sees an escape beckoning to her as she sings of being "enclosed" in a "shattered prison". The window, which has functioned symbolically throughout, is the means of final escape for Cathy into "that glorious world." She envisages a final transcendent escape into this new world "incomparably beyond and above" (240) all.

Heathcliff interrupts her and the scene nears its end with Cathy's final utterance. The music takes on a more tranquil character, conveying the final peace that she yearns for. There is a downward movement in Cathy's vocal line as her strength gradually ebbs:

unmistakable echoes of the opening of the opera. Floyd's ending, while having a logical coherence, perhaps does not have the same theatrical impact. In Floyd's final scene, the change in Cathy's appearance is sudden and startling; "her skin is ashen and there are hollows in her cheeks" (266) and it is apparent that Cathy is close to giving birth. This follows the equivalent scene from the novel more closely than Herrmann. Floyd also uses the same passage from the novel that Herrmann used and there is a wistful atmosphere, rather than the feeling of any kind of mental breakdown which Herrmann attempted to evoke. Her train of thought leads her to recall her days with Heathcliff on the moors and she pleads with Nelly to open the window. Nelly resists, remarking: "Be patient, now. You'll be delivered soon" (269). Cathy's reply displays her state of mind: "I don't want this child; I only want to die!" (269)

Nelly realizes that the end is near and at that moment Heathcliff enters, enquiring from Nelly whether it is true that Cathy is sick. Nelly attempts to prevent Heathcliff from seeing Cathy: "It could mean her life if she's excited at all! Would you kill her, Heathcliff?" (273), but Heathcliff strides into the living room and he and Cathy embrace rapturously. Cathy's first concern is whether Heathcliff will remember her when she is dead. The music takes on a renewed intensity as Cathy, taking Heathcliff's face in her hands, sings: "I will die very soon. No don't protest. And before I die, I must tell you this: I've loved you and only you all my life" (275-276). The crux of this exchange occurs on her line, "I only want us together again and death is the only way I know" (277-278). As Nelly announces the arrival of Edgar, Cathy asks Heathcliff to take her to the door again to look at the moors. Heathcliff takes her in his arms and flings the door open and, accompanied by passionate music, Cathy sings ecstatically: "Oh, Heathcliff, I can breathe again! My lungs are not enough to drink the air" (281) (both a musical and verbal echo of the earlier scene in the opera (Ex. 17.)). Heathcliff sings an expressive arioso which develops musically out of Cathy's previous music and is punctuated by words of affirmation from Cathy: (Ex. 32.)

The large downward leap in the vocal line as he utters the questioning word "dream?", indicates his disbelief as he realises that Cathy is dead:

(Ex. 33.)

Heath

cling to you, cling to you while you dream?

(With a long exhalation, Cathy falls back in his arms, dead. Heathcliff looks down at her face)

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He tenderly places Cathy down on the sofa as Nelly looks on and Edgar falls sobbing on Cathy's body. Heathcliff rushes from the room and the final visual image of the opera is of Heathcliff, "with arms upraised and fists clenched...silhouetted against the somber and cloud-massed sky" (286) as he sings:

May you never find peace as long as I live. If I killed you then haunt me the rest of my life. Take any form, even drive me mad, but just don't leave me, don't leave me here! Haunt me, Cathy for the rest of my life! (287-288)

This is virtually the exact image that ended the prologue of the opera, both Floyd and Hermann achieving a symmetry of visual and musical effect at the end of their operas.

It is significant that both operas end with the death of Catherine and a final defiant image of Heathcliff. This is a typically operatic image, the dead soprano in the arms of the lover (usually the tenor but in this case the baritone). Three of the most popular operas in the repertoire, *La Traviata*, *Carmen* and *La Bohème* end in this fashion and it certainly accords with Clément's (1989:11) view of the soprano as victim: "opera concerns women...they suffer, they cry, they die....Not one of them escapes with her life, or very few of them do." Both operas have little choice but to end where they do given the dramaturgical demands of the art form. Interestingly, most of the film and stage versions of the novel also end at this point, which indicates the problematic nature of the second half of the novel. The dominant view is that, as Holderness (1985:63) states, "the sequel is a healing, therapeutic conclusion: a demonstration of the happiness that can come out of suffering, of the restorative power of love." Yet other critics take a different view. Allot (1970:10) says that such a reading "overlooks the departure of Hareton and the younger Catherine to the valley, and their abandonment of the old house to the spirits of the still restless Heathcliff and the elder Catherine. There is, after all, no escape for Emily Brontë from her emotional commitment to Heathcliff." The ends of both operas, however, do retain something of this ambivalence. As Knopfmacher (1989:106) observes, the novel closes on an "ambiguous note. The book's open ending suggests the co-existence of alternative explanations our eagerness to complete what Emily Brontë leaves unsettled suggests how

profoundly she challenges her readers through her Shakespearean ability to keep opposites in suspension."

For the operas to end where they do obviously makes sense from a dramatic and theatrical point of view as well as from the purely practical one of length. In Herrmann, the final image is of Heathcliff "hopelessly searching out into the storm" (254), and the final stage direction: "only the windows remain radiantly white with the swirling snow" has an open-ended, enigmatic quality, with the symbolism of the radiant window remaining ambiguous. There is no resolution to this relationship, even in death, and we have, in fact, in the Prologue, seen the aftermath of these events. Floyd's ending achieves a similar effect in a perhaps more conventionally operatic way with the figure of the defiant Heathcliff. Herrmann's Heathcliff ends "broken and desperate" and the music reflects the visual image as well as his emotional state. The "Heathcliff" theme occurs for the final time and there is little sense of closure in the music:

(Ex. 34.)

Heathcliff sinks broken and desperate beside the window, hopelessly searching out into the storm. Only the windows remain radiantly white with the swirling snow.

44 Adagio tenebroso (in 6)

Fla. Cl. Hp. Tbn. Tuba Vlc. Cb. + Timp. pp

Heathcliff is denied emotional or musical resolution. Although the ending of Floyd's opera seems more conventional, with a final ringing high note from the singer and crashing chords in the orchestra, there is an equivalent lack of resolution:

(Ex. 35.)

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Heath. just don't leave me, don't leave me here! Haunt me, Cath-y, for the

rest of my life!

(The solitary figure of Heathcliff, with arms upraised and fists clenched, is silhouetted against the somber and cloud-massed sky)

(The curtain falls)

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The one view is of a broken Heathcliff, the other of a defiant one, yet we are aware of the tormented future that awaits both of them. Apter (1976:218-219) maintains that Heathcliff in the novel becomes a

Tristanesque figure, longing for the union with Catherine which will be his death. When he feels himself close to the realization of his desire he calls himself happy, but it is clear that he is tormented by a mingling of excitement and pain.... Death provides for that impossible Romantic combination: ecstasy and peace. Heathcliff's longing has grown to such a pitch that only in death can he rest. His longing makes life an impossible torment only in death is there satisfaction for this devouring Romantic passion.

There is something of this Romantic, Wagnerian *Liebestot* quality in the ending of both operas where the death of Cathy does not mean the end of their relationship but suggests that their love now exists on a metaphysical level, transcending the every-day world.

The differences in ending between the two operas in many ways reflects the different approaches of the two composers. Not only do their individual musical discourses differ but their conception of the novel itself. Herrmann chooses to focus on the romantic aspects, with the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff as the central dramatic and musical focus, and most of the wider social issues are underplayed. Floyd, however, seems to be more concerned with the wider world around these two: their relationships with the other characters are more fully explored in his work, and the theatrical possibilities of these relationships are thoroughly exploited. There is a sense that Herrmann has concentrated on creating a primarily poetic version of the novel while Floyd is more concerned with its inherent dramatic possibilities. Although the comparison simplifies matters somewhat and does not reflect musical idiom, Kerman's (1988:159) distinction between the operas of Wagner and Debussy could well apply to these two operatic versions: "Wagner tended toward the ideal of opera as symphonic play, Debussy toward the ideal of opera as sung play". Herrmann is more the poet, Floyd the dramatist.

Herrmann seems more conscious of tradition; there is a strong sense of intertextuality in his opera in its many musical allusions to the operatic repertoire such as, for example, the many songs he incorporates into his work which deliberately call attention to its artifice. Floyd, significantly, does not use song in his opera and employs a 'through-composed' style, and his primary focus is on the drama with music playing a subservient role. This is not to say that he does not exploit conventional operatic devices, but they are less self-consciously employed in his opera. One could argue that Herrmann's orchestra-narrator is more obtrusive - a character in the action, while Floyd's narrator is much more removed from the action, an observer rather than a participant. Both methods have their validity; in the words of Knoepfmacher (1989:119) concerning the novel: "The simultaneous assertion of sameness and difference, fusion and separation, so integral to *Wuthering Heights*, becomes part of a process in which the artist signifies kinship with the original and yet translates it into a new mode of expression." Both

operas offer valid, though differing responses to the novel and reveal much about the process of adaptation itself.

Chapter Two: *Billy Budd*

In contrast to the two operatic versions of *Wuthering Heights*, Benjamin Britten's adaptation of Herman Melville's posthumous novel, *Billy Budd: Sailor (An Inside narrative)*, with libretto by E. M. Forster and Eric Crozier, has secured for itself a permanent place in the current repertoire since its premiere at Covent Garden in December 1951. It is also enjoying a growing critical appreciation, being admired for its faithfulness to Melville's ambiguous work as well as for its theatrical effectiveness. It is unusual for a contemporary opera to have achieved such a standing relatively quickly and has come to be regarded as a twentieth century masterpiece.

At first glance, *Billy Budd* would seem to be a problematic choice for an opera. On Melville's death, the novel was left unfinished and there is a great deal of uncertainty as regards his final intentions. Melville's diffuse style would also seem inimical to operatic adaptation; although the structure of the narrative is broadly linear, it is complicated by many narratorial digressions and intrusive examinations of the nature of its construction and narrative method. For example, in a self-reflexive moment in chapter 11 of the novel, Melville is at pains to counter the possible accusation of mere mechanical plot-juggling: "Now to invent something involving Billy Budd ... [is] not so difficult to do [and] might avail in a way more or less interesting to account for whatever enigma may appear to lurk in the case" (1962:73-74). There is relatively little actual 'incident' in the novel but rather an abundance of authorial comment and speculation concerning these incidents. The critical views on the nature of the narrative are divided. Seelye (1971:20), for instance, sees the narrative as "slow-paced, ponderous, the fable weighed down with conjecture, hypothesis, qualification", while Watson (1971:11) argues in direct contrast that the story "develops simply, always unhurried, yet never lagging. Each character is described with the patience which the complex intention of the theme demands". On a purely practical level, the apparent lack of variety occasioned by the absence of female characters would also seem to place considerable difficulties in the way of librettist and composer. Apart from the lack of female interest, the vocal colour of a purely male-voiced ensemble is, on the face of it, a major hindrance in creating tonal variety, a problem, however, largely overcome by the astute vocal distribution of roles and the brilliantly varied orchestral colour of Britten's opera.

As will become apparent, it is the ambiguity at the heart of the novel rather than the 'drama' of the actual events which has been of most interest to Britten. There is in Britten's opera a pervasive harmonic conflict corresponding to the ambiguity of the novel, and the opera can be seen as being constructed around this conflict. The 'action' takes place in the mind of Captain Vere, and Britten has created an opera, it will be argued, that invites a view of opera as psychological novel rather than opera. Melville's novel is profoundly concerned with language and the problems of narrative itself, and these self-reflexive elements are mirrored in the operatic adaptation. A related aspect of this concern with language is the notion of silence which can be

far out of sight of land, for ages and ages we continue to sail with sealed orders, and our last destination remains a secret to ourselves and our officers; yet our final haven was predestined ere we slipped from the stocks at Creation. (378-379)

Auden (1950:63), in discussing Melville's works, deals with the concept of the ship as metaphor at length, arguing that "a ship can stand for mankind and human society moving through time and struggling with its destiny." Alluding to the well known political views of Britten and Forster, Emslie (1992:44) maintains that the opera further extends and intensifies this sense of a world in isolation, although he qualifies his view: "the closed world of the ship, while clearly a 'society', is so exceptional as to suggest a distance from general social or political problems." The difficulty for any operatic version of *Billy Budd* is how to recreate this external view of a contained world while simultaneously telling its "inside narrative". It will be shown how successful the opera actually is in suggesting this isolation, largely by means of the orchestra. (The celebrated 1978 production of the opera by John Dexter for New York's Metropolitan Opera exploited the full resources of the stage machinery in depicting a cross-section of the entire ship, sections of which moved independently of each other. This production was particularly successful in conveying the impression of the ship as microcosm.)

1.4. Dramatic qualities of the novel.

The historical setting of the novel and the detailed descriptions of the man-of-war give the events described an immediacy and a context - a backdrop against which character can realistically operate. Introducing a crucial encounter between Billy Budd and John Claggart, Melville explicitly equates the world of the man-of-war with a stage:

Passion, and passion in its profoundest, is not a thing demanding a palatial stage whereon to play its part. Down among the groundlings, among the beggars and rakers of the garbage, profound passion is enacted. And the circumstances that provoke it, however trivial or mean, are no measure of its power. In the present instance the stage is a scrubbed gun deck, and one of the external provocations a man-of-war's man's spilled soup. (78-79)

The perceived need for a realistic setting for the opera rather than an abstract background against which the psychological drama could unfold was stressed by Britten early on in his plans for its staging. (John Piper, the designer of the first production describes how Britten insisted on exact historical authenticity for the ship (Mitchell 1993:111).) Britten's desire for realism reflects a response to Melville's novel similar to that of a critic such as Sherril (1979:205) who says:

The narrator lures the reader into a wonder-world *within* the context of those historical times which the reader cannot doubt were instances brimming over with crisis, moment, and passion. The effect, and no doubt the purpose, of this telescopic narrative technique - this ranging across Europe, narrowing to Spithead and the Nore, and focussing at last on the gun decks of the *Bellipotent* - is to lend credence to the validity of the fiction because the implication left with the reader is

that the wonder-world he has entered possesses all the momentousness, energy, and significance of the encompassing, historically verifiable time.

One can argue, however, that this insistence by Britten on verisimilitude is at variance with opera's anti-mimetic bias. Subsequent productions of the opera have exploited more abstract stage-settings to good effect. (The English National Opera's 1988 production was described as achieving a successful balance between "[r]ealism and symbolism by using authentic costumes and props against a bleak semi-circular segment of sloping stage" (Cooke and Reed 1993:146). The 1989 production at Mannheim employed a similar combination of realism and symbolism with realistic props set against a "black backcloth" and a "bare wooden deck bleached white" (146).)

The novel has several intensely dramatic scenes which require little structural rearrangement for theatrical adaptation. The most striking of these scenes are the confrontation between Billy and Claggart in Vere's cabin which leads to Claggart's death, the subsequent trial of Billy, and its culmination in Billy's execution. Despite Melville's discursive style, Schmidgall (1980:22) considers the action "swift, simple, unified and manageable", comparing it to Mann's *Death in Venice* (the source for Britten's final opera) which he similarly regards as an "'inside' story ... about states of mind and the passions of the inner man." The comparable brevity of *Billy Budd* (it is occasionally designated as a novella) also facilitates its generic translation. The characterization of Billy and Claggart has frequently been seen as elemental. The elevation of character into archetype and myth is part of the magnifying effect of opera and Schmidgall (1980:22) points out in this regard that "Melville's story ... is ... as nearly perfect an operatic source as one could imagine" since opera "thrives on heightened and hyperbolic drama, on pure and polar concepts of morality like salvation and damnation, on characters caught exactly at the moment when primal ethical forces collide." Such a view must, however, remain something of a simplification; Britten retains and perhaps even extends much of the inherent ambiguity in Vere, Billy and Claggart. (Schmidgall seems to have nineteenth-century opera in mind rather than the complexities and ambiguities of much of the twentieth-century repertoire.) Indeed, it is this ambiguity which lies at the heart of the moral and ethical concerns of Britten's opera which presents him with the greatest challenge as he is working against the bias of his medium towards polarity and flattening out in character depiction.

1.5. Metaphysical drama.

The novel's interrogation of the nature of evil itself is central to the operatic adaptation. Many commentators have remarked on the parallel with *Othello*, most notably in the creation of a figure such as Claggart who embodies many of the attributes of Iago. Schmidgall (1980:23) remarks that in general terms "the central characters of Shakespeare and Melville stand at the fulcrum between archetypal forces of good and evil, which are reflected in imagery of divine

light (Desdemona) and satanic darkness (Iago), calm and storm, 'upright barbarian' (Billy) and 'urbane serpent' (Claggart)." As in the case of Shakespeare's Iago, one of the central questions in the novel is the motivation behind Claggart's primal desire to destroy Billy. Melville talks of a "natural depravity" (75), but the nature of this depravity, however, remains ambiguous. Auden (1950:145) maintains that Claggart's acts "must appear to be arbitrary and quite motiveless", and here Auden touches on a problem which has stimulated much critical debate: how this seemingly motiveless, natural depravity can authentically be represented. Claggart, like Iago "has to be given some motive, yet if the motive is convincing, he ceases to be demonic". Miller (1962:223) sees Claggart as wearing "the congenial mask of respectability to conceal from the world his true nature" - as being, in effect, the "civil monster" that Iago acknowledges himself to be.

One can, perhaps, like Schmidgall (1980:24) see a motivation behind Claggart's destructive urges which is similar to Iago's jealousy of the "daily beauty" of Othello's life: Melville's narrator specifically states that "what first moved [Claggart] against Billy" was Billy's "significant personal beauty" (77). The narrator further tells us that Claggart "fain would have shared" Billy's innocence but "despairs of it" (78). There is an increasing awareness of the complexity of the attraction that Billy exerts on Claggart whose melancholy expression "would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban" (88). As Stern (1968:230) expresses it, Claggart "looks at Billy Budd yearningly as well as hatefully, wistfully as well as scornfully, lovingly as well as balefully." The parallels with Iago are striking, as Schmidgall (1980:24) points out:

Claggart's evil is dangerous for the same reasons Iago's evil is dangerous; he has a cool judgment and knows men and by what ideals they live, though he honors none himself. He has that "peculiar ferreting genius" that gets behind actions to motivations, and as a consequence he is a master of equivocation, a perfect liar. He is a sweet talker: the marking *dolce* follows Claggart through the Britten score. And he has no conscience.

Any explanation for what Coleridge described as a "motiveless malignity" must necessarily remain mysterious. Iago, at the end of the play, replies to Othello's question: "Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil/Why he has ensnared my soul and body?" with the supremely enigmatic line: "Demand me nothing, what you know, you know" (V.ii.302-304). Since Melville's Claggart has died with his secret, the court asks Billy: "why should Claggart have so maliciously lied?" Billy cannot answer, nor, ultimately, can Vere. The narrator himself also leaves it unexplained, describing it as the "mystery of iniquity" (76). The final response to these questions must ultimately be silence.

Character revelation perhaps partly explains Britten's controversial decision to give Claggart an extended soliloquy in the opera which has many striking affinities with Iago's great "Credo" in *Otello*. Verdi's dramatic aria attempts partly to explain the motivation behind Iago's behaviour. Iago sings: *Vile son nato. Son scellerato/Perchè son uomo,/e sento il fango originario*

in me (Base I was born./I am evil/because I am a man;/and I feel in me the primeval filth). The summation of his nihilistic creed is found in the final words of the aria: *E poi?/La Morte e il Nulla/E vecchia fola il Ciel* (And then?/After Death is Nothing/And heaven an old wife's tale"). In dramatic terms it is an extremely effective moment and is Shakespearean in its powerful effect if not in source. Britten and his librettists opted for a similar revelatory aria for Claggart which has musical and thematic similarities with both Iago's aria and Ford's jealousy monologue in *Falstaff*, a fact which would seem to strengthen their view of envy being the prime motivation behind Claggart's actions. As will be shown, this aria obliquely alludes to several of the speculations about Claggart voiced by the narrator in the novel which, it can perhaps be argued, are inappropriate coming from Claggart himself. (This aria was, in fact, a source of contention between Britten and Forster who was unhappy with Britten's musical setting of his words. He wrote to Britten describing what he envisaged in this scene and, at the same time, clarifying his conception of the figure of Claggart: "I want *passion* - love constricted, perverted, poisoned, but nevertheless *flowing* down its agonising channel; a sexual discharge gone evil. Not soggy depression or growling remorse" (Cooke and Reed 1993:61).)

1.6. The sexual drama.

An important aspect of the novel which occupied both Britten and his librettists was the nature of the attraction that Billy exerted on both Claggart and Captain Vere. While Billy's appeal for Claggart is undoubtedly homoerotic in nature, it is linked to a primary concern of Melville's: the relationship between good and evil, and the corruption of innocence. In the novel, Melville obliquely acknowledges the sexual difficulties of sailors within the confined space of the man-of-war. Melville more explicitly confronted this issue in *White-Jacket* (1924:355-356):

Like pears closely packed, the crowded crew mutually decay through close contact, and every plague-spot is contagious. Still more, from this same close confinement - so far as it affects the common sailors - arise other evils, so direful that they will hardly bear even so much as an allusion. What too many seamen are when ashore is very well known, but what some of them become when completely cut off from shore indulgences can hardly be imagined by landmen. The sins for which the cities of the plain were overthrown still linger in some of these wooden-halled Gomorrah's of the deep. More than once complaints were made at the mast in the *Neversink*, from which the deck officer would turn away with loathing, refuse to hear them, and command the complainant out of his sight. There are evils in men-of-war, which ... will neither bear representing, nor reading, and will hardly bear thinking of.

If it is clear that the primary motivation for Claggart's desire to destroy Billy is envy engendered by physical attraction, then, similarly, there is more than a hint that Vere's attitude towards Billy is more complex than the simple paternal affection with which he appears to regard Billy. During the impressment of Billy, the narrator registers Vere's comment to Lieutenant Ratcliffe about "his good fortune in lighting on such a fine specimen of the *genus homo*, who in the nude might have posed for a statue of the young Adam before the Fall" (94). There are

several other incidents in the novel which have an overtly homoerotic element. The spilling of the soup at Claggart's feet has the obvious sexual connotation of ejaculation. The moment of Billy's hanging when Billy hangs motionless and Vere is described as standing "erectly rigid as a musket" (124) also has obvious sexual implications. Again it is Auden (1950:146) who has most skillfully isolated and explained this aspect of the sexual symbolism in the novel:

the opposition is not strength/weakness, but innocence/guilt-consciousness, i.e., Claggart wishes to annihilate the difference either by becoming innocent himself or by acquiring an accomplice in guilt. If this is expressed sexually, the magic act must necessarily be homosexual, for the wish is for identity in innocence or in guilt, and identity demands the same sex.

Claggart, as the devil, cannot, of course, admit a sexual desire, for that would be an admission of loneliness which pride cannot admit. Either he must corrupt innocence through an underling or if that is not possible he must annihilate it, which he does.

Auden's interpretation emphasises the duality at the heart of the novel.

There is a remarkable struggle in the novel to apprehend the nature of good and evil as embodied in the conflicting concepts of human justice and absolute or divine justice. In the dangerous situation in which the *Bellipotent* finds herself, "man cannot appeal to anything beyond the wooden walls of his world" (Stern 1979:224). The novel seems to imply that sometimes the individual must of necessity be sacrificed for the common good, something which it does not condone but is "unavoidably expedient at the present stage of human development" (Hillway 1979:140-141). Miller (1962:226) concludes that the climax of the novel is to be found in the trial and Vere's choice "between the 'chronological time' of absolute justice and the 'horological time' of worldly necessity." Whittall (1990:149) suggests that Vere's personal feelings in the novel inevitably remain secondary but "for the opera-makers ... the possibility of providing the Captain with personal feelings whose significance was to prove central was a real and attractive one." The expansion of Vere's physical presence in the action and as the centre of the psychological 'action' is a strong indication of the extent of this realignment, and the trial and its aftermath becomes the focal point of the opera.

Of course, intimately linked to the notion of good and evil is a central concern of the novel and opera: the corruption of innocence, which is a subject that features prominently in many of Britten's other operas as well. Warrack (1968:2), for one, sees the concept of innocence relatively unproblematically, remarking that

so powerfully has the theme of destroyed innocence pervaded Britten's art that there is a danger of seeing Billy exclusively as a victim.... The essence of *Billy Budd* is that innocence finally becomes the dominant force. Billy is incorruptible; but in the hidden interview ... he reaches the state of understanding which lies behind his cry from the yard-arm. His innocence has become mature and conscious, comprehending its place in the order Vere affirms; and Vere in turn find his life's justification in Billy.

However, in the novel innocence is presented more problematically and Stern (1968:215) considers that "Melville repeatedly suggests that innocence, in the need for a knowledge of the history of the only world there is, is not a saving virtue, but a fatal flaw. The very goodness of Billy's ignorance of the world, while in accord with Christian teaching, becomes the sin of nonunderstanding, noncommunicating mindlessness marked by the stutter." Here is the fundamental paradox of Billy's goodness which is threatening rather than conciliatory. (This is reflected in the ambiguous presentation of Billy in the opera which will become apparent later.) Auden (1950:143-4) concludes that the problem for Melville lay in his attempt to have Billy function as both Christ and Adam:

If the story were to be simply the story of the Fall. i.e., the story of how the Devil (Claggart) tempted Adam (Budd) into the knowledge of good and evil, this would not matter, but Melville wants Budd also to be the Second Adam, the sinless victim who suffers voluntarily for the sins of the whole world. But in order to be that he must know what sin is, or else his suffering is not redemptive, but only one more sin on our part ... Melville seems to have been aware that something must happen to Billy to change him from the unconscious Adam into the conscious Christ but, in terms of his fable, he cannot make this explicit and the decisive transition has to take place off-stage in the final interview between Billy and Vere.

Auden's comment alludes to an extremely contentious aspect of both the novel and the opera: the final interview between Vere and Billy, an incident which is not actually presented in either. Melville speculates at some length on what *could* have happened but does not come to any final conclusion. Britten, at this point, has a series of 34 orchestral chords which aurally seem to suggest what might have happened in the cabin (this scene will be discussed in depth later). This scene encapsulates the thematisation of silence which is a feature of the novel. In Britten's opera, the concept of silence is foregrounded in Billy's stammer with its combination of preverbal sound and silence, culminating in the confrontation with Claggart in Vere's cabin and its tragic ambiguities. Paradoxically, the 'silent scene' only serves to intensify the ambiguity.

1.7. Plurality of meaning.

Any attempt to isolate one particular theme in the novel at the expense of the totality of its thematic concerns would, as Cooke (1993:26) warns, ignore the "complex web of allusion and symbolism" in which other "levels of allegorical interpretation are clearly of equal if not greater importance." He remarks on the "open-ended" quality of Britten's opera in response to the novel's "ambiguities and resonances" which "provide a godsend to an opera composer of Britten's sensibilities." It is the plurality of meaning which opens the text up for successful adaptation: it resists any final interpretation. Whittall (1990:149) concedes that it is "difficult to deny that there is a sexual aspect to Melville's predominantly, ambiguously robust style" but the approach of the opera-makers results finally in the enhancement of the "innate, irreducible ambivalence of Melville's tale", or, as Vincent (1971:5) puts it, the "ambiguities, mystifications, riddles" of

which "Melville was a connoisseur". The opera does not attempt to resolve the ambiguity - on the contrary, the apparently deliberate evocation of ambiguity which seems at times to dominate the opera can be seen as its ultimate artistic achievement.

2. Structure of the novel and opera.

The novel is divided into thirty chapters of varying length followed by the verse, "Billy in the Darbies". The opera consists of two acts, the first act of three scenes being preceded by a prologue, while the second act has four scenes followed by an epilogue. There are no breaks between scenes and each scene is linked to the next by means of musical interludes. (This is the revised 1960 version of the opera which, in its original format consisted of four acts.) The following table relates the subject-content of each chapter of the novel to the plot-structure of the opera:

Novel	Opera
	Prologue
	Vere ruminates on the subject of good and evil - always some flaw. All life is confusion - leads from his memory directly into 1st scene.
	Scene 1
	(Main deck and quarter deck)
	General scene of ship bustle.
	A flogging and 3 impressed men - Billy. Claggart warned to keep an eye on Billy and sets up his trap. Billy and Claggart's first contact.
	Scene 2
	(Vere's cabin)
	Vere, 1st Lt. and Sailing Master. Discussing mutiny and talk of Billy.
	Scene 3
	(Berth deck)
	Billy and other sailors. Squeak interfering in Billy's kit - they fight and Claggart appears, and (alone) talks of his nature. Novice attempts to enlist Billy. Dansker tells Billy that Claggart is down on him.
	Act II
	Scene 1
	(Main deck and quarter deck)
	Claggart approaches Vere - interrupted by French ship - attempt to catch her fails. Claggart again speaks to Vere and Billy is summoned to Vere's cabin.
	Scene 2
1. Description of Billy and his impressment.	
2. Billy is questioned about his origins.	
3. Discussion of the mutinies of Spithead and the Nore.	
4. Discussion of Nelson	
5. Anxiety about further outbreaks of mutinies.	
6. Description of Capt. Vere.	
7. Continuation.	
8. Description of Claggart.	
9. Billy's life on board. Introduction of Dansker.	
10. Claggart and Billy clash.	
11. Further discussion of Claggart.	
12. Continued.	
13. Claggart's method of operation.	
14. Billy tempted by one of Claggart's spies.	
15. Billy tells Dansker about it who warns him.	
16. Billy's innocence.	
17. Billy's life on board.	
18. Claggart confronts Vere and denounces Billy who is summoned to Vere's cabin.	

19. Interview - Billy kills Claggart. Surgeon enters.
20. Surgeon disturbed by Vere's actions.
21. Drumhead court convened. Officers are influenced by Vere and Billy is condemned.
22. Vere informs Billy of the verdict.
23. Verdict announced to crew. Claggart buried.
24. Billy alone, chained on gundeck.

25. Execution in front of crew.
 26. Discussion of lack of muscle spasm.
 27. Crew's murmur after Billy's death. Life carries on.
 28. Vere's death soon after.
 29. Discussion of false report of events.
 30. Veneration of Billy.
- "Billy in the Darbies"

(Captain's cabin)

Billy and Vere first, then Claggart who accuses him and is struck by Billy. Ist Lt, Sailing Master and Ratcliffe are summoned and cabin prepared for a court-martial. Billy is heard and the court pronounces the death sentence.

Scene 3

(Bay of upper gun deck)

Billy in chains is visited by Dansker. Billy is resigned to his fate.

Scene 4

(Main deck and quarter deck)

The whole crew assembles. Billy's sentence is read out and he is marched off to be hanged. There is a growing murmur among the crew but is soon silenced by officers.

Epilogue

(As in Prologue)

Vere finishes his narration and describes Billy's last moments. Ends with his sense of being blessed by Billy

2.1. Operatic narrative and ambiguity.

The nature of ambiguity has been the subject of debate among literary theorists and there is some dispute about the meaning of the word in a literary context, and whether the use of a term such as 'indeterminacy' might be preferable. According to Graff (1987:165), 'ambiguity' denotes the "property of a text which, however elusive it might be, [is] assumed to be finally capable of being described by an interpretation of the text", whereas 'indeterminacy'

denotes a property of a text that enters and infects the interpretation of the text, so that it is not just literature but also the *interpretation* of literature that is fraught with uncertainty [it] spreads the range of ambiguity by making interpretations of literature, as well as literature itself, uncertain.

While I do not wish to enter this debate, the term 'ambiguity' seems more useful in this context in that this investigation of the process of metaphrasis is founded on the conventional meaning of the term 'interpretation' and there would be little benefit to be derived in problematising the concept of ambiguity itself; the operatic response to a fictional text must be seen as an interpretation of that text.

3. Prologue: double perspective and tonal ambivalence.

Of course the operatic adaptation of the novel necessitates structural changes and rearrangement of material. Perhaps the most important difference in focus between novel and opera is to be found in the treatment of Captain Vere. The opera intensifies the focus on Vere to the extent that the events on board the *Indomitable* are seen through his eyes. This is achieved through the creation of a Prologue and Epilogue which frame the action and in which Vere, as an old man, recalls the events of 1797 (in the novel there is narratorial description of the death of Vere which occurs soon after the events on the *Bellipotent*. Vere's last words are "Billy Budd, Billy Budd", uttered not in the "accents of remorse" (129)). Thus, in the opera, these events are presented to the audience as if filtered through Vere's consciousness. The fact that the evolution of the opera itself is so fully documented (see Cooke and Reed 1993:42-74) is helpful in tracing the growth of Vere in the hands of the composer and librettists. It appears that Forster was initially intent on focusing the attention on the eponymous Billy rather than so intensely on Vere of whom he wrote in an article in the *Griffin* in September 1951:

How odiously Vere comes out in the trial scene! At first he stays in the witness box, as he should, then he constitutes himself both counsel for the prosecution and judge, and never stops lecturing the court until the boy is sentenced to death.... His unseemly harangue arises, I think, from Melville's wavering attitude towards an impeccable commander, superior philosopher, and a British aristocrat. (Cooke and Reed 1993:157)

However, in a radio discussion of the opera before the revised two-act version of the opera was recorded for the BBC in 1960, Forster stated: "I don't think Billy the central figure. He names the opera, and I think I consider the things from his point of view.... But I quite see the position of Vere". He went on to remark that "It's very easy to place him in the centre of the opera, because he has much more apprehension than poor Billy, who's often muddling about in an instinctive way." In reply to a comment that Vere thus became the more dramatic character, Forster concluded: "Yes, I think that he is the only character who is truly tragic. The others are doing their jobs, following their destinies" (Cooke and Reed 1993:28-29). In response to a similar question, Britten gave a fascinating insight into his compositional and interpretive method:

I think several things about this. One, I think there is the difference of the time that we were writing and the time that Melville was writing - one sees things a little bit more liberally now. Also I feel that we after all were making a new work of this.... From my own particular point of view, the way that Melville made Vere behave in the trial would not have been sympathetic or encouraging to me to write music.... I think it was the quality of conflict in Vere's mind ... which attracted me to this particular subject. (29)

The Prologue of the opera has Vere as an old man alone on stage. Although a radical departure from the novel, the prologue (and epilogue) is an operatic convention exploited in operas as diverse as Verdi's *Simone Boccanegra*, Boito's *Mefistofele*, Offenbach's *The Tales of*

Hoffmann, and Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. (Indeed, Wagner's *Das Rheingold* is regarded as the prologue to the the *Ring* itself). Some recent productions of *Billy Budd* draw a specific link between Vere and Melville; in a 1987 Scottish Opera production, Melville/Vere is depicted as an old man writing the story shortly before his death, while others have even had Vere present during events in the opera when it is not specified in the score that he be there (the 1988 production for the English National Opera which was televised by the BBC). This obviously increases the dramatic effectiveness of both the Prologue and Epilogue in the sense of having Vere as both focaliser and focalised. (The 1988 ENO production had Vere made up to resemble Forster himself!) This adaptability of the Prologue indicates how flexible it is as a framing device, and it functions in a similar way to the prologues in both operatic versions of *Wuthering Heights*. The distancing effect of the Prologue in the opera *Billy Budd* is noted by White (1983:177-178): "To see the ship from without, alone in the centre of its circumscribing horizon, it is necessary to provide the audience with a view-point outside the field of immediate action". The crucial difference in function between the Prologue here and those of the *Wuthering Heights* operas is the presence of Vere who Howard (1969:79) considers has a "dual role - in the action and outside it; a protagonist and a structural prop." This points to the thematisation of duality and ambiguity in the opera as a whole.

Emslie (1992:46) sees other, more problematic factors at work and remarks that this framing device "throws the events of the opera into flash-back, presenting it to us 'whole' and, as narrative, seemingly unproblematic. The story asserts closure, suggests that things have been worked out and settled." This view is debatable; Vere's anguish in both the Prologue and the Epilogue suggests that he perceives himself as condemned to an eternal reliving and questioning of the events he describes and therefore any easy sense of closure must be questionable. The tonal ambivalence of the ending of the opera also tends to resist any absolute sense of closure. Having Vere alone on stage at the beginning could, in a limited way, be seen as a theatrical equivalent of the narrator in the novel, and Vere certainly shares some qualities with him, not least a pronounced pedantic streak, but this view is undercut by the all-pervasive presence of the orchestra which itself, in the terms of this study, 'narrates' Vere.

In musical terms, the Prologue immediately sets up a sharp clash between two keys: B flat major against B minor which have their roots only a semitone apart yet are harmonically far removed from each other:

(Ex. 1.)



This harmonic conflict which is central to the opera's 'meaning' and dominates much of its musical structure, is established in these opening measures. The meaning of this tonal conflict has been the subject of much debate, with Howard (1969:79), for example, suggesting that conflict is generally "expressed in tonal ambivalence, bitonality; and the juxtaposition of notes, chords, and phrases a semitone apart." Whittall (1982:125) considers that this clash seems finally to be resolved in favour of B flat which would seem to symbolise "the implicit triumph of good over evil", but then qualifies his statement by suggesting that there is only apparent resolution: the "dramatic and musical essence of the opera is in the conflict, and the whole 'message' of the work is that evil is not vanquished by good, but at best submerged beneath it." Warrack (1966:3-4) echoes this view, describing this clash as an "easily perceived musical symbol of two forces, irreconcilable yet in closest contact." He further remarks that "[t]he moral tension of the opera ... finds expression in a musical tension that does not properly have a resolution; between the given forces, all man may do is make a choice."

The use of musical material in this way is a characteristic part of Britten's musical discourse and is employed for more than its mere symbolic value; this tonal ambivalence in the orchestra can be seen as a device which approximates the narrator's ambiguity towards his subject in the novel. Brett (1984:141) remarks that "[b]eing a suggestive force, rather than a specific symbol, a musical motif can reflect ... subtle changes of mood and meaning". Britten uses this semitone clash so pervasively throughout the opera that it surely suggests the primal ambiguity which Forster (1974:98) attributed to Melville who, for Forster, "reaches straight back into the universal, to a blackness and sadness so transcending our own that they are indistinguishable from glory."

This ambiguity is adumbrated by Vere in the Prologue, who looks back to the events of 1797 and how these events influenced his attempt to fathom "eternal truth" (Britten 1961:2-3). Seemingly in response to the harmonic clash in the orchestra, he introduces the idea of the contrasting poles of good and evil which, having their own ambiguities, are not absolute: "the good has never been perfect. There is always some flaw in it, some defect, some imperfection in the divine image, some fault in the angelic song, some stammer in the divine speech" (1961:3-4) - an obvious reference to the stammer which mars the otherwise 'perfect' Billy. Immediately apparent is a characteristic aspect of Britten's musical discourse in action. As the line, "and the good has never been perfect" is sung, a rapid figure in the woodwinds is heard:

(Ex. 2.)

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows a vocal line (Vere) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "e - vil, and the good has ne - ver been per - fect. There is". The piano accompaniment includes markings: "cresc", "pp w w", and "Trpt: sord.". The second system also shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "al - ways some flaw in it, some de - fect, some im - per -". The piano accompaniment includes markings: "getting livelier", "animando", and "cresc. poco a poco".

This orchestral figure will be seen to be associated with Billy, particularly with his stammer, but also incorporated at times into his vocal line. Although this is not *leitmotif* in the more extended sense of the term, the use of a phrase such as this functions as a kind of musical shorthand, immediately indicating aspects of character or situation in a similar way but without the wider connotations of *leitmotif*. Vere laments that "the Devil still has something to do with ev'ry human consignment to this planet of earth" (4). In comparison the novel, in describing Billy's defect, concludes that it was a "striking instance that the arch interferer, the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every consignment to this planet earth" (53). One can see here the skill with which the librettists have incorporated lines from the novel into the opera. The narrator's rather elaborate description of the Devil in the novel is necessarily simplified for intelligibility and clarity for both singer and audience, yet much of the texture of Melville's language is retained while most of the ambiguity of the original is, as we have briefly seen, transferred to the orchestra-narrator. The libretto is written almost entirely in a flexible and poetic prose with several of Melville's lines of dialogue being incorporated. This gives the opera its sense of fluidity; the transition from recitative passages to the more formal set pieces is smooth and, at times, almost imperceptible. Forster's libretto certainly fulfills Thomson's (1989:66) injunction that a libretto needs plain yet poetic language.

Vere seems almost to interrupt his own thoughts with the memory of what actually happened in 1797 which has caused him so much anguish: "O what have I done" (4). This is set to a musical phrase which one will hear expanded in 'meaning' to include references to the mutinies of Spithead and the Nore. This line of Vere's is given impulse by a rhythmic figure which, in turn, will come to be associated with the concepts of work and duty and is a partial and inadequate answer to his question - 'duty'. This figure will also finally be employed during Billy's execution:

(Ex. 3.)

passionately
appassionato

planet of earth. O what have... I done?..

broadly - *largamente*

p molto cresc

meno f

p

pp

o what, what..... have.... I done?

Con - fu -

Britten puts both rhythmic and melodic material to complex use; the orchestral accompaniment contains the rhythmic figure with its particular associations, but Vere's vocal line introduces a melodic shape that is utilised differently in the opera, most notably its associations with the idea of mutiny. Thus Britten's complex discourse embodies a diversity of meanings and associations. Vere's thoughts continue with his recollection of "confusion, so much is confusion! I have tried to guide others rightly, but I have been lost on the infinite sea" (5), and the rhythmic figure is transformed into the original semitone motif suggesting the unresolved nature of the events in Vere's mind. This confusion seems to triumph and his subsequent question "Who has blessed me? Who has saved me?" remains unanswered as, indeed, the whole question of redemption remains ambiguous in the opera. As the lights slowly fade, Vere's recollections start to taper off as if the effort has been too much for him: "In the summer of seventeen-hundred and ninety-seven, in the French wars, in the difficult and dangerous days after the Mutiny at the Nore, in the days when I, Edward Fairfax Vere, commanded the *Indomitable*" (6-7). This apparent sapping of Vere's strength will be echoed in the Epilogue which parallels the musical structure of the Prologue. This circularity creates the impression of the figure of Vere, like the Flying Dutchman, eternally condemned to relive these events and continually to re-experience their anguish.

4. Act One: dualistic operatic discourse.

4.1. Leitmotif.

The transition from the Prologue to the first scene is smooth, and the act commences with normal ship-board activities where the crew is seen holystoning the deck to the accompaniment of the rhythmic figure first heard in (Ex. 3.). This rhythmic impulse is frequently interrupted by the men's work song which is characterised by a distinctive rising-fifth phrase:

(Ex. 4.)

5 The men sing as they work.

CHORUS

TENORS *pp*

1st PARTY *pp*

BASSES *pp*

dragging

Sir.

Timp.

This phrase is later incorporated into Billy's farewell to his comrades on the *Rights o' Man* and is used extensively throughout the opera. It is an outstanding example of Britten's extensive use of leitmotif, and was first heard in Vere's Prologue when he tried to remember what had actually happened in the past. Later in the opera when the officers are discussing the mutinies of Spithead and the Nore, this phrase will become more specifically associated with the whole concept of mutiny itself. It is also used for the temptation of Billy by the Novice, as well as in Claggart's denouncement of Billy to Vere. Its final manifestation is found in the wordless chorus immediately after Billy's execution when there is a very real danger of rebellion among the crew, and it can be concluded that this motif is generally associated with repression of all kinds. As is apparent, the recurrence of musical motifs has the dramatic function of showing how one event is experienced in terms of a previous event.

In his discussion of this kind of musical device in opera, Lindenberg (1984:138) maintains that the audience "reinterprets the motif against the developing dramatic action". Britten builds up a web of motivic material throughout the opera and this is a striking characteristic of the complexity of his musical discourse, a discursive complexity which conveys much of the ambiguity of the novel. Evans (1979:164) contends that "similarities of melodic expression are deliberately played on that create a sense of obsession", and concludes that it is "this labyrinthine quality of the motivic work" (167) which is so effective in enclosing characters in the isolated world of the opera. This creation of a claustrophobic atmosphere does not become unbearable because the "concentration of motivic work is counterbalanced by an extremely wide range of orchestral invention, tirelessly exploring the colour and possibilities of Britten's largest opera orchestra" (164). Repetition of thematic material also has a narrative and structural function in both providing a link between different parts of the narrative as well as giving larger segments of the opera a sense of an overall framework. As Lindenberg (1984:138) argues, in addition to providing "interpretive clues", this repetition also "works to guarantee the narrative cohesiveness and temporality of a musical work", and one is reminded that music can make "dramatic statements [which] gain new significance in the course of the work." This elaborate utilisation of leitmotifs, as elements in larger musical structures, also, in the broader sense, contributes to the overall architecture of the opera.

4.2. The Chorus.

What is also immediately striking in this opera, in comparison with the other operas examined in this study, is the extensive and wholly organic use of the chorus. As one would expect, Britten's use of the chorus in the performance of sea shanties is innovative, but its deployment is much more sophisticated than merely adding a nautical flavour; it greatly contributes to the layered discourse of the opera. The chorus virtually has the status of a 'character' but there is a duality in its deployment in that it functions both as a collective unit as well as a group of individuals. Its use in the opera parallels the importance of the chorus in such diverse operas as *La forza del destino*, *Boris Godunov* and *Moses und Aron*, as well as Britten's first opera, *Peter Grimes*. The integration of the chorus can be seen during normal ship's activities: they sing in unison as they collectively hoist the sails:

(Ex. 5.)

The musical score for 'sway!' is presented in a multi-staff format. At the top, the BOSS's part is written in bass clef, with the lyrics 'sway! and sway! and sway! and'. Below this, the CHORUS is divided into four parts: TENORS, 3rd PARTY, BASSES I, and BASSES II. Each part has its own staff and lyrics, with 'And' indicating staggered entrances. The piano accompaniment is shown at the bottom in grand staff notation. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C).

The chorus as collective finds its most impressive utilisation in the great battle scene in Act Two. Britten is unusual in so far as large-scale modern choral operas are rare, and he harks back in this instance to the great tradition of nineteenth-century grand opera. Lindenberger (1984:36) traces the disappearance of the chorus as a dramatic force in verbal drama and its retention in musical drama as accompanying

a shift of focus in drama from public to private, from the political to the psychological realm. If opera, in the course of its development, did not precisely aim to articulate political truths, the crowd at least served as a magnifying force that could lend the medium an epic quality; perhaps more than any single element, it is the crowd that justified the adjective *grand* with which opera was associated during the nineteenth century.

Although *Billy Budd* has strong elements of the grand opera tradition it focuses more intensely on the private, psychological realm. (The realities of available resources must also be taken into

consideration. *Billy Budd* was a commission from the Royal Opera Covent Garden which had a large and well-trained chorus at its disposal, and this factor, as well as the operatic tradition of sailors' choruses, obviously influenced Britten in his use of the chorus.)

It is in the deployment of the chorus as a vital element in both the musical discourse as well as the physical drama that the hardships and cruelties on board ship become immediately apparent in this first scene. These injustices are epitomised by the bosun's heartless treatment of the Novice who stumbles while working and is listed for "twenty strokes" (23). This punishment appears to be without motivation and is described by Howard (1969:82) as both "typical and individual", and she concludes that the "generalised atmosphere of violence is emphasised by the fact that such minor characters are involved - the Bosun, not Claggart; the nameless Novice, not Billy, Dansker, or Donald." Emslie (1992:44) talks about the generally repressive character of shipboard life, and remarks that despite the cruel treatment of the crew there is an "equally shared, but implied, agenda of liberation." However, Emslie notes that there appears to be some ambivalence regarding Britten's attitude as "the ambiguities of the opera reflect the fact that no real emancipation is possible, as genuine liberation would evoke radical implications well beyond the predispositions of the opera's creators." This brief incident is once again interrupted by the men's song; "O heave!" which accompanies the departure of the two parties of men, leaving the stage empty except for the Sailing Master on the quarter deck. A cry from the Maintop is heard announcing the return of the boarding party with three impressed men.

4.3. Billy Budd.

The general political and social situation is summed up in the Sailing Master's reply to the First Lieutenant's question about the three men, and is a preparation for the arrival of Billy who is an atypical product of impressment:

We seem to have the devil's own luck. Nothing worth having these days. Diseased, hungry grumblers, sweepings of the stews and jails, lackeys and pimps ... mechanics and lickspittles. Ah, it's wearisome! But it's war, it's war, we must be content. (29-30)

The impressment (the novel has only Billy being impressed) is dealt with at some length in the novel and there is a discussion between Captain Graveling of the *Rights-of-Man* and the *Bellipotent's* lieutenant which focuses on Billy's qualities as a 'peacemaker'. Graveling remarks to the lieutenant "with a rueful reproach in the tone of his voice: 'Lieutenant, you are going to take my best man from me, the jewel of 'em'" (46). Stern (1968:216) argues that the "bitterness of [*Billy Budd's*] irony and anger first becomes noticeable in the impressment scene" and, of course, some of this is sacrificed in the opera although the objections of the first two impressed men convey something of the injustice of their situation. An aspect of the different narrative strategy in the opera is the loss of background information about Billy, particularly his influence

on his fellow men which has had to be left out of the libretto - and also, significantly, his violent reaction to an obvious sexual overture from a fellow sailor. The opera, however, preserves this central dualism in the presentation of Billy as both peacemaker and potential aggressor, and this constant duality is part of the fabric of ambiguity in the opera. Brett (1984:139-140) suggests that in the opera this

slightly aggressive side of Billy's goodness is expressed in a series of rising arpeggios on triads a tone apart, first heard when the boat containing him and the other impressed men nears the *Indomitable* in Act I scene 1. This motif subsequently forms the accompaniment to Billy's first aria ('Billy Budd, king of the birds!'), and when in his last scene Billy lies in chains, it punctuates the phrases of his ballad, played on the piccolo, still chirpy but lonely and forlorn. At the opening of Act II, however, it is transformed into the melody the whole crew sings in pursuit of the French ship, thus suggesting psychologically that this moment of unity is a product as much of Billy's influence as of the excitement of the chase.

The cumulative effect of musical elements such as those outlined above can convey a surprising amount of fairly specific information. As Brett indicates, "Being a suggestive force, rather than a specific symbol, a musical motif can reflect such subtle changes of mood and meaning ... and Britten was able to achieve such nuance in his description of the other main characters" (140).

4.4. Claggart.

The ambiguities in the representation of a character such as Billy are extended in the presentation of Claggart who is strongly characterised by his music. His entrance is accompanied by a distinctive falling phrase dominated by intervals of a fourth and accompanied typically by lower brass which suggests something of his sinister quality:

(Ex. 6.)

The musical score for Claggart's entrance is presented in a multi-staff format. The vocal line for Claggart begins with the instruction "Slower Più lento" and the lyrics "- quire your as-sis - tance." The orchestral accompaniment includes a Tuba part marked "p" and a Timpani part marked "g". The Claggart vocal line continues with "CLAGGART p dolce ad lib." and the lyrics "Your ho - nour, I am". The orchestral accompaniment includes a Tuba part marked "p" and a Timpani part marked "g". The Claggart vocal line continues with "at your dis - po - sal." and the lyrics "First man for-ward!". The orchestral accompaniment includes a Tuba part marked "p" and a Timpani part marked "g". The Claggart vocal line continues with "Red Whiskers is pushed forward." and the lyrics "First man for-ward!". The orchestral accompaniment includes a Tuba part marked "p" and a Timpani part marked "g".

The paradox at the heart of Claggart's nature is indicated in his first line, "Your honour, I am at your disposal" (31), given the marking *dolce* which characterises his ingratiating behaviour with his superior officers. In direct contrast, his first line to the impressed men is marked *feroce*, an immediate indication of his attitude towards them: the duality central to the opera, and embodied in a figure like Claggart, is indicated here in musical terms. His implacability is conveyed in his repetition of the question "your age?" to the first man, Red Whiskers, each time on a rising fourth which seems to gain in menace with each repetition. There is a gradual speeding up of the questions, and his questioning of Billy results in the revelation of Billy's stammer. As the officers remark on this fact, Billy is unable to utter the word "foundling". This is an example of how opera can telescope events. The officers' comments and Billy's stammer occur simultaneously with both elements being perfectly distinct and intelligible. Finally, Billy manages to get the word out and there is a marked contrast in the vocal flourish on this word compared with his previous inarticulateness. Most of Billy's vocal set pieces are constructed from melodic fanfare-like material similar to this phrase:

(Ex. 7.)



A version of this phrase first occurred in the Prologue ("some stammer in the divine speech") but here undergoes an ironic inversion to express Billy's singing ability which is placed in direct contrast with his speech defect. The delight of the officers with Billy is echoed in a more restrained and ambiguous manner by Claggart who remarks: "A find in a thousand, your honour. A beauty.... A jewel. The pearl of great price" (41-42). This is an echo of Captain Graveling's comment in the novel: "Ay, Lieutenant, you are going to take away the jewel of 'em" (47), as well as the "jewel-block" (132) referred to in "Billy in the Darbies". Again, the musical phrase has the distinctive falling fourth shape which becomes very prominent later in Claggart's great monologue. Billy is assigned his place on the foretop and bursts into an exuberant aria: "Billy Budd, king of the birds". Included in this section is the musical phrase which accompanies his line "Farewell old *Rights o' man!*" which has a similar melodic structure to phrases which have become associated with the mutinies as well as with the work song of the men:

(Ex. 8.)

40 33 Broadly - Largamente (d)

Billy: Fare - well old Rights o' man! Fare - well *dim.*

FIRST LIEUTENANT: What's

SAILING MASTER: What's that? What's

LIEUTENANT RATCLIFFE: What's

TENORS: Ah..... *pp*

BASSES: Ah..... *pp*

CHORUS: (off stage)

Timp.

The duality of the novel is reflected in the complexity of Britten's method for, as Howard (1969:84) remarks, this phrase has the "double result of aligning [Billy] with the men and the pattern of their working song and of arousing the suspicions of the mutiny-haunted officers." In contrast to the novel, the reaction of the officers to the name *Rights o' Man* is much more heated here. In the novel the reaction is described as follows: "'Down, sir!' roared the lieutenant, instantly assuming all the rigor of his rank, though with difficulty repressing a smile" (49). The opera uses the same phrase, "Down sir", but there is none of the 'suppressed smile' of the novel; the lessening of the ambiguity is reflected in the officers' reactions which are underpinned by unequivocal music and the immediate call to clear the decks. The Sailing Master echoes Vere's comment in the Prologue: "Always something, always some defect". One has the sense, even at this early stage in the opera, that the perceived threat of mutiny is very real on board the *Indomitable*, a result of the ever-present element of repression (far more so than on the *Bellipotent*), and this would seem to justify Vere's later decision to summon a drumhead court immediately after Claggart's death rather than to refer the case to the commander of the fleet as was the standard procedure under the Articles of War.

The First Lieutenant instructs Claggart to keep a watch on Billy, and Claggart's reply again has melodic elements of the falling fourth, with a brief moment of revelation for Claggart:

Do they think I'm deaf? Was I born yesterday? Have I never studied men...and man's weaknesses? Have I not apprenticed myself ... to this hateful world, to this ship, accursed ship? And oh, the fools!.... These officers! They are naught but dust in the wind. (49-51)

One sees Claggart's ambivalent function here, by the very nature of his rank, as a buffer between the officers and the men, and he is disliked by both, a view which is supported by Sherrill's (1979:211) comment that in the novel Claggart is "placed at the very center of the vortices of

power" which make up the world of the ship. Another view of Claggart is advanced by Howard (1969:84) who remarks that Claggart is seen here in the opera as "the reverse side of Vere - Vere has "studied ... and tried to fathom eternal truth", Claggart has also studied: "men and man's weakness" and "apprenticed [him] self to this hateful world". He is the nexus of an ambiguous world of deceit and sadism. Claggart bullishly instructs Squeak to make life difficult for Billy while the Novice's Friend enters and tells Claggart that the Novice has taken the flogging very badly and "cannot walk" (57), to which Claggart callously replies, "let him crawl", again accompanied by his distinctive musical phrase. The vocal casting of the opera can also provide an avenue of interpretation and Howard (1969:84) remarks that in this scene "Claggart's mental as well as physical bullying is demonstrated.... Claggart as a bass has most of his scenes with tenors, invariably dominating them - Red Whiskers, Squeak, and later the Novice. We are not, then, surprised when he attempts to dominate Vere." Vere is, of course, sung by a tenor.

4.5. Ensemble.

Britten is, of course, extremely skillful in the operatic device of varying the musical discourse by allowing certain orchestral instruments to become associated with particular characters, emotions or ideas. Claggart's exit, which is accompanied by a distinctive saxophone melody, also signals the entrance of the Novice and the plangent sound of the saxophone becomes associated with him and with particular acts of cruelty. The saxophone overlays the vocal lines of the Novice and the Novice's Friend and a small chorus of sailors who sing "We're all of us lost forever on the endless sea" (57), which has the feel of a shanty about it.

Novice	Novice's Friend	Small Chorus
I'm done for, I'm done for! The shame'll never pass. But my heart's broken... They've caught me, my home's gone. We're lost forever on the endless sea.	The pain'll soon pass. Yer bruises'll heal up, kid. I'll look after you. We're all of us lost on the endless sea.	Yes, lost forever on the endless sea. Ay, he's heartbroken. We're all broken. Ay, his home's gone. They've caught us. We're lost forever on the endless sea.

It is one of the few moments of compassion in the opera and one can see how different strands of emotion can simultaneously be integrated (the Novice experiencing the pain, his friend comforting him, and the chorus commenting more abstractly on the action occurring in front of them) through an interweaving of melody to create a moment of great beauty. Again the vocal casting is significant: the Novice is a tenor and his vocal line rises above the others conveying the pain of the flogging and his sense of humiliation. The Novice's Friend is a baritone and his vocal line is smooth and reassuring; mainly in the baritone's warm middle register. The sound of the chorus is low and subdued as they reflect on the event they are witnessing, and conveys their general sense of desolation and melancholy. That the actual theme announced by the saxophone has elements of the mutiny motive adds another element to the sub-text of this scene, suggesting

the as yet un-articulated discontent which is a direct result of such brutality, and the realisation that "They've caught us", with its sense of the futility of any resistance.

As a contrast with this slow-moving ensemble there follows an agitated quartet (61-69) in which Red Whiskers objects to his impressment accompanied by cynical comments from Donald. Billy remarks to Dansker that he will "give no offence" and will "get no punishment" - with obvious ironic undertones as these matters are out of his control. Billy's attitude can be seen problematically: Johnson (1980:88) claims that "he is obsessed with maintaining his own irreproachability in the eyes of authority.... His reaction to questionable behavior of any sort is to obliterate it." This brief ensemble functions both musically and dramatically as a contrast to the previous one. The change in tempo signals a stronger resistance to injustice than the seemingly blind acceptance of their fate by the sailors, evident in the previous section, and also offers a comparison between Billy's goodnatured acceptance of his situation and Red Whiskers's violent, yet ultimately futile, resistance.

4.6. Billy and Claggart.

The first, significant incident between Claggart and Billy occurs when Claggart orders Billy to "take off that fancy neckerchief" and admonishes him: "Look after your dress. Take a pride in yourself, Beauty! And you'll come to no harm" (70-71). The sudden silence from the orchestra gives a sense of the menace posed by Claggart even though his vocal line does not seem to be threatening. This is an example of orchestral silence being used to increase the intensity of the dramatic action on stage and reflects in a wider sense the opera's thematisation of silence. The silence in the pit focuses the attention more strongly on the events on stage. It is as if the orchestra-narrator suddenly stands back and allows the drama of the situation to take effect without mediation. The brass which is evident during parts of this scene has elements of both Claggart's typical fourth motif as well as the distinctive timbre which accompanies most of Claggart's utterances, both musical elements in combination conveying the danger - as yet unperceived by Billy - that Claggart poses to him. In reply to Billy's question about Vere, Donald answers: "Starry Vere we call him" (73), which is taken up by the chorus. There follows an extended chorus with Donald supplying information which is echoed by the chorus, using a shanty format that illustrates how a particular musical form can be adapted to a different situation. Billy joins in the spirit of the occasion and exuberantly sings:

"He's good is he? and goodness is best, and I'm for it Starry Vere, and I'm for you! Star of the morning.... Leading from night ... leading to light.... Starry, I'll follow you.... Follow through darkness, never you fear ... I'd die to save you, ask for to die ... I'll follow you all I can, follow you for ever! (73-79)

Again the dualism in the opera is apparent in the references to darkness and light - Claggart as a denizen of the darkness of the lower decks and Vere epitomising the clear light of reason. The

latent irony in Billy's words lies in the fact that he will, in the end, die to save Vere. The comments of Donald, which are echoed by the sailors, also suggest the wider political situation, a perception which is reinforced by the interruption of the Bosun ordering the crew below deck; there can be no relaxation of the harsh discipline because of the threat of rebellion as well as the constant possibility of action against the French. The crew reveal their attitude towards the French: "They killed their king and they'll kill ours" (75), an attitude which will be reflected by the officers in the next scene - again the wider political situation is alluded to and the threat that the French pose. At this point Howard (1969:86) says our attention is once more directed towards the ship as microcosm afloat on a hostile sea: "we take in the ship as a whole once more. And more than the ship: we are reminded of the war with France, which is the reason for most of the action of the plot - the harsh discipline, the press-ganging, the tension among the officers. It is also the reason for Vere's ultimate betrayal of Billy." Britten's ability constantly to reposition the scenic focus through the skillful deployment of both his stage and orchestral resources, is apparent. And just as Melville's fictional narrator is able to direct the focus at will, so the orchestra-narrator, in perhaps a more limited way, is similarly able to direct the audience's point of view.

4.7. Vere.

There is no musical break between Scene 1 and Scene 2 which takes place a week later in Vere's cabin in the evening, and the continuous nature of the music gives a fluidity to the action as well as a sense of time passing. This is the audience's first impression of Vere as a relatively young man and here it is the contemplative, academic character rather than the man of action who has briefly been alluded to in the previous scene. Even more than with Billy and Claggart, Vere is presented in dualistic terms, and it is through a gradual accretion of detail that Britten builds up his complex character. There is a reference to the 'duty' figure (Ex. 2.) which immediately establishes a link with the Vere of the Prologue and, of course, all of Vere's subsequent actions are coloured by our knowledge of him as a tortured old man. The Prologue has, in a sense, used a similar method to that of a fictional narrator in establishing a character in the reader's mind before that character is actually shown in 'action'. The original four-act version of the opera had an act division at the end of the first scene which concluded with an ensemble called the 'Captain's Muster'. This scene was one of several passages deleted for mainly dramaturgical reasons when the opera was revised in 1960. Reed (1993:78-79) regards the motivation behind this this revision as being

the avoidance of too great a climax rather early in the opera the scene possesses no authority from Melville and was specifically requested from the librettists by the composer. What functioned in the 1951 version as a grand opera set piece bringing the first act to a triumphant conclusion was rather out of place in a two-act span where the action was more fluid a scene in which Vere's character is evoked helps to build up further the mystery surrounding the *Indomitable's* commander.

However, the excision of this scene does tend to problematise Billy's immediate enthusiasm for Vere since he has had no contact with Vere as yet in the two-act version, and this revision has not met with total approval. (Another reason advanced for this revision is the purely practical one that it calls for some rather demanding singing from Vere and Peter Pears, the first Vere, was uncomfortable with this section. Some recent productions have reopened this cut, apparently to good effect.)

A tenuous musical link is, however, suggested between Vere and Billy in the musical interlude which consists of thematic material from the previous scene, most significantly the ironic use of the melody to which Billy sang the words: "I'll die to save you". It is as if the orchestra-narrator were commenting on the relationship to develop between Billy and Vere. Reading Plutarch, Vere compares the troubles of the Greeks and Romans with his own: "May their virtues be ours, and their courage" (83), a moment which Howard (1969:87) suggests identifies Vere as "of the eighteenth century". She concludes that Vere's failure to save Billy is a direct result of his "classically slanted view of life. He sees Billy as the consenting victim which expediency and the good of his 'people' require him to sacrifice." Musically this section of the scene conveys a feeling of an invocation which supports Vere's Line: "O God, grant me light, light to guide us all!" (83) a line given intensity and poignancy by the the warmth of the accompanying tremolo strings, also suggesting early on some of the anguish that Vere will experience before the end of the opera and of which the audience is already aware.

The entrance of the First Lieutenant and the Sailing Master turns Vere's attention towards the proximity of the French and the possibility of imminent action, increasing the audience's awareness of the very real dangers threatening the ship and softening the later response to Vere's precipitous and extreme action after the murder of Claggart. The contemplative side of Vere has been replaced by the man of action. The two officers also reveal the typical rampant chauvinism of the period, echoing the men: "Don't like the French. Don't like their bowing and scraping. Don't like their hoppity skippity ways. Don't like their lingo.... England for me. British brawn and beef. Home and beauty..." (86-87). The Sailing Master apologises for their language and although Vere professes not to object, his failure to participate in their exchanges gives one the impression that he is faintly disapproving of their sentiments, and the jaunty 6/8 rhythm in which they express their feelings adds to the impression of the superficiality and limited scope of their political views. One senses in this scene a certain distance between Vere and his officers, not only in rank.

The deference with which the officers regard Vere is further demonstrated by the question from the First Lieutenant who asks Vere, "Any danger of French notions spreading this side, sir?" (90) Britten constructs a character much as a novelist would through the cumulative effect of details such as these as well as with larger gestures. Although the opera is a legacy of the

tradition of grand opera, Britten nevertheless achieves a subtlety in his characterisation that differs greatly from the more emphatically two-dimensional figures of conventional opera. Lindenberger (1984:44) comments that the "shading that critics admire so much in literary characters is the exception rather than the norm in most styles of opera", yet acknowledges the complexity of some twentieth-century opera which often has a "subtlety and many-sidedness rare in earlier operatic periods". He suggests that the reason "may not simply be that the great opera composers of our time have been more self-consciously 'literary' than their predecessors", but that the ability to create "characters with 'depth effect' may lie ... in the fact that the complex musical language at their disposal allowed them to create the illusion of correspondingly complex characters" (45). Of course, it is the function of the orchestra-narrator to provide much of this complexity.

Vere is the first to utter the dreaded word "mutiny" in this scene. The phrase which leads up to the word is marked *deciso*: "There is a word which we scarcely dare speak, yet at moments it has to be spoken" (90). However the word itself is uttered *pianissimo* by Vere and the two officers, again indicating in both musical and verbal terms the dread which this concept evokes for them, and the variation in dynamic marking is a further aural signal of the pervasive ambiguity in the opera. This sets off a new train of thought which the Sailing Master utters *mesa voce*: "Spithead, The Nore, the floating republic..." (91), again to the distinctive 'mutiny' melodic phrase first heard in the Prologue where it is set to Vere's question: "O what have I done?" The prominence of the recent disturbances is emphasised by the First Lieutenant's passionate exclamation: "O God preserve us from the Nore" (92), which elicits an agitated outburst from Vere:

Ay, at Spithead the men may have had their grievances, but the Nore! what had we there? Revolution, sedition, the Jacobins, the infamous spirit of France, France who has killed her king and denied her God, France the tyrant who wears the cap of liberty, France who pretends to love mankind and is at war with the world, France the external enemy of righteousness. That was the Nore. Ay, we must be vigilant. We must be on our guard. (92-94)

This shows the other, passionate and political side of Vere as opposed to the more contemplative aspect exhibited in the earlier part of this scene. However, when Claggart's name is mentioned, Vere refers to him as a "veritable Argus" (95), which flummoxes the two officers, the classical reference being beyond them. The opera does not seem overtly critical of this academic inclination in Vere's character, unlike the novel where his fellow officers find him "lacking in the companionable quality" and perceive him as a "dry and bookish gentleman." One of his fellow officers is described as asking: "Don't you think there is a queer streak of the pedantic running through him?" (63). The novel often seems more critical of Vere than does the opera, a fact which would seem to substantiate Forster's comment that Vere needed to be "rescued from Melville" (Brett 1984:135).

Vere's disclosure that he has taken note of Billy when the officers remind him of Billy's farewell to the "Rights o' Man" (96) (using the 'mutiny' phrase), is significant: Vere has already been suitably impressed by Billy when Claggart eventually approaches with his accusations of mutiny. As if in response to the mention of Billy, the sound of the men singing below decks is heard to which Vere remarks: "Where there is happiness ... there cannot be harm. We owe so much to them - some torn from their homes" (97-99), perhaps an indication of Billy's role as 'peace-maker'. This can be seen, Howard (1969:87) maintains, as an example of the fact that "the men have, throughout the opera, substantial melodic compensation for the hardships of their life", but Emslie (1992:44) refutes this rather simplistic view of life aboard the *Indomitable*, insisting that

Vere clearly has the status of a benevolent patriarch and, equally clearly, represents an historically conditioned view of social stability, one hostile to radical change notions of consensus and shared responsibility are unavoidably linked to an acknowledgement of socially institutionalised brutalities in which Vere himself is implicated. In *Billy Budd*, 'The Rights of Man' cannot be limited to individual spiritual redemption or sexual fulfilment. Human worth and human rights are group concepts.

Lieutenant Radcliffe enters and announces that they have reached enemy waters and Vere, now alone, almost resignedly turns once more to Plutarch.

4.8. Sea shanties.

There follows an orchestral fantasy based on the previous shanty theme which links the shanty heard in Vere's cabin with the third scene where the watch below are heard singing the shanty "Blow her to Hilo", while other members of the crew attend to their kit in the gun-bays. This thematic linking of material gives a strong sense of the continuity of shipboard life on both the upper and lower decks as well as conveying the feeling of time passing. Donald starts up a new shanty, "We're off to Samoa", which is taken up by other characters including Billy. The otherwise sparing use of shanties is highly effective in this scene. A shanty is a kind of simple, natural song which Cone (1974:59) maintains conveys

the impression that the singer is improvising both words and music, whether or not this is really the case. Thus not only is simple song the obvious medium for natural song of all kinds, but it is also ideal for producing a simulation of natural song. In natural song the concepts of poet and composer are hardly relevant: there is only a musician singing on an occasion calling for musical expression. The simulation of natural song attempts to portray such an occasion.

Paradoxically, the musical setting of this shanty is highly complex but it conveys the sense of the words and music having been spontaneously composed on the spot, as was the case with authentic shanties. The words are significant in that there is a sexually ambiguous element which establishes the later possibility of a potential homosexual relationship between Billy and Vere.

Hindley (1992:363-381) has traced the evolution of the various drafts of the libretto and notes that in the early stages "there seems to have been an intention to provide Billy with a girl friend" - 'Bristol Molly' - who is referred to in the ballad, "Billy in the Darbies", but who is dropped in the final version of the libretto. Hindley further notes that "the composition of the sea shanties seems, in fact, to have caused problems, in particular over the extent to which they might refer to girls" (370). He demonstrates that

at the conclusion of the shanty episode the verse about 'Billy' is introduced by a succession of suggestive *tenutos* on the words 'My Aunt willy-nilly was winking at Billy'. This is followed by considerable elaboration and emphasis on the words 'She'll cut up her Billy for pie, For all he's a catch on the eye' - words which, in the mouths of an all-male chorus, carry scarcely concealed homosexual overtones.

It would seem that from all this that the final decision to exclude Molly was a considered one, and its likely purpose was to avoid too strongly shifting the atmosphere to suggest a heterosexual interest on Billy's part. We do not have to hold that Billy was 'a homosexual' in the modern exclusive sense. But the way had to be left open for the main theme: a positive and indeed idealized form of homosexual love to be implicit in the relationship between Billy and Vere. Billy *might* have had an affair with Bristol Molly, but it would have blurred the perception of the main theme to say so. (371)

In a sense the complexity of the intentions of the librettists and composer and even their indecision perhaps mirror the uncertainty of Melville's final intentions and further reinforce the ambiguity.

4.9. Billy's stammer.

The boisterous good fun of the shanty is interrupted when Billy, searching for some tobacco for Dansker, finds Squeak rifling his kit. Billy's agitation brings on the stammer and, in another example of opera's ability to simultaneously present several incidents, there is a brief ensemble with Billy and Squeak off stage and the other characters and chorus on. This is the second manifestation of Billy's stammer which occurs four times in the opera and becomes irrevocably associated with his temper, thus making his reaction to Claggart's accusation in Vere's cabin completely plausible. Billy's stammer can be seen as part of the problematisation of the whole concept of language and silence in the opera. In musical terms the stammer consists of unvocalised syllables which are punctuated by the woodwind 'stammer motif' in the orchestra which reflects Billy's attempt at utterance and its gaps:

(Ex. 9.)

The musical score for Ex. 9 is divided into two systems. The first system features Billy (off), Darius, and the Chorus. Billy's part includes the lyrics "Hi! You... a... a...". Darius's part includes "too good. There's... his whole trouble." The Chorus's part includes "cut up her Bil - ly for pie, cut up her Bil - ly for pie." The piano accompaniment includes a section marked "34 Lento (come sopra)" with dynamics like *pp* and *ppp*. The second system features Billy (off), Darius, and the Chorus. Billy's part includes "He's a-stammer!" and "He's up." Darius's part includes "He's a-stammer!" and "He's up." The Chorus's part includes "What did I tell you?" and "He's a-stammer!". The piano accompaniment includes dynamics like *pp* and *ppp*.

The stammer is pre-linguistic and falls somehow into the space between speech and silence, between music and speech, and between music and silence. It exemplifies a rare discursive liminality: it occupies - to employ a phrase of Melville's - 'the space between' which the opera as a whole explores. One could regard Billy's stammer as comparable to those moments in opera where singing as well as speech break down: moments described by Poizat as the 'cry'. Poizat (1992:90) sees silence in opera as "opposed not to sound but to speech there is nothing further from speech than silence." He notes that "the cry, being the vocal manifestation furthest from verbal articulation, finds itself quite logically closest to silence." He observes that "singing consequently occupies all the intermediate space according to the diverse modalities of its relation to speech:

Silence, cry ----- Singing ----- Speech, signifying linguistic message

According to this model then, Billy's stammer can be seen as part of the larger thematisation of silence in the opera and the encounter with Claggart in Vere's cabin could be regarded in terms of

a clash between speech and silence. Billy's stammer brings all the conflicting expressive modes in the opera into sharp relief through their juxtaposition.

The fight, which ironically also foreshadows Billy's final encounter with Claggart, is interrupted by the appearance of Claggart who questions Dansker about its cause. Dansker's reply is typically brief: "Billy went to his bag. Squeak there. Billy lugged him here. Squeak drew a knife. Billy floor'd him. That's all" (128). Claggart orders Squeak to be put in irons and turns to Billy with the ambiguous words: "Handsomely done, my lad. And handsome is as handsome did it, too" (129). This is taken from chapter 10 of the novel where the incident that provokes it is Billy's spilling of the soup in front of Claggart who

happened to observe who it was that had done the spilling. His countenance changed. Pausing, he was about to ejaculate something hasty at the sailor, but checked himself, and pointing down at the streaming soup, playfully tapped him from behind with his rattan, saying in a low musical voice peculiar to him at times, "Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it, too!" And with that passed on. Not noted by Billy as not coming within his view was the involuntary smile, or grimace, that accompanied Claggart's equivocal words. Aridly it drew down the thin corners of his shapely mouth. (72)

The reason for the alteration and relocation of this incident from the spilling of the soup is the need to telescope various incidents in the novel into one representative incident in the opera (the spilling of the soup is alluded to by Claggart in the opera in his instructions to Squeak to spill Billy's soup). The operatic incident loses much of Melville's obvious homoerotic symbolism, but retains the ambiguity as regards Claggart's meaning in his reference to the 'handsome sailor'.

4.10. Claggart: aria as revelation.

Claggart's innate cruelty is further revealed in his gratuitous lashing of a boy who stumbles against him as the crew leave the deck. This is accompanied by a brief yet telling musical allusion to the theme associated with the flogging of the Novice. As the men leave they continue singing their shanty with Claggart repeating his line: "Handsomely done, my lad. Handsome indeed..." (130-131). This seemingly endless repetition indicates the obsession that Billy has now become for Claggart and is an example of the ability of operatic discourse to convey the 'meaning' of such moments non-verbally. It is not the words here that convey meaning as such, but the musical repetition. One can link this repetition with Billy's pre-verbal stammer which itself is a form of repetition and both these aspects of repetition finally come into conflict in the ultimate confrontation between Claggart and Billy in Vere's cabin. When the stage is empty, Claggart commences his great monologue:

O beauty, o handsomeness, goodness! Would that I never encountered you! Would that I lived in my own world always, in that depravity to which I was born. There I found peace of a sort, there I established an order such as reigns in Hell. But

alas, alas! the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it and suffers.... Having seen you, what choice remains to me? None, none! I am doomed to annihilate you, I am vowed to your destruction. I will wipe you off the face of the earth, off this tiny floating fragment of earth.... No, you cannot escape! With hate and envy I am stronger than love.... I, John Claggart, Master-at-arms upon the *Indomitable*, have you in my power, and I will destroy you. (132-143)

The obvious parallel to be drawn is with Iago's "Credo" in *Otello*. Although Iago's motives remain a mystery at the end of the play the situation is not quite the same in *Billy Budd*. Melville, in chapters 11 and 12, expands at length on the nature of Claggart who, in the narrator's words, exhibits a "depravity according to nature", which is transformed in the opera into the line "Would that I lived in my own world always, in that depravity to which I was born" (133). In the novel the narrator insists that to gain an understanding of Claggart, "one must cross 'the deadly space between'" (74), and he concludes his analysis with some plausible thoughts on possible motivation which are worth quoting at length for the way they illustrate the extraordinary duality of Claggart's character:

But since [envy lodges] in the heart not the brain, no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it. But Claggart's was no vulgar form of the passion. Nor, as directed toward Billy Budd, did it partake of that streak of apprehensive jealousy that marred Saul's visage peturbedly brooding on the comely young David. Claggart's envy struck deeper. If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health, and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because these went along with a nature that, as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent. To him, the spirit lodged within Billy, and looking out from his welkin eyes as from windows, that ineffability it was which made the dimple in his dyed cheek, supplied his joints, and dancing in his yellow curls made him pre-eminently the Handsome Sailor. One person excepted, the master-at-arms was perhaps the only man on the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd. And the insight but intensified his passion, which assuming various secret forms within him, at times assumed that of cynic disdain, disdain of innocence - to be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an aesthetic way he saw the charm of it, the courageous free-and-easy temper of it, and fain would have shared it, but he despaired of it.

With no power to annul the elemental evil in him, though readily enough he could hide it; apprehending the good, but powerless to be it; a nature like Claggart's, surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and, like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, act out to the end the part allotted to it. (77-78)

One cannot help noticing the irony in the fact that, apart from Vere, Claggart is the only one on board who can appreciate the 'moral phenomenon' posed by Billy.

The obvious problem confronting the operatic adaptor is to convey something of the complex ambiguity suggested by the narrator's explanation, and it is in this monologue that the polarities between Billy and Claggart are made plain. Billy's goodness is a threat to Claggart because he cannot exist together with this goodness and therefore he experiences an irresistible urge to destroy Billy. Claggart's monologue is an attempt to make some of this explicit. Forster's

view of Claggart left little doubt about the homosexual implications in the portrayal of the character. His comment about a "sexual discharge gone evil" (Cooke and Reed 1993:27) is echoed in his view of Melville's treatment of the subject as opposed to Henry James's:

Billy Budd has goodness -...rather alloyed by H. M.'s suppressed homosex.... H[enry] J[ames] in *The Turn of the Screw* is merely declining to think about homosex, and the knowledge he is declining throws him into the necessary fluster. Only the writer who has the sense of evil can make goodness readable. I come back to Melville and Dostoyevsky. (Cooke and Reed 1993:157)

The aria itself, in musical terms, is characterised by the extensive use of fourths which is typical of Claggart's music:

(Ex. 10.)

The musical score for Claggart's aria is presented in three systems. The first system features a Clag. (Claggart) vocal line and a Chorus (off) line. The Clag. line begins with a *ppp* dynamic and the lyrics "Hand-some.... O". The Chorus line has the lyrics "ry me home, car - ry me home!". The second system continues the Clag. line with the lyrics "beau - - ty, o hand-some-ness, good - - ness," and includes a *Trb. Solo* and *p espr.* marking. The third system shows the Clag. line with the lyrics "beau - - ty, o hand-some-ness, good - - ness," and includes a *p* dynamic and a *Wind sustained* marking.

In contrast to Howard (1969:88), who maintains that the aria "establishes a morbid degree of introspection which contrasts with Vere" whom she insists is "always an outward-looking character", one has the sense here of striking similarities between Vere and Claggart in their very susceptibility to introspection. Howard rightly resists the interpretation of Claggart as a simple reincarnation of Iago when she argues that Claggart "knows himself" and is "not a totally corrupt man, a Machiavel." Recognising that "the conflict is still going on", and that in this aria he is "still in torment", she concludes that it is a "sense of hopelessness that drives him to annihilate Billy and we feel that, in spite of the common cruelty and persecution of his environment, this is a unique decision for Claggart." Britten provides a number of obvious musical passages which directly link Claggart with Vere, and perhaps the most significant one is the motif accompanying the words "Beauty, handsomeness, goodness" (139), which is directly echoed by Vere after the trial where he sings the same words (293). Vere ironically echoes other melodic fragments of Claggart's discourse, and another striking example occurs when Claggart, at the end of his aria, sings the words: "I, John Claggart, Master-at-arms upon the *Indomitable*, have you in my power,

and I will destroy you" (142-143), on one note. Vere, after the trial, sings: "I, Edward Fairfax Vere, captain of the *Indomitable* lost with all hands on the infinite sea" (293-294), similarly on one sustained note, the music pointing, as Howard (1969:89) remarks, "a complex comparison between levels and efficacies of power."

Claggart's brief scene with the novice (who is accompanied by his now familiar saxophone melody) shows another aspect of his subtlety and shrewdness as a character as he manipulates the Novice into incriminating Billy with money. Resistance to Claggart is futile and the Novice cries out that "Everything's fate. There's no end to it, and may God forgive me" (150). (This belief in the potency of fate will be echoed by Vere immediately after Billy has struck Claggart as well as by Billy just prior to his execution.) The Novice moves to where Billy is sleeping, and the nocturnal mood is emphasised by the music which will again be heard as Billy lies chained on the gun-deck awaiting execution. Billy is initially sympathetic towards the Novice's story, particularly the reference to the injustice of impressment, but as soon as he realises where it is leading his stammer breaks out and he attempts to strike the Novice who flees. Much of their dialogue is taken directly from the novel and is skillfully incorporated into this scene. The fact that it should be the Novice who attempts to enlist Billy is plausible as the audience has witnessed the injustice of his flogging as well as the cruelty of his treatment by Claggart.

4.11. Dansker and Billy.

The scene between Dansker and Billy establishes their relationship which is important for the more extended exchange prior to Billy's execution. Dansker acts as a kind of confidant in the opera, a function which is part of operatic convention. Indeed, one can situate the three main roles roughly within this convention: Billy as desired object and victim in the role normally played by the soprano, Vere as combination of father/lover figure played by the tenor, and Claggart as the conventional villain played by the baritone or bass. In his case the role calls for a deep bass voice but one with a smooth and eloquent delivery and possessing a seductive quality (the requirements for an ideal Don Giovanni!). The vocal casting of Vere is more complex, as befits the father/lover figure, calling for more than a purely lyric tenor, but also sufficient vocal weight and expressive ability to suggest authority as well as spiritual and emotional anguish. Dansker then would fall into the comprimario role of confidant which in opera can be either male or female and is used as a foil for the main character.

The equivalent conversation between Dansker and Billy in the novel takes place some days after this incident, during which time Billy has had the opportunity to reflect on the implications of his 'temptation'. The afterguardsman who had approached him seems unconcerned about the rejection and this puzzles Billy which causes him to turn to Dansker for assistance. In the opera Dansker warns Billy that "Jemmy-Legs is down on you" (162), the repetition of the phrase is another example of the verbal repetition in the opera which adds to the mesh of ambiguity. Much of Billy's inherent innocence and goodness is revealed in his reply to Dansker:

But Jemmy Legs likes me. He calls me that sweet pleasant fellow. He gives me the smile and easy order when we meet. And when I gave Squeak that drubbing ... "handsomely done", was all he said ... and he smiled. No, he likes me. They all like me. And the life suits me, I couldn't wish for better mates. (162-164)

(The reference to "that sweet and pleasant fellow" is mentioned by the narrator earlier in the novel.) This exchange is accompanied by exuberant music suited to Billy's mood and even Dansker's growled warnings cannot stem Billy's lyrical outburst. In fact, Claggart's theme is transformed into a moment of innocence when it accompanies the line, "He calls me that sweet, pleasant fellow" (163), and this ecstatic music closes Act One in a suitably spirited fashion, with Billy's vocal line consisting of typical fanfare-like figures which have come to be associated with his high spirits. The act ends in this manner with the operatic convention of a rousing conclusion still remaining potent.

5. Act Two: language and 'truth'.

The second act of the opera extends the investigation of language and ambiguity in relation to a series of dramatic episodes extracted from the novel. There is an important encounter between Vere and Claggart which acts as a prelude to the exchange between Billy and Vere which establishes a strong emotional bond between them. This is followed by the confrontation between Billy and Claggart in Vere's cabin. Following the death of Claggart is the trial of Billy and Vere's delivery of the verdict of the court to Billy. This is the crucial 'silent' scene where the bond between Billy and Vere is strengthened. Subsequent to this is the execution and near mutiny of the crew. These episodes are dramatised in the opera and it is during these crucial incidents that the opera examines the nature of language and the concept of truth, both of which are thematised in the novel.

5.1. Battle.

A brief orchestral introduction helps to create a mood of tense excitement before Act Two opens on the main-deck some days later. Vere stands on the quarter-deck with a few of his officers and expresses concern about the mist and the desire for action as the men are getting impatient with the inactivity. The First Lieutenant announces Claggart who enters to the now familiar accompaniment of trombones, reinforcing the impression of his obsequious manner, and he commences a rather rambling story punctuated by interjections of impatience from Vere. In a deftly ironic touch, Britten introduces a woodwind motif associated with Billy's stammer on Vere's words, "speak freely", as Claggart seems unable to get to the point of his story - the orchestra-narrator amplifying the physical and verbal 'action' on stage. But, as soon as Claggart mentions that "there is danger aboard. Danger from one who..." (175), there is a cry from the

maintop announcing the sighting of an enemy sail. The mist begins to lift and the scene brightens with a feeling of general excitement on board. Vere looks through the glass and comments that it is a "Frenchman, seventy-four and new rigged. Three miles off" (179). This scene has no direct basis in the novel but is derived from the report of the narrator in chapter 18:

when the *Bellipotent* was almost at her furthest remove from the fleet ... she unexpectedly came in sight of a ship of the enemy. It proved to be a frigate. The latter, perceiving through the glass that the weight of men and metal would be heavily against her, invoking her light heels crowded sails to get away. After a chase urged almost against hope and lasting until about the first dogwatch, she signally succeeded in effecting her escape. (90-91)

This forms the basis for a large-scale ensemble with a running time of about twelve minutes. Howard (1969:90) notes that "everything that happens in the opera has the dramatic function of general effect and particular contribution to the plot. Here the attempted sea-fight is part of the working background of the ship, as well as enacting the image of Vere pursuing his moral enemy through the mists of distrust." This is a highly complex scene both musically as well as dramaturgically, with an enormous amount of physical activity on stage, and the vocal and orchestral resources are stretched to the limit. There is a central musical motif which expresses the sailors' optimism and anticipation of a fight: "This is our moment - the moment we've been waiting for these long weeks" (180-181) and it is introduced simultaneously with the sailors' work song which was used in Act One when they hauled up the sails - battle being just another aspect of their 'work':

(Ex. 11.)

AND ARISE WILD DOGBOY.

Sop'a. sway... And sway... and sway... and sway... and

TENORS *p* And sway... and sway... and sway... and

BASSES I *p* And sway... and sway... and sway... and

BASSES II *p* And sway... and sway... and sway... and

CHORUS (Hauling Party) *p* And sway... and sway... and sway... and

CHORUS (Main Deck) *p* This is our me - ment... we've

p *cresc.*

The battle scene is most effective and exciting in performance and contrasts with the more intimate scenes which predominate in the opera. It shows the release of tension that a moment like this provides for officers and men as well as the sense of disappointment displayed by all when the French ship effects her escape. This air of disappointment plays an important role in

increasing the general feeling of dissatisfaction which becomes more pervasive during the course of the opera and which culminates in the moment of near-mutiny immediately after Billy's execution. It is significant that the mist, which had briefly cleared, once again closes in. This scene also interrupts Claggart's elaborate insinuations about Billy at a crucial moment, thus increasing the tension as to how these insinuations will be received.

5.2. Claggart and Vere.

When the military conflict recedes, the personal struggle re-emerges. As things return to normal on board, most of the crew leave the deck; the First Lieutenant, the Sailing Master, and Ratcliffe remain with Vere, but draw to the side as Claggart once again approaches. Vere's impatience with Claggart is evident and he bursts out: "Now be brief, man, for God's sake" (225). This time, however, Claggart's approach is direct and he utters the word 'mutiny'. But Vere reacts differently from Act One where the term was described as "a word which we scarcely dare speak" (90). There is none of the expected horror: "Mutiny? Mutiny? I'm not to be scared by *words*" (227 - my emphasis) - the first indication in this act of its profound concern with language and the notion of absolute 'truth'. Claggart substantiates his charge by showing Vere the coins which, in an inversion of the actual events (and which contains an equivalent inversion of the musical material used in Claggart's temptation of the Novice in Act One), he claims Billy used in an attempt to bribe the Novice. Vere finally asks the name of the young seaman, and his reaction to Billy's name is violent and immediate: "Nay, you're mistaken. Your police have deceived you. Don't come to me with so foggy a tale. That's the young fellow I get good reports of" (230). There is a brief duet during which Vere expresses similar sentiments of disbelief while Claggart continues his insinuations which contain material taken directly from the novel, including Claggart's comment that Vere has "but noted his fair cheek. A mantrap may be under the ruddy-tipped daisies" (94). Finally Vere's patience is at an end: his response, "Claggart! Take heed what you say. There's a yard arm for a false witness" (232-233), is again taken directly from the novel and a reminder, as Howard (1969:93) observes, that "the struggle is a life and death one for both".

Hindley (1992:376), in his examination of successive drafts of the libretto, shows a gradual increase in the intensity of Claggart's insinuations concerning Vere's relationship with Billy. The original draft of Claggart's lines were less specific about Billy's physical beauty: "You have but noticed his outwards, your honour - his pleasant looks, his frank temper". Gradually, Britten and his librettists reworked this section, substituting the warmer 'Billy' for 'William' at Vere's first mention of his name. The final draft adds the line: "the flower of masculine beauty and strength" and this draft "not only introduces (for the first time) Vere's personal expression of trust in Billy, but divides the speeches so that Vere first rebuts the suggestion of deceit on Billy's part and then responds more roundly to the sexual innuendo of Claggart's rejoinder." Hindley draws the conclusion that

[t]he end product of this development is a delicate but clear psychological progression. Vere at first simply states his confidence in Billy's loyalty. Claggart's suggestion of deceit elicits a stronger expression of trust, whereupon Claggart hints at a somewhat less honourable motive for Vere's attitude, prompting the latter to threaten the Master-at-Arms with the yard-arm. (377)

The use of mist as a metaphor for the difficulty in discovering the unambiguous 'truth', is again prominent in this scene, and draws directly on the novel, using Vere's comment: "Do you come to me, Master-at-arms, with so foggy a tale?" (95). The irony in Vere's description of Claggart's story as 'foggy' is pointed out by Emslie (1992:58): "At this moment the metaphor is false. Claggart's tale is not foggy. It is clear and direct, not in the least difficult to understand. None the less, it is a lie." This apparent contradiction is indicative of the problematisation in both novel and opera of the nature of absolute 'truth'. Howard (1969:93) considers that Vere "precipitates the tragedy at this point because he cannot bear any uncertainty about Billy's character, not because of his fear of mutiny". There certainly is the sense of an over-reaction on Vere's part, and one can justify such an interpretation musically in that the musical discourse of this section is dominated by a sense of Billy's influence over Vere. Vere assumes Billy's lyrical aria style rather than the tortured, angular melodic quality evident in his previous aria denouncing the Nore. Here the orchestra-narrator supplies the underlying 'truth' of the scene. What Vere 'says' is not necessarily what he 'means', the 'truth' is more likely to be found in the orchestra.

Towards the end of this exchange Vere's obvious distaste for Claggart becomes increasingly apparent. He quickly instructs Claggart to come to his cabin after he has spoken to Billy and to repeat the accusations in front of Billy. The same unctuous music in the trombones which accompanied Claggart's first approach to Vere now recurs and Vere finally reveals his exasperation with his comment: "Be so good as to leave me!" The words on their own appear innocuous but the rising musical phrase ending on the almost screamed B natural clearly show the extent of Vere's anger and distaste. The agitation in the music gradually disperses but there is one final outburst from Vere, "O this cursed mist!", again at the top of his vocal range and once more indicating the extent of his agitation. The other officers come over to join Vere and each expresses his own thoughts in a brief ensemble (236-238):

Vere	1st Lt	Sailing M	Radcliffe
Disappoint-ment, v e x a t i o n , e v e r y w h e r e , c r e e p i n g o v e r e v e r y - t h i n g , c o n f u s i n g e v e r y o n e . Confusion without and within.	Yes, sir, it's got us. It's lost us the Frenchie. The Frenchie's escaped us. She's lost, she's lost.	It may lift later, sir, but too late for our purpose. Too late, late late.	Sadly disappointing, s i r , s a d l y disappointing, sir. It's here for good, it's here for good, good.

An ensemble moment like this illustrates the plurality of meanings that the opera accommodates, and the discourse of the opera is generally characterised by these brief but telling ensembles which have a conversational quality as well as functioning as character revelation. Musically, a feeling of fluidity is created as these ensembles are not set-pieces in a formal musical sense but evolve organically out of the physical action as well as from the musical development. The irony of this particular moment is unmistakable as the officers condemn the arrival of the mist and the 'confusing' of their plans while Vere integrates their sense of the word into his more complex "confusion without and within". As the officers leave, Vere calls for "the clear light, the light of clear Heaven to separate evil from good!" (239), a line that will be echoed ironically over the dead body of Claggart. It has a similar invocatory quality to earlier moments of introspection from Vere, revealing more of the psychological agony of the character first apparent in the Prologue. The melody accompanying these words evolves into the musical material of an orchestral interlude which further depicts Vere's mental confusion and which divides this scene from the next which follows a few minutes later in Vere's cabin.

5.3. The scene in the cabin: Billy, Vere and Claggart.

Vere's brief and energetic monologue seems to revitalise him: "Claggart, John Claggart, beware! I'm not so easily deceived. The boy whom you would destroy, he is good; you are evil. You have reckoned without me. I've studied men and their ways. The mists are vanishing - and you shall fail" (243-244): it is as if the primeval ambiguity is briefly dispelled into a world of clear binary oppositions. The short scene between Vere and Billy, who now enters, is suggested in the novel when the narrator dramatises what could have been going on in Billy's mind:

The only thing that took shape in the young sailor's mind was this: Yes, the captain, I have always thought, looks kindly upon me. Wonder if he's going to make me his coxswain. I should like that. And may be now he is going to ask the master-at-arms about me (98).

This evolves into a duet for Vere and Billy in the opera and their respective vocal lines again offer insights into their emotions. Vere's has a broadly lyrical quality suggesting little of the agitation of his previous exchange with Claggart. He repeats the accusations made by Claggart but the resolute quality of his vocal line suggests his determination to disprove them. Billy is once again accompanied by a fanfare figure on a solo horn and his vocal line again assumes some of the elements of this fanfare, acting as a contrast to the smoothness of Vere's line, and suggesting something of Billy's excitement at the prospect of promotion.

A further examination of the various drafts of the libretto is revealing (as Hindley points out). In the initial draft there is no exchange between Vere and Billy while the second draft has Billy speculating about a promotion but Vere immediately telling him to put all such thoughts out of his mind. The next draft has the first indication of Billy's thoughts of his personal association

with Vere and expresses his devotion to his captain, while the final draft expresses this even more fully as well as Vere's doubt concerning the veracity of Claggart's accusations: "John Claggart, beware!". Vere asks Billy why he would like to be his coxswain, to which Billy replies:

To be near you. I'd serve you well, indeed I would. You'd be safe with me. You could trust your boat to me.... I'd die for you, so would they all. Aren't I glad to be here! Didn't know what life was before now, and O for a fight! Wish we'd got that Frenchie, I do, but we'll catch her another day. Sir! Let me be your coxswain! I'd look after you well. You could trust your boat to me. You'd be safe with me. Please sir! (246-251)

These redrafts suggest a steady increase in the intensity of the relationship between Billy and Vere, and Hindley (1992:378) remarks that "as the dialogue develops, so Billy ceases to play the role of submissive, dog-like subordinate assigned to him by Melville, and comes more and more to speak with his captain on terms of equality."

Claggart is summoned and is instructed by Vere to repeat his accusation. In the novel this is not dramatised but described:

With the measured step and calm collected air of an asylum physician approaching in the public hall some patient beginning to show some indications of a coming paroxysm, Claggart deliberately advanced within short range of Billy and, mesmerically looking him in the eye, briefly recapitulated the accusation. (98)

In the opera this is expanded into a lengthy accusation:

William Budd, I accuse you of insubordination and disaffection! William Budd, I accuse you of aiding our enemies and spreading their infamous creed of "the rights of man!" William Budd, I accuse you of bringing French gold on board, to bribe your comrades and lure them from their duty! William Budd, you are a traitor to your country and your king! I accuse you of mutiny! (254-256)

Musically each separate accusation follows a similar melodic progression and ritually conveys the "Measured step" and "calm collected air" described in the novel. This has the expected effect on Billy and as Vere turns to him the stammer, accompanied by the distinctive woodwind figure, inhibits his reply. Here we see the contrast between Claggart's linguistically complex repetition and Billy's pre-linguistic stammer, both sets of repetitions punctuated by silences (but at different ends of the continuum suggested by Poizat). This moment provides a complex combination of sense and mere sound, of silences, of musical narration and disintegration, as well as pure dramatic action. In the novel Vere quickly guesses Billy's problem and "laying a soothing hand on his shoulder, he [says], 'There is no hurry, my boy. Take your time, take your time'" (99), words which are repeated in the opera. The narrator in the novel then describes the effect of these words:

Contrary to the effect intended, these words so fatherly in tone, doubtless touching Billy's heart to the quick, prompted more violent efforts at utterance - efforts soon ending for the time in confirming the paralysis, and bringing to his face an expression which was as a crucifixion to behold. The next instant, quick as the flame from a discharged cannon might, his right arm shot out, and Claggart dropped to the deck.

In the opera this sequence of events is dramatised exactly as described in the novel and Claggart falls to the floor, an action illustrated in the orchestra by the seeming disintegration of Claggart's characteristic theme as the life seeps from his body:

(Ex. 12.)

Billy's right fist shoots out, striking Claggart on the forehead. Claggart falls and, after a couple of gasps, lies motionless.

dev-ill

VERE

He kneels by the corpse.

God o' mer-cy! Here, help me!

pp Str. (col legno)

Trb. c. aurd.

Britten uses relatively little of this kind of illustrative, programme-type music in the opera. Its use here, however, does pose the question whether 'pure' music itself can be said to possess a narrative quality - something which Abbate (1991:27) maintains resides outside of music and which music, in fact 'traces'. Certainly this is a moment of such 'tracing'.

In many ways the novel can be seen in terms of classical Aristotelian tragedy in which the *peripeteia*, or the reversal of carefully laid plans, is the mainspring of the plot. Johnson (1980:83) observes that "positioning an opposition between good and evil only to make each term take on the properties of its opposite, Melville sets up his plot in the form of a chiasmus", a situation in which innocence and guilt, criminal and victim, change places. Anderson (1971:96) suggests, however, that the novel is not "in itself a tragedy, although it is an expression of belief in the tragic predicament of man." The next moments are similar in both novel and opera. In the novel, as Vere ascertains that Claggart is dead, he turns to Billy: "'Fated boy,' breathed Captain Vere in tone so low as to be almost a whisper, 'what have you done! But here, help me'" (99). The 'tone so low' of the novel is suggested in the opera by the *pianissimo* dynamic marking in the score and the fact that Vere intones these instructions on one note - his horror at the situation inhibits melody.

From this point on there is a considerable divergence between novel and opera. In the novel Vere instructs his boy to fetch the surgeon (a character deleted in the opera) to verify Claggart's death, which he does, and Vere comments to him: "Struck dead by the angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!" (101) The surgeon begins to doubt Vere's sanity: "Was Captain Vere suddenly affected in his mind, or was it but a transient excitement, brought about by so strange and extraordinary a tragedy?" (101) Adler (1981:165) sees the questions raised about Vere's sanity as symbolic: "the concrete poetic expression of Melville's long conception of war as the 'madness' in men". One has the impression here that Vere has already judged the case and that all the subsequent events follow an inexorable pattern constituting what the narrator refers to as 'measured forms'. There is also an important difference in that in the novel Vere seems to contemplate for a moment what should be done:

Captain Vere with one hand covering his face stood to all appearances as impassive as the object at his feet. Was he absorbed in taking all the bearings of the event and what was best not only now at once to be done, but also in the sequel? Slowly he uncovered his face; and the effect was as if the moon emerging from eclipse should reappear with quite another aspect than that which had gone into hiding. The father in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian. (99-100)

There is the sense here that Vere acts only after - however briefly - having considered the options open to him, while in the opera he is not given even a moment's contemplation but acts impetuously and characteristically.

In the opera Vere tells his boy to summon the officers and there follows a brief aria introduced by the line "The mists have cleared". All has become terrifyingly clear for Vere even as, ironically, the 'measured forms' seem to disintegrate before him:

O terror, what do I see? Scylla and Charybdis, the straits of Hell. I sight them too late; I see all the mists concealed, all. Beauty, handsomeness, goodness coming to trial. How can I condemn him? How can I save him? How? My heart's broken, my life's broken, broken. It is not his trial, it is mine. It is I whom the Devil awaits! (260-264)

There is a strong irony in Vere's repetition of words from Claggart's monologue: "beauty, handsomeness, goodness", and this musical section reveals several striking musical similarities with Claggart's music. Here is clear evidence of the intervention of the orchestra-narrator in that the only way that Claggart's music can be appropriated by Vere is through the narrator who provides the link between them, which supports the argument that operatic characters 'quote' their utterances within the narratorial 'diegesis', rather than being 'free agents'.

In many ways Vere sums up the essence of the moral dilemma in the opera in his line: "It is not his trial, it is mine". Howard (1969:95) notes that "[t]he Claggart/Vere conflict has now

replaced the Claggart/Billy antithesis, even though Claggart is now dead. It is pointed musically with utter simplicity in the phrase "It is I whom the Devil awaits": Claggart's motif inverted for the first half of the phrase (Vere) and *in situ* for the word "Devil".

Vere's aria also raises the question concerning the passion with which he expresses his emotions. His lines "My heart's broken, my life's broken" seem somewhat excessive in this context from someone who has really only met Billy for the first time some few minutes before although there are indications that he has noticed Billy during general activity on board ship. A plausible reason for this is advanced by Hindley (1992:374) who argues persuasively that this speech can be seen in relation to the previous scene during which the growing warmth between Billy and Vere is developed where "they discover a hitherto unrealized depth of love and respect for one another. It is only this depth of feeling which will account for Vere's cry."

5.4. The trial.

The lengthy scene which culminates in Billy's trial is important both for the light it sheds on Vere's dilemma as well as offering (albeit brief) insights into the characters of the three officers. In a swiftly-moving quartet (another example of a typical organic ensemble), the librettists have taken pains to differentiate between the officers' immediate reactions here compared to their subsequent move towards unanimity in the court scene: the First Lieutenant's sense of duty, the Sailing Master's sense of outrage and vindictiveness, and Lieutenant Radcliffe's immediate compassion.

Vere (aside)	1st Lt	S Master	Radcliffe
Struck by an angel, an angel of God, yet the angel must hang.	Great God! For what reason? We must keep our heads. Why did he do it? What is the truth? Justice is our duty, justice is our hope. Here and now we'll judge the case. Call him to trial. Sir, command us!	Great God! For what reason? Oh what unheard of brutality! Claggart is lost to us. We must revenge him! He's dead. Give the murderer the rope! Neither heaven nor hell suffer villainy to rest. We must have revenge. Unheard of in naval annals!	Great God! For what reason? The boy has been provoked. There's no harm in the boy, I cannot believe it. Mercy on his youth. There's no harm in the lad. Heaven is merciful. Let us be merciful! Let us show pity. What's to be done?

(265-269)

The narrator in the novel does not bother to make these character distinctions, commenting that "[t]he lieutenants and other commissioned gentlemen forming Captain Vere's staff it is not necessary here to particularize, nor need it to make any mention of the warrant officers" (63).

Vere in the opera interrupts their musings with several decisive statements couched in short and peremptory musical phrases: "Justice must be done. I summon a drumhead court. The

enemy is near. The prisoner must be tried at once. Mister Redburn presides. I myself am witness, the sole earthly witness." (269-270). His final comment is, perhaps, an oblique allusion to Vere's comment in the novel that the situation for Billy would be different "at the Last Assizes" (111). Vere in the opera seems intent not to allow any questioning of his authority or, indeed, to provide any explanation of the reasons for his decision.

Billy is summoned by the court and the First Lieutenant reads the charges and calls on Vere to give his evidence. Vere, on one tone (again, a significant lack of melody) with a sense of numbness as well as ritual, repeats exactly what has happened without any elaboration. Even Billy's brief interruptions are brushed aside. The question concerning his reason for striking Claggart, however, elicits an impassioned response from Billy, typical of his most expansive lyrical style accompanied by its usual fanfare figure. As Billy mentions his stammer, the distinctive flute figure once again accompanies his words. When Billy is asked why the master-at-arms should have accused him his answer is brief: "Don't know, don't know such things" (277). Billy is unaware but the orchestra-narrator knows, and the answer is "beauty, handsomeness, goodness", the theme associated with Claggart's lines which are later taken over by Vere. The tension of the scene is further increased when Vere is asked for his opinion, but his reply once again is a dispassionate repetition on one tone: "I have told you all I have seen. I have no more to say" (278), which is a drastic reduction of Vere's lengthy speech to the court in the novel.

Billy finally seems to realise the enormity of the charges he faces and pleads with Vere to save him. Again, an examination of the successive drafts of the libretto reveals a strengthening of the intensity of Billy's appeal to Vere. In the first draft the First Lieutenant asks Billy: "Very well Budd, any questions." to which Billy replies, "Aye, Captain Vere will you save me?". In the final draft he repeats his plea several times as well as his avowal from act one: "I'd have died to save you" (279) and each request is accompanied by a fanfare from the solo horn of increasing urgency but to no avail. Vere remains silent and Billy is dismissed.

The actual trial is a distillation of several chapters in the novel. Skillful use is made of material from the novel for the subtle differentiation between the officers' deliberations in another typically fluid, organic ensemble:

1st Lt

Poor fellow, who could save him? We've no choice. There's the Mutiny Act. We've no choice. Claggart...I never liked. Still he did his duty. We've no choice. Baby Budd the men called him. Billy Budd they loved him. They called him Baby Budd. But we've no choice.

Sailing Master

Ay, he must swing. We've no choice. There are the Articles of War. We've no choice. Claggart - no one liked Claggart. Still, he's been murdered! We've no choice Billy Budd. Billy. He might have been a leader. But we've no choice.

Lt Radcliffe

Ay, there's nought to discuss. We've no choice. There are the Kings' Regulations. We've no choice. Claggart was hard on them all. How they hated him! We've no choice. Billy Budd. I had impressed him. Billy Budd, a king's bargain. But we've no choice.

(280-285)

The musical phrase which accompanies the repeated comment of the officers: "We've no choice", is repeated in several different permutations, indicating their attempt to see the situation from different points of view but being unable to resolve it and to come to any other conclusion:

(Ex. 13.)

The musical score for three vocal parts (1st Lt., S.M., Lt. R.) and piano accompaniment. The first system shows the vocalists repeating "we've no choice," in unison, marked *sempre pp*. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The second system shows the vocalists repeating "no choice." in unison, marked *clearly poco marc.*, while the piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

Before pronouncing their verdict, the three officers call once again on Vere for assistance who replies: "No do not ask me, I cannot" (287). Their second attempt is also rebuffed and Vere asks for their verdict. There is complete silence in the orchestra with its obvious heightening of the tension. In a sense this moment is a culmination of all the preceding silences in the opera: this is the ultimate silence that signifies Billy's death. All three in unison then reply: "guilty" (287), with the penalty being "hanging by the yard-arm", a verdict accepted by Vere. Vere's reaction is muted and the officers leave.

A gradual change in focus in the trial scene is revealed in the various drafts of the libretto which demonstrate the librettists' grappling with the central dilemma facing Vere. An examination of these drafts shows the difficulties Britten and Forster experienced in motivating Vere's subsequent actions, their difficulties being analogous with Vere's striving after 'truth'. These difficulties, of course, are contentious issues in interpretations of the novel, and arise from the ambiguity of Melville's final intentions. In the initial draft, Hindley (1992:372) notes that "the first solution ... was to shift from Vere to his officers all the statements in Melville which suggest the overriding duty of obeying naval law and of disregarding the claims of natural justice." The problem arose from the fact that it is Vere who has to order the execution. Hindley argues that this position still persists in the final version with its "references to the Mutiny Act,

the Articles of War and the King's Regulations, and the almost liturgical refrain 'We've no choice''. In an intermediate draft, Vere, while still replying in the negative when asked by the officers whether he desires acquittal for Billy, says:

I must not too closely consider these mysteries. As mysteries let them remain. I serve the King and my course is laid out for me. I must pursue it inflexibly. Honour, tradition, the safety of my ship. The exigencies of war compel me. Poor lad! Poor lad! May God grant him strength. (Hindley 1992:372)

Interestingly, in this draft, the suggestion offered by the surgeon in the novel that a decision be delayed until the fleet is rejoined is mooted, but Vere rather unconvincingly rejects it: "If he is to be condemned it must be here. If his blood is to be on another's head, let it be on mine." This suggestion is dropped from later drafts for the reason, as Hindley notes, that it "would make Vere's resolute refusal to save Billy (already difficult) wholly unacceptable" (373) by offering the possibility of a plausible way out of this dilemma. The reason given for coming to an immediate decision is found in a later draft where the line, "Our enemy is near and the prisoner must be tried at once", occurs. There is also a comment by Vere which is unequivocal in its import: "Death is the penalty for those who break the laws of earth" (373). Hindley comments that this sentiment would seem to fly in the face of the well known pacifist sympathies of both Britten and Forster, but he notes that they would seem

prepared to allow (as I think Melville was not) that Vere's decision may have been mistaken - hence the words of the Epilogue, 'For I could have saved him'. While raising the issue of Vere's freedom to have acted otherwise, and so throwing into ambiguity the ultimacy of Fate, this concluding statement substantiates the portrait of Vere as a real person, and transforms his part in the action into a genuinely human tragedy. (373)

The ambiguous moral issues confronting Vere are also illustrated in the various drafts of Vere's impassioned aria after the departure of the officers. The earlier drafts reveal a stronger sense of the presence of Melville with their metaphysical speculations about a cosmic war between "invisible legions" in which Vere appears to be almost a hapless bystander, as well as the image of the ship as a stage in this cosmic drama.

5.5. 'Silence'.

The 'absent' scene in the cabin between Billy and Vere is central to the whole opera and can be seen as the culmination of a pattern of silences throughout the opera. This 'silence' at the centre of both the novel and the opera has provoked much critical debate. Tindall (1971:36) comments that because the crucial interview is "disappointingly offstage, Melville seems to have avoided the dramatic possibilities of his theme". Tindall, however, finds justification for Melville's method, concluding that Melville "avoided the attractions of the obvious in the

interests of indefinite suggestion and myth. His work, whatever its air of the factual and the discursive, is symbolist and richer for scarcity of drama and image. Such drama and images as are there function more intensely in their abstract context" (38-39). (Tindall also erroneously assumes that the opera does dramatise this scene - which perhaps it does, though certainly not in the way he means!) Berthoff (1971:72) makes a similar point when he notes that Melville's mode of exposition has "other resources than dramatization, other ways of declaring its meanings". He argues that the climax of the narration is reached "in an episode in which the actual event is withheld, and we are referred instead to the *character* of the participants." Auden (1950:144) voices certain reservations: "Melville seems to have been aware that something must happen to Billy to change him from the unconscious Adam into the conscious Christ but, in terms of his fable, he cannot make this explicit and the decisive transition has to take place off-stage in the final interview between Billy and captain Vere.

What is sometimes overlooked is the fact that although the actual encounter between Billy and Vere is not presented, in the novel there is some very specific conjecture on the part of the narrator as to what might have happened. What is misleading is his initial comment that "[b]eyond communication of the sentence, what took place at this interview was never known" (114). The narrator's conjectures, however, are extensive and graphic:

It would have been in consonance with the spirit of Captain Vere should he on this occasion have concealed nothing from the condemned one - should he indeed have frankly disclosed to him the part he himself has played in bringing about the decision, at the same time revealing his actuating motives. On Billy's side it is not improbable that such a confession would have been received in much the same spirit that prompted it. Not without a sort of joy, indeed, he might have appreciated the brave opinion of him implied in his captain's making such a confidant of him. Nor, as to the sentence itself, could he have been insensible that it was imparted to him as to one not afraid to die. Even more may have been. Captain Vere in the end may have developed the passion sometimes latent under an exterior stoical or indifferent. He was old enough to have been Billy's father. The austere devotee of military duty, letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity, may in end have caught Billy to his heart, even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac on the brink of resolutely offering him up in obedience to the exacting behest. But there is no telling the sacrament, seldom if in any case revealed to the gadding world, wherever under circumstances at all akin to those here attempted to be set forth two of great Nature's nobler order embrace. There is privacy at the time, inviolable to the survivor; and holy oblivion, the sequel to each diviner magnanimity, providentially covers all. (115)

Whatever actually transpires in the cabin, it seems that there is little sense of recrimination or regret. Emslie (1992:56) remarks of Melville's narrative strategy that "it is typical of Melville that, in order to underline the imagined factual basis of his 'stories', he names his 'sources'". The problem for him here is that both potential sources are dead, having died soon after the events being depicted. Emslie reminds us that Melville "is, and always has been, our only source of authority." Therefore, "his 'conjectures' are so only in name." What Emslie terms the 'narrative

The effect of these chords in performance has provoked much debate, with commentators attempting to 'describe' some kind of transcendental occurrence in the cabin. White (1983:187) talks about the "effect of a simple signal seen through an extremely powerful telescope - a rainbow of hope", while Evans (1979:173) describes the "mysterious cleansing process of the great succession of chords", and further believes that "Britten has elevated the triad to a symbolic role that is unprecedented: only in an age which has so strenuously sought to rid that unit of primacy in its musical thinking could his spelt-out arpeggio which each note supported by a triad ... serve to represent the culminating moral drama and triumph of the whole work" (168). Culshaw (1968:6) asks why the audience is so moved by these chords and concludes that "musical analysis ... takes us nowhere near the heart of the matter. One can no more define why this passage is so profound than one can reveal, by an analysis of his sentences, why Melville's story of *Billy Budd* is so much more than an account of misadventure and misjudgment at sea." Brett (1984:142) attempts a more exact explication of the 'meaning' of these chords which he insists "lie at the heart of the musical treatment of the metaphysical overtones of *Billy Budd*". He goes on to propose that they "seem to suggest that in Platonic terms, the love of Ideal Beauty can lead to wisdom, knowledge and forgiveness; and that in Christian terms, goodness and love have the power to forgive. This moment of unalloyed optimism is perhaps the crux of the opera." Here the orchestra-narrator fulfils the equivalent function of the narrator in the novel. But music has no intrinsic 'meaning' and therefore any 'description' by the orchestra of what might have happened in the cabin must of necessity remain ambiguous, as it does in the novel. All that the orchestra-narrator can do is 'speculate'. In terms of operatic narrative, Britten has followed the model of the novel exactly.

An important aspect of this scene in both novel and opera is the thematisation of silence which becomes more prominent as the novel reaches its close and is paralleled by the opera. Mitchell (1993:132) regards this scene as a culminating moment where Britten "consummates all those accumulating references to silence in a massive sonorous image that 'speaks', undeniably, and yet at the very same time is 'dumb', i.e. *wordless*". He concludes that the interview "in Britten's hands emerges as a stroke of genius, both a realisation and extension of the imagery central to Melville's text and used to service the drama's - the opera's - single most important episode" (134). The idea in the novel that 'truth' finally is beyond language, is given embodiment in this 'mute' scene. There can be no simple resolution of ambiguity in either novel or opera.

A cogently argued and more radical view, but one that is worth quoting at length, is offered by Emslie (1992:52-53) who perceives this scene as the 'gap' at the heart of the opera and regards it as a fundamental flaw in the whole operatic conception. He acknowledges that the scene is "in every respect the central scene of the opera, necessary for understanding every theme by which the work is animated. It constitutes a signifier so authoritative that, *potentially*, it resolves the ambiguities of all the others. It is the opera's transcendental signifier." Emslie goes on to argue that the narrative 'gap' which in a "linguistic context exists between between signifier

and signified, and in Lacanian theory between the subject and his presentation of himself in the symbolic order" is foregrounded by that "which it has, superficially, suppressed." He further maintains that "narratives are susceptible to a process of deconstruction that places them all in the context of those stories they apparently do not want to tell but cannot escape; stories that suggest values and closures that radically undercut those overtly presented." Emslie suggests that these radical narratives in the opera are suppressed, particularly the appeal of the novel's homosexual element for Forster, and notes that these tensions reach their climax in this scene where the "contradictions have become so acute that words are no longer to be trusted." He concludes that the opera "accomplishes something that, in post-structuralist terms, is theoretically impossible, it consciously foregrounds that which represents the ultimate incoherence of all spoken or written discourse. In consequence, this opera is most clear about the *existence* of what cannot be said, sung or allowed on stage. To an exceptional degree it foregrounds its own deconstruction."

Several of the attempted explanations of this operatic scene seem to suggest the presence of some kind of transcendental quality which goes beyond words, but all that these explanations 'do' is collectively illustrate the difficulty commentators have in articulating how and why this scene 'works'. The result of this interview obviously leaves Vere tormented; his face is described as "one expressive of the agony of the strong" (115) and, as Emslie remarks, "the mere passing on of the death sentence is not at stake.... We feel that a good deal more took place" - as the narrator in the novel suggests. Emslie alludes to the inadequacy of language and the concept of silence when he notes that "the missing scene in *Billy Budd* is not only without a libretto, it is also without a plot and context", and considering that the combination of this chord sequence "in conjunction with the theatrical absence, can be used to elide or avoid all the opera's critical questions.... We have nothing dramatic or operatic on which to hang the chords." The ambiguity of this passage, its resistance to final interpretation or definition is succinctly summed up by Emslie: "In short, each listener is, at this moment in the drama, accorded an exceptional freedom in fitting these thirty-four signifiers to the stage opera in general. He can resolve the thematic material of plot, character and ideas in whatever way suits him."

At the heart of this debate about the 'meaning' of this scene lies the fundamental controversy concerning the narrative function of music. The essential question here is whether the non-verbal 'pure' music of this interlude can denote or even suggest a narrative sequence that makes 'sense' of this passage. In terms of this study which sees the function of the orchestra as approximating the role of the fictional narrator, this 'silent' music must have 'meaning' but that meaning remains abstract. This chord sequence can have no intrinsic meaning on its own but can suggest meanings when it is contextualised in discursive terms. These chords are part of a complex harmonic structure that is developed during the course of the opera and it is the context of this development that 'meaning' attaches to them - they can only be explained in terms of the whole discourse of the opera. In a sense they also act proleptically as their full meaning only becomes apparent during the final part of the opera.

While I do not fully endorse his view of this scene, Emslie does argue persuasively about this passage in the context of the general dialectical relationship between words and music. He is critical of the way in which most commentators of this scene "lay out their interpretations in essentially narrative terms", and observes that because "their framework is narrative, there is little they can do with 'pure' music". However, Emslie insists that the chords attain an "extraordinary degree of free association ... by virtue of 'simplifying' the discourse, by forgoing a true dialectic. Were there more to go on - were there a musical structure overtly related to the rest of the opera or, more important still, a concomitant textual or narrative context - meaning and theatrical effect would be enhanced" (57). While agreeing with much of Emslie's view of the nature of operatic discourse, I do not subscribe to his belief in the absolutely 'free association' of these chords. Their 'meaning', while necessarily remaining abstract in terms of exact depiction of events, achieves significance in the larger discursive context of the opera, something which Emslie seems reluctant to recognise. It is in the overall architecture of the opera that their meaning lies even if that meaning might be difficult to articulate. Ambiguity is at the heart of the novel and it is to this ambiguity that the opera responds, never more profoundly than in this particular passage.

Corse (1987:150-151) maintains that "[o]pera operates on the edge of language - it both is and is not a verbal construct; the words are both language and music. Sometimes the text may present the dramatic situation in much the same way that ordinary language does". However, she argues that "[t]he music, more than the libretto, adds general, overall ideas and explores values and meanings. Music helps to extend the context, to open it out", and concludes that "[o]pera, being more definite, more suggestive than music alone, and more indefinite and open than language alone, offers a unique combination of strategies by which to explore human motives and values." It is by means of these unique discursive strategies which Corse outlines that a passage such as this signifies. (Emslie (1992:58) has also noted a purely practical problem with this scene in performance:

The audience, or a good part of it, is not prepared to listen in silence: there is always an appalling bout of coughing, chat and programme rustling. The reasons for this are significant. Too many of the audience clearly do not feel that anything important is taking place. To which one might reply: they are partly right, as nothing whatsoever *is* taking place on the stage. Perhaps it is simply that, when a large part of the audience does not know the opera or has not read the programme carefully, they assume that the scene between Vere and Billy is coming and that the orchestral passage is merely a preparation for it: they are still looking to see the narrative worked out.)

However one finally 'interprets' this chord sequence - and perhaps its 'meaning' lies in the fact that there can be no final interpretation - in purely practical terms it also acts as a musical interlude facilitating the change of scene from Vere's cabin to a bay of the gun-deck where Billy lies bathed in moonlight and chained between two cannons. The music of this interlude ideally has both a quasi-mimetic function (if one accepts the intention and ability of the composer to

'dramatise' the events in Vere's cabin through music), as well as a diegetic function in that it also 'speaks' of time passing. Whittall (1990:159) has noted that the 1960 revision of the opera changed the dramatic function of this interlude from what was originally a coda to Act Three to the transition between scenes two and three: "What might have originally have been interpreted as matching the real time of the Vere-Budd interview now encapsulates the real time of the period between the beginning of the interview and the moment, 'shortly before dawn the next morning', when scene 3 begins." This restructuring would also appear to weaken the potential dramatic effect of the chord sequence and substantiate the reasons Emslie advances for the typical audience reaction. In simplistic terms, one could regard this interlude as being no more than an example of many similar interludes in opera which serve no further dramaturgical function than to facilitate a scene-change, a view which certainly cannot be reconciled with the discursive and dramaturgical complexity of the rest of the opera.

5.6. Billy.

The opera has so far given two of its three principal characters extensive moments of self-revelation and Scene 3 consists of a similar opportunity for Billy, although one can argue that little revelation actually takes place. The scene is introduced by a slow-moving figure in the strings which is interrupted by a piccolo figure associated with Billy, music strongly reminiscent of that which depicts Billy sleeping prior to being woken by the Novice in Act One. The similarity of these two passages suggests that Billy is still as capable of untroubled sleep now as he was then, again indicating the effect, if not the actuality, of what transpired between himself and Vere in the cabin. Billy sings part of the ballad "Billy in the Darbies" which was the starting-point of the novel for Meville:

Look!

Through the port comes the moon-shine astray!
 It tips the guard's cutlass and silvers this nook;
 But 'twill die in the dawning of Billy's last day.
 Ay, ay, all is up: and I must up too
 Early in the morning, aloft from below.
 On an empty stomach, now, never would it do.
 They'll give me a nibble-bit of bisquit ere I go.
 Sure a messmate will reach me the last parting cup;
 But turning heads away from the hoist and the belay,
 Heaven knows who will have the running of me up!
 No pipe to those halyards - but ain't it all sham?
 A blur's in my eyes; it is dreaming that I am.
 But Donald he has promised to stand by the plank,
 So I'll shake a friendly hand ere I sink.
 But no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think.
 They'll lash me in hammocks, drop me deep,
 Fathoms down, fathoms - how I'll dream fast asleep.
 I feel it stealing now....roll me over fair.
 I'm sleepy, and the oozy weeds about me twist. (297-302)

The symbolic significance of the visual picture of Billy lying chained on the gun-deck is emphasised by the narrator in the novel and he devotes considerable space to this description. Certainly a striking aspect of this episode in the novel is one's awareness of the peripeteiac reversal that has taken place in that the malevolent Claggart has been buried with full naval honours while Billy awaits an ignominious death. Perhaps central to the whole complex of symbols created in this fictional episode is the contrast between the "funereal hue" of the surroundings and Billy's white clothing which "dimly glimmered in the obscure light of the bay" (118), almost as if "he is already in his shroud" (119), which is part of the black/white coding throughout the narrative. The religious symbolism is intensified with lanterns set at intervals which "serve but to bring out somewhat the obscurer bays which, like small confessionals or side-chapels in a cathedral, branch between the two batteries of that covered tier" (119). As Adler (1979:170) remarks, "Billy is a picture of innocence, beauty, and peace doomed in the world of war."

In a sense the transformation of the ballad during Melville's reworking of the novel is paralleled by the novel's generic transformation into opera. In its original form, the ballad was the impetus for the novel but during the composition of the novel the ballad itself was transformed. As Reich (1971:65) notes, the ballad "is not only the ending of the novel, it was also its beginning.... And just as the poem is a question, so the entire book is a question." Adler (1979:180) reminds us that what was "originally intended as an expression of Billy's actual thoughts on the eve of his execution, became Billy's thoughts only as imagined at the end by the sailor-poet. As harmonies evolved between the poem and the prose, the poetry took on meanings implied by its words and images only in the context of the work as a whole." (The actual 'musicalisation' of the ballad parallels Adler's assertion; Billy's 'thoughts' here are mediated and expanded through the addition of music: through the consciousness of the orchestra-narrator.) The narrator in the novel describes the poem's origin in the final chapter where the feelings of the crew towards Billy "eventually found rude utterance from another foretopman, one of his own watch, gifted, as some sailors are, with an artless *poetic* temperament" (131). In a sense what the opera does is rightly restore the ballad to Billy as in its original version. It is also appropriate that the ballad is now *sung* by Billy as his true realm is song and the evocative beauty of Britten's setting of these words creates a moment of tranquillity before the final dramatic events of the opera.

The whole of Scene 3 is devoted to Billy, but it is significant that, even more than with Claggart, we never really 'know' Billy. Undoubtedly a part of the ambiguity of both novel and opera lies in the 'problem' of the delineation of the character of Billy which perhaps remains ultimately subservient to his symbolic role. Camus (1971:91) suggests that while "the metaphor suggests the dream, but from a concrete, physical starting point the symbol emerges from reality, the image is born of what we see with our own eyes." Billy, more than the other characters, assumes symbolic importance, and, as Schmidgall (1980:24) notes, "Blond, blue-

eyed, white-clad Billy is less a character of flesh and blood than a symbol of human goodness." Emslie (1992:47) notes a tension inherent in the way Billy is presented, commenting that "Billy's identity and function in the narrative ... oscillate between a symbolic, quasi-religious ideal (the angel) and a character type determined by the plot (a virtuous innocent limited by a speech defect that will cost him his life)". He is variously referred to as the Handsome Sailor, Apollo, Achilles (made vulnerable by his stammer), Adam, Beauty, a jewel and, appropriately, he fits most completely into the operatic order where, as Emslie (1992:52) notes, he is "caught in a shifting imbalance between words and music. The result is the emergence of a stage figure who, of narrative and ideological necessity, is so innately but 'meaningfully' vague that even at the end of the opera no one is entirely sure who he really was." This is reflected in the myth that grows after his death, an attempt to give meaning to the ultimately unknowable phenomenon who was 'Billy'. Orpheus-like, Billy epitomises the inherent instability of language which can only be overcome through song which, although 'of' language, ultimately transcends language.

At the end of Billy's ballad Dansker steals in bringing him a mug of grog. Dansker speaks about some of the sailors who are considering rescuing Billy. Appropriating Dansker's melody which is itself an echo of the mutiny motif, Billy warns Dansker to prevent them: "I'll swing and they'll swing". (In a sense, as Whittall (1990:162) notes, Billy is "dying 'in action', not only to save Vere from the threat of mutiny, but to save his comrades from a futile gesture of defiance at a time when their most important task is to defy the foreign enemy.") There is a departure from the novel in that Billy mentions the fact the Chaplain had visited him with his "story of the good boy hung and gone to glory" (307). This is, in fact, the only specifically Christian reference in the opera and is taken from a discarded section of "Billy in the Darbies". In the novel, the narrator describes how the chaplain comes to Billy while he sleeps, whereas in the opera, the chaplain as a physical character disappears and much of the overtly religious imagery of the novel (which Tindall (1971:38) says, "however unobtrusive and irregular, recur[s] like Wagnerian *leitmotiv*") is discarded as well. In this scene, however, the chaplain's function is assumed by Dansker and the religious symbolism is unmistakable with a kind of Eucharist being performed by Dansker who brings Billy the biscuit and grog.

Billy seems strengthened by his 'communion' with Dansker and more forcefully tells him that he "had to strike down that Jemmy Legs, it's fate", and that "Captain Vere has had to strike him down" - also fate. There is a strong sense of this running throughout the opera as in the novel where, early on, there is a hint of Billy's fatalism when the narrator comments that "like the animals, though no philosopher, he was, without knowing it, practically a fatalist" (49). Such fatalism, of course, carries with it the danger of an abdication of responsibility, best illustrated in the words of the officers in the trial: "We've no choice", who seem to be saying that war is to blame and not its participants. Apart from the unmistakable sense of fatalistic calm emanating from Billy, this scene again indicates that something profoundly significant had occurred during the interview with Vere in the cabin. Billy remarks of himself and Vere: "We're both in sore

trouble, him and me, with great need for strength, and my troubles soon ending, so I can't help him longer with his" (308). Billy's music is forthright and decisive here which emphasises the feeling that a sense of equality has been achieved between Vere and Billy. Hindley (1992:380) remarks that "in some mysterious way they have now found one another as men."

Dansker leaves and Billy sings a vigorous aria which incorporates some of the chordal music from the interview (which will occur again at the end of the opera):

And farewell to ye, old *Right's o' Man*! Never your joys no more. Farewell to this grand rough world! Never more shipmates, no more sea, no looking down from the heights to the depths! But I've sighted a sail that's not Fate, and I'm contented. I've seen where she's bound for. She has a land of her own where she'll anchor for ever. Oh, I'm contented. Don't matter now being hanged, or being forgotten and caught in the weeds. Don't matter now. I'm strong, and I know it, and I'll stay strong, and that's all, and that's enough. (309-313)

The stoic quality exhibited by Billy in this aria seems to suggest something of what the narrator, in the novel, intimates is Billy's childlike innocence:

Not that like children Billy was incapable of conceiving what death really is. No, but he was wholly without rational fear of it, a fear more prevalent in highly civilized communities than those so-called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to unadulterate Nature. And, as elsewhere said, a barbarian Billy radically was. (120)

This aria of Billy's can be seen in problematic terms: Whittall (1990:160) comments that due to operatic exigencies and the need to give Billy a "sizeable solo", this aria "leads to a display of self-knowledge that transforms Melville's character out of all recognition". He argues that "Billy seems to undergo a transfiguration, from 'barbarian' to 'one of great Nature's noble order'". The shift of emphasis from novel to opera in the portrayal of Billy is perhaps most noticeable at this moment, but Whittall's view seems too reductive and implicitly rejects the significance of the interview with Vere in the cabin.

Billy, in the second part of this aria, sings of the strength he has found which will overcome fate, and here the interview chords unmistakably recur. The emphatic recurrence of these chords here seems finally and undeniably to emphasise the importance and significance of the encounter with Vere and that Billy has been changed by it in some undefinable way and, as will be seen, the final appearance of the chords in the Epilogue indicate that a similar, but more equivocal, transformation has overtaken Vere.

5.7. The Execution.

The 'duty' motif facilitates the transition into Scene 4 which takes place on the main-deck and quarter-deck. It is four o' clock of the same morning just as daylight is appearing. To muted

accompaniment the whole ship's company assembles. Once again, the 'interview' chords are heard:

(Ex. 15.)

25 VERE preceded by FIRST LIEUTENANT, SAILING MASTER and LIEUTENANT RATCLIFFE.

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for 'Hos. Sax.' (Horns, Saxophone), the middle for 'Trb.' (Trombone), and the bottom for 'Tro.' (Trombone). The music is in 2/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is labeled '25 VERE preceded by FIRST LIEUTENANT, SAILING MASTER and LIEUTENANT RATCLIFFE.' and includes dynamic markings like 'mf' and 'f'.

They can be interpreted as a reminder of the relationship between Billy and Vere and as preparation for Billy's final utterance before he is hanged: "Starry Vere, God bless you" (321) (the obvious Christian symbolic parallel being Christ's forgiveness from the cross on Calvary), a phrase taken up by the whole crew. The actual hanging is a moment in the novel charged with great significance:

At the pronounced words and the spontaneous echo that voluminously rebounded them, Captain Vere, either through stoic self-control or a sort of momentary paralysis induced by emotional shock, stood erectly rigid as a musket in the ship-armorer's rack.

The hull, deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to leeward, was just regaining an even keel when the last signal, a preconcerted dumb one, was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vapory fleece hanging low in the East was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and, ascending, took the full rose of the dawn.

In the pinioned figure arrived at the yard-end, to the wonder of all no motion was apparent, none save that created by the slow roll of the hull in moderate weather, so majestic in a great ship ponderously cannoned. (123-124)

The obvious parallel here is with the Crucifixion, with Billy being seen as a sacrifice "to social necessity" (Hillway 1979:140). There is, however, also a sense of transcendence with Billy both Christ Ascendant as well as Apollo Rising. Sherrill (1979:219) notes that at the moment when Billy "is most completely repudiated by the world - Billy's character is disclosed most fully. He confers a benediction on Vere, the sources of which are unmistakably transcendent." In the opera Billy is led off stage and his progress towards execution is indicated by the eyes of the crew and

the music rises in pitch as he is hanged, the music functioning here in a diegetic fashion with the rising pitch indicating the ascension of Billy.

The aftermath of the hanging in the novel is, significantly, silence, which is "emphasized by the regular wash of the sea against the hull" (125). This is perhaps symbolic of the absolute failure of language at a moment like this, either in response or to describe it, and what then transpires is not language, but something pre-linguistic (on Poizat's (1992:90) continuum between speech and silence, the 'cry' to which the crew's reaction could be compared, is closest to silence). The silence is disturbed by "a sound not easily to be verbally rendered" (127-128). Yet the narrator does attempt its verbalisation in a vain attempt to 'describe' this atavistic moment:

Whoever has heard the freshet-wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountain, showers not shared by the plain; whoever has heard the first muffled murmur of its sloping advance through precipitous woods may form some conception of the sound now heard. The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous indistinctness, since it came from close by, even from the men massed on the ship's open deck. Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance further than it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to, in the present instance possibly implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing of Billy's benediction. (126)

It is a moment such as this when the non-verbal qualities of music would seem able to transcend the limitations of language and to suggest this primeval power. Such a moment also presents a unique challenge to a composer. Using the rising fifth figure that has come to be associated with the idea of mutiny Britten turns it into a wordless fugue, brilliantly corresponding to the narrator's "murmurous indistinctness", a scene which has a mesmerising effect in performance. It is a moment which illustrates the connotative power of music where all verbal signification has broken down. Abbate (1991:4) speaks about the sonority of unaccompanied voice being "disturbing", and this is a similar moment particularly foreign to the 'normal' discourse, not part of the continuum. Abbate remarks that these are moments which the Western view of music regards as almost irrational, where one is affected without the necessity for rational speech. Poizat (1992:44-45) similarly describes moments in "the progressive dissolution of meaning under the effect of musical composition" that escape "the logic of verbal expression."

Through Britten's complex use of leitmotifs this moment in the opera incorporates the 'mutiny subtext' with all its associations even though there is no verbal signification. Here one sees the complexity of the leitmotivic structure of the opera. Poizat notes that "what the leitmotif principle strives to accomplish in voicing the truth of an utterance" is the "respect" for the "underlying and unconscious meaning" (73). Of course this subtext in the opera is given specific focus by the physical 'action' on stage which clarifies and gives meaning to the menacing nature of the music, but its effect is primarily musical and unarticulated. There is a paradox in that the fugue is a highly complex musical form which is used here to represent something irrational and

spontaneous (much like the paradoxical shanties which, while musically extremely complex, represent something simple and improvised).

In the novel, the potential rebellion against authority is quickly quelled by new sounds:

But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamor it was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt unexpectedness: "Pipe down the starboard watch, Boatswain, and see that they go."

Shrill and shriek of the sea hawk, the silver whistles of the boatswain and his mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it; and yielding to the mechanism of discipline the throng was thinned by one-half. (126)

In the opera the officers move to quell the obvious defiance of the men which is specifically directed at the quarter-deck. Vere is described as standing "throughout motionless". The officers' cries, "Down all hands! And see that they go!" gradually gain ascendancy over the sound of the men. Measured words reassert their power and the rebellious fugue gradually and significantly turns into the work song, symbolising the fact that although incipient mutiny has been prevented, the resentments remain just below the surface. The raw sound of the mutinous fugue has been contained by the 'voice' of authority. Culshaw (1968:4) observes that the return of 'O heave' shows "how short is the memory of man, and how weak the voice of human protest." Emslie (1992:50) raises some important ideological points in this regard. He notes that "Billy's execution is a catastrophe for the crew", but the reason why this is so is not clear. Acknowledging that this episode is

taken directly from Melville we are entitled to ask: Are they no longer men? If this is revolution raising its head it is not only ugly but inarticulate, and while by no means the opera's only great moment of inarticulateness, it is certainly a powerful one. Of course, we are supposed to believe that the men are, axiomatically, in no position to contemplate the issue at stake in the thoughtful manner of Vere. And, quite logically, they are shown to be inescapably trapped. Ordered below, they go like dogs. (50-51)

In the novel the burial of Billy brings forth a "second strange human murmur" (127) which blends with the cries of the sea birds (alluded to in the Epilogue of the opera). There is an "uncertain movement" among the men which is "tolerated but for a moment.... For suddenly the drum beat to quarters". Order is restored with the use of music: the "band on the quarter-deck played a sacred air, after which the chaplain went through the customary morning service" and "toned by music and religious rites subserving the discipline and purposes of war, the men in their wonted orderly manner dispersed to the place allotted to them when not at the guns" (128). The telling use of music in a situation such as this is justified by the narrator when he describes the attitude of Vere:

"With mankind," he would say, "forms, measured forms, are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spellbinding the wild

denizens of the wood." And this he once applied to the disruption of forms going on across the Channel and the consequences thereof. (128)

The actual burial of Billy is not depicted in the opera but is alluded to in Vere's Epilogue. One could perhaps regard Vere's rigidity during the hanging in the opera as symbolic of his adherence to these "measured forms" (as well as an attempt to control his personal emotions) and the gradual overcoming of the mutiny motif by the familiar work song as a visual and, particularly, aural equivalent of the description in the novel. Of course what cannot be shown is the phenomenon of the absence of motion of Billy's body as he is hanged which is discussed in chapter 26 of the novel, with its obvious sexual implication which seems to indicate that Billy remains inviolate, even in death. Significantly, Britten did not choose to expand this moment musically (except with the brief rising pitch in the orchestra which directs the sailors' eyes off-stage), as any elaboration at this point would have dissipated the drama of the situation: the climax in theatrical terms occurs both off-stage and non-verbally. One could regard this as a moment both where language is superfluous and the visual aspect is inadequate (apart from the purely practical difficulty of attempting to stage a hanging). The music at this point performs a connotative function. Ultimately, what seems to be implied is that the final interpretation of *Billy Budd* lies in music, tacitly endorsing Robinson's (1988:328) assertion that "the meaning of opera is at bottom musical." The novel and opera are, in the final analysis, about the problems of narrative representation.

6. Epilogue/Sequel.

At this point the opera and novel again diverge quite considerably. The structural demands of opera are precise with a finite running time and exacting dramaturgical imperatives, whereas the narrator in the novel argues that

[t]he symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than fact. Truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges; hence the conclusion of such a narration is apt to be less finished than an architectural finial. (128)

But with the formal demands of opera there cannot be narrative ragged edges of this kind. In the novel one of the strategies employed by the narrator is his frequent foregrounding of the process of writing itself, such as his ostentatious recourse to 'sources' to give apparent verisimilitude to his account. In opera the theatrical and dramatic necessities are paramount and narrative flourishes such as this are impractical; the dramaturgical imperatives prescribe brevity and swiftness. The narrator in the novel also, however, seems grudgingly to accept this necessity when he comments that "three brief chapters will suffice" (128), and proceeds to give an account of the death of Vere as well as a distorted official report of the events on board the *Bellipotent* (an

oblique indication that what we have just read is, indeed, the 'inside narrative' rather than the report), as well as an account of the mythification of Billy Budd.

It is important to consider how Vere emerges from the final scene of the opera in comparison with the figure presented in these last three chapters of the novel. Melville's concern with form is inescapable and, as Adler (1979:176) remarks, the "counterposition of two statements about form, Vere's and Melville's, accents the fundamental difference between the thinking of the artist and the man of war." For Vere, measured forms are all and he would invoke Orpheus, the musician, in "subservient the discipline and purposes of war", while, as Adler argues, for Melville "art strives to be an equation of life, and life to him has no final form" (one can perhaps argue that this open-endedness has inspired those interpretations of the opera which see Vere in the Epilogue as a kind of Flying Dutchman figure sentenced to an eternal re-telling of his 'story'). These final three chapters, according to Adler, "burst out of the established pattern of conventional narration and in so doing convey the idea that the rigid form of the world that has been pictured can also be disturbed." One can perhaps regard the Epilogue of the opera as the equivalent to the 'sequel' of the novel in that it offers a different and wider perspective on the events which have been narrated. However, opera cannot overcome the formal constraints - form is the essence of music - and it can at most only suggest a certain lack of closure.

Vere's death occurs in chapter 28 of the novel, where he is described as mortally wounded in a naval engagement:

Not long before death, while lying under the influence of that magical drug which, soothing the physical frame, mysteriously operates on the subtler element in man, he was heard to murmur words inexplicable to his attendant: "Billy Budd, Billy Budd." That these were not the accents of remorse would seem clear from what the attendant said to the *Bellipotent's* senior officer of marines, who, as the most reluctant to condemn of the members of the drumhead court, too well knew, though here he kept the knowledge to himself, who Billy Budd was. (129)

There is an obvious parallel between Vere's 'murmur' and that of the crew after the execution, the implication being that at this moment of supreme stress, Vere's humanity must 'speak' out just as the crew is almost roused to mutiny at the sight of Billy. Yet there are no 'accents of remorse' from Vere which suggests a similar kind of stoic fortitude as displayed by Billy during his final moments. This episode underlines an essential contradiction inherent in human nature which, as Adler (1979:177-178) persuasively argues, is Vere's

very essence.... He is the symbolic figure ... of civilized man: learned, but not sufficiently imaginative; not devoid of the ability to love, but not allowing this capacity to develop; sensitive to the difference between good and evil signified by Billy and Claggart.... It is the tragedy of civilized man, as of Vere - tragic in the sense that creative potentialities are wasted - that he has so far continued to uphold the values symbolized by Claggart and sacrifice those symbolized by Billy.

The penultimate chapter deals with the grossly distorted "authorized" account of the events on board ship. Billy's 'crime' is one of "extreme depravity" and Claggart is "respectable and discreet" (130), illustrating how evil has changed places with good. However, this distortion is balanced by the final chapter where the crew attempts to give 'meaning' to Billy's hanging. The spar from which Billy was hanged becomes almost a religious relic and, according to Adler (1979:179), Billy is 'resurrected' in the ballad which ends the novel: "the inarticulate crew has found its voice. Feelings which had been only a murmur have 'found utterance' not only in words but in poetry, however rude". The Epilogue of the opera attempts to incorporate some of these elements into its structure.

The Epilogue uses the same figure as the Prologue (Ex. 1.), conveying the impression that what we have seen are Vere's recollections which continue as if there has been no 'interruption' by the 'performance'. This musical figure, with its tonal ambivalence, is symbolic of all the ambiguities in the opera and its recurrence would seem to indicate that the central issues are still not resolved, the conflict remains even after the retelling. Vere describes Billy's burial and its aftermath to the accompaniment of this figure:

We committed his body to the deep. The sea-fowl enshadowed him with their wings, their harsh cries were his requiem. But the ship passed on under light airs towards the rose of dawn, and soon it was full day in its clearness and strength.
(330-331)

Although the lines are the librettists', with several quotations from the novel, one has the strong impression of Melville's shadow falling over them. In a sense the method in the libretto is a kind of collage and the simplicity and beauty of these lines is much more than a paraphrase of Melville. This seemingly tranquil moment is interrupted by the intrusion of a much harsher memory which draws forth an anguished outburst from Vere: "For I could have saved him. He knew it, even his shipmates knew it, though earthly laws silenced them. O what have I done?" (331-332) This is a direct verbal and musical repetition of Vere's outburst in the Prologue. Vere is depicted as a man both saved and damned and the un-asked question hangs in the air: why didn't he save Billy? This matter is less ambiguous in the novel where Vere gives very plausible reasons for the necessity of Billy's execution, the main one being the very real threat, in his eyes, of mutiny if Billy were saved. The essential difference in the opera is that the threat of mutiny is increased by the death of Billy - the only moment of open rebellion occurs immediately after Billy's execution.

The Epilogue enters a final stage of ostensible peacefulness and tranquillity, which must, however, be considered in the light of his earlier statements:

But he has saved me, and blessed me, and the love that passes understanding has come to me. I was lost on the infinite sea, but I've sighted a sail in the storm, the

far-shining sail, and I'm content. I've seen where she's bound for. There's a land where she'll anchor for ever. (332-334)

What seems to be indicated here is Vere's sense of salvation as result of the interview with Billy, and again the concept of silence is important. Vere maintained his silence during the trial but now he finally breaks this silence. Vere's overtly religious reference to Billy suggests that Billy has conquered the really evil figure in the opera, Claggart, and saved the compromised man who condemned him. The validity of this point of view seems to be strengthened by the fact that there appears to be a mysterious union between Billy and Vere in Vere's appropriation of Billy's music in these final moments. Billy had sung about the "far shining sail that's not Fate" and Vere here sings similar words set to a parallel melody and, most significantly, the chords of the interview scene which underpinned the final moments of Billy's aria as well, are now sounded for the last time. This appropriation by a character of another character's music occurs frequently in *Billy Budd* but never more effectively than here. The orchestra-narrator seems to be unambiguously 'stating' Vere's sense of redemption through Billy far more emphatically than the words seem to do:

(Ex. 16.)

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The first system features a vocal line for Vere (labeled 'Vere') with the lyrics 'sea, but I've sight-ed a sail in the'. Below the vocal line is a piano accompaniment (labeled 'Ha.') with various musical notations including 'p', 'f', 'w.w.', and 'Ha.'. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'storm, the far-shin-ing sail, and I'm con-'. The piano accompaniment continues with 'Fl.', 'Trpt.', 'p', 'w.w.', 'Ha.', and 'Brass o. sord.'. The score is written in a standard musical notation with treble and bass clefs, key signatures, and various dynamics and articulation marks.

However, there must remain doubts about the efficacy of this sense of redemption. The moral justification for Vere's ultimately inexplicable act is questionable yet this act leads ultimately to his salvation. Whittall (1990:151) feels that "the opera may be more ambivalent about Vere's dying sense of vindication than the story, despite the opera-makers' wish to suggest his redemption through love", and notes that the line, "the love that passes understanding" has strong sacred rather than secular overtones. Whittall feels that Britten was able to turn "the element of tension between Melville's story and the opera-maker's libretto to positive creative ends", with the final result that the opera "[s]ucceeded in suggesting the confusion of motives that is likely to arise when, to transmute Forster's famous phrase, the compulsion to betray one's friend in order to save one's country is confronted." Vere, significantly, does not use Billy's

words, "I'm strong, and I know it", a fact which seems to suggest that there still is some doubt in his mind about the reality of his 'redemption' through Billy. In the novel, Vere's murmur of Billy's name was not in "accents of remorse", but in the opera there is a strong sense of remorse which produces this ambiguity and which Whittall effectively describes as Britten's "positive, creative indecision" (168). However unambiguously the orchestra-narrator seems to be conveying the idea of redemption, the doubt must remain even though, in Abbate's (1991:156) words, it is assumed that "whatever falsehoods are spoken by a character, the music will speak across and thus expose his lies." Just as she demonstrates music in Wagner's *Ring* that may "ring false", so one may here be entitled to have doubts about the seemingly positive 'assertion' in the orchestra.

The final section of the Epilogue takes us, in effect, back to the Prologue and emphasizes the circularity of the work. In Johnson's (1980:80-81) view, the novel "ends not once, but no less than four times", first with the death of Vere, then with the naval chronicle which describes the incident on board, followed by the posthumous mythification of Billy, and finally the poem. She concludes that the story "ends by fearlessly fraying its own symmetry" where, in fact, it "begins to repeat itself - retelling itself first in reverse, and then in verse. The ending not only lacks special authority, it problematizes the very *idea* of authority by placing its own reversal on the pages of an 'authorized' naval chronicle. To end is to repeat, and to repeat is to be ungovernably open to revision, displacement, and reversal." In the opera Vere sings:

I am an old man now, and my mind can go back in peace to that far-away summer
of seventeen hundred and ninety-seven, long ago now, years ago, centuries ago,
when I, Edward Fairfax Vere, commanded the *Indomitable*. (335)

The striking musical feature of this final moment is that the conflict between B and B flat appears to be finally resolved in favour of B flat. However, the last word is sung unaccompanied after the music has died away, dissipating somewhat the feeling of tonal resolution and leaving a final sense of ambiguity. Britten's shifting, unstable tonality complements the equivocal nature of the ending of the novel. Whittall (1982:125) suggests that the "whole 'message' of the work is that evil is not vanquished by good, but at best submerged beneath it". He notes that "throughout his career Britten relied on clouding the clarity of harmonic closure and resolution to enhance the expression of essentially 'downbeat' endings, where nothing as simple as good defeating evil or love defeating hate or despair is in question" (168). Whittall (1990:171 ff.) later remarks that "harmony embodies a mental state in which equivocation is of the essence, and Britten's technical and aesthetic multivalence comes into consonance with the innate, irreducible ambivalence of Melville's original tale."

In a sense then, the Epilogue in the opera parallels Adler's (1979:176) view of the novel's ending as bursting out of the "established pattern of conventional narration". The 'framing' of the narrative, which places both Vere and the viewer at a distance from the events portrayed and highlights this seeming re-creation of these events (in Vere's mind perhaps), is an equivalent of

Melville's self-reflexive narrative strategy. There is a similar self-reflexive aspect to the opera in this process of alienation, its deliberate flouting of the illusion of 'reality'.

The operatic discourse of *Billy Budd* is necessarily complex and varied in order to cope with Melville's equally complex narrative strategies, and Britten exploits many of the conventions of the genre, particularly in his extensive use of ensembles of varying size. The fluent movement from melodic recitative into ensemble gives the opera an organic fluidity while still exploiting the impressive theatrical effects of large-scale set pieces. Although there are arias in the conventional sense, they are not formally separated from the normal discourse but arise naturally out of the dramatic situation - a 'number' opera of unusual sophistication. Ultimately, however, it is the sophisticated use of the orchestra-narrator which contributes to the triumph of the opera just as it is Melville's narration which transforms a relatively 'simple' tale into a work of art.

Britten's musical language has been criticised by many as being conservative. Whittall (1990:170) compares Britten's aesthetic position to that of Melville whom he describes as embodying a profound skepticism towards modernity, while Britten is considered as "unenthusiastic about whole hearted 'modernism' though unable to embrace unalloyed conservatism." While there may be some truth in this statement it is too easy an equation as Melville's narrative and epistemological problematisation can be seen as a direct anticipation of modernism. Britten's musical idiom might be regarded as conservative, yet it is the sophistication exhibited by the opera's complex discursive response to the 'problems' of ambiguity and silence which reveal *Billy Budd* as a mid-twentieth century modernist masterpiece.

Chapter Three: *Under Western Eyes*

Whereas Britten's acclaimed adaptation of *Billy Budd* reveals a creative and complex response to Melville's novel and successfully addresses questions raised by its meditation on the nature and limits of language and narrative, John Joubert's operatic adaptation of Joseph Conrad's modernist text, *Under Western Eyes*, faces the challenge of its author's uniquely ironic vision. For, as part of its sombre psychological study of the consequences of an act of betrayal, Conrad's novel with its complicated narrative structure and strikingly ambiguous and ironic narrative mode also investigates the nature and operation of language. It contains, furthermore, not least through its use of an intrusive and self-conscious narrator, a particularly daunting self-reflexiveness which would demand an innovative response from an operatic adaptor.

Joubert's opera attempts to present the reasons for Razumov's betrayal of the revolutionary Haldin as well as his subsequent moral isolation and the motivation behind his final confession and its tragic aftermath. It does so, however, largely in the context of the romantic relationship between its two protagonists, Razumov and Natalia Haldin, sister of the betrayed man. This chapter will argue that the opera, while successful if judged in purely operatic terms, nevertheless does not, and perhaps cannot, altogether match the intricacies of Conrad's narrative. Although the focus on Razumov's psychological state in the novel shifts in the opera onto the essentially romantic relationship between Razumov and Natalia, it will be shown that the psychological investigation of Razumov still takes place, however, as much in the music as in the words, and that the orchestral accompaniment in this adaptation also bears out the claim that the essential affinity of opera lies with fiction. Despite Conrad's searching interrogation of Razumov's actions having been transmuted into a work which has its roots firmly in romantic opera, most of the central issues in this study - the investigation of the literary, dramatic and musical imperatives which characterise opera - are well illustrated in Joubert's *Under Western Eyes*.

With a libretto by Cedric Cliffe, the opera was a commission from Watney Mann Limited in 1966 and was first performed at the Camden Festival in London in May 1969. It was South African-born Joubert's second opera based on a literary text (his *Silas Marner* was premiered in a production at the University of Cape Town in 1961), and was well received, being described by one reviewer as making "a strong dramatic and musical appeal" with a "well-wrought" libretto (*Opera* June:1969). It has not, to my knowledge, received any subsequent performances - the fate of most contemporary operas!

Conrad's novel, *Under Western Eyes*, was completed in January 1910 and first published in serial form in the *English Review* between December 1910 and October 1911, after which it

appeared in book form. The unexpected complexities of the novel perhaps contributed to its initially cool reception. Several reviewers accused Conrad of a pronounced anti-Russian bias (his narrator is certainly guilty of this) while others commented on Conrad's 'foreignness'. However, some of the reviews were favourable, with an anonymous review in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 11 October, 1911, describing the novel as "[k]een and merciless in exposure and meticulously searching in analysis ... a psychological study of remarkable penetration." Most of the reviews of the novel emphasised its undoubted power and vision as well as its dramatic quality. Edward Garnett praised the novel for its "illuminating ... pathological truth", and felt that the strength of the novel lay in the "atmospheric effect of the dark national background" (Cox 1981:41). The exceptional qualities of the novel's protagonist were recognised by most reviewers and the dramatic character that emerges from the novel certainly has the makings of an operatic figure.

* * * *

1. *Under Western Eyes* as a modernist text.

McHale (1989:9) describes the "dominant" in modernist fiction as "*epistemological*"; modernist fiction, he says, asks questions such as:

"How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?.... What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?; How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?; How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower?; What are the limits of the knowable? And so on.

The modernist character of *Under Western Eyes* presents particular problems for operatic adaptation.

1.1. Narrative dislocation.

Immediately apparent in any consideration of *Under Western Eyes* is its complexity of structure, even though Cox (1974:115) maintains that it does, in fact, present a "linear development of plot" in that "Razumov proceeds from betrayal to guilt to purification." This is somewhat of a simplification as the shifts in time and point of view complicate the way the narrative is presented. The novel is divided into four parts with Parts First and Fourth progressing in a linear fashion as do Parts Second and Third. This is, however, further complicated by the fact that Parts Second and Fourth include material from earlier parts of the novel, but they offer a different, and frequently ironic, perspective on these earlier events. Part First is clearly retrospective, consisting as it does of the narrator's depiction of events in Razumov's past as described in his journal - Razumov's 'involvement' in the assassination in St Petersburg and the suspicions which subsequently attach to him - while Part Second moves into the dramatic 'present' of the novel which deals with the revolutionary activities of the Russian community in

Geneva and Razumov's ambivalent relationship with them. In Part Third, the shift is not temporal but rather one of point of view, with the focus falling increasingly on the relationship between Natalia and Razumov, while in the final part of the novel, the time sequence shifts as well as the point of view with a return to the beginning of the narrative as well as its denouement.

The ruptures in narrative linearity as well as frequent temporal fluctuations must problematise any dramatic adaptation. Conrad's narrative is carefully crafted and the final form of the novel should be seen as central to its meaning, a point which Daleski (1981:192) takes up:

It is clear ... that Conrad has contrived to handle a nominally fixed point of view and a seemingly chronological narrative in such a way as to effect constant switches in perspective, Part Fourth serving in this respect as a model of the method employed throughout. The form of the novel ... forces on us the sense of shifting perspectives, and so serves to help us focus the theme, for what Conrad traces in his psychological study of Razumov is his changing view of the act of betrayal. It is more than a quirk of form that Razumov's ultimate repudiation of the act should be recorded in Part Fourth, where all is fluid, and the novelist, seemingly giving way to a narrative abandon, veers from one view to another.

This distinctive narrative method is the result of a strategy which, as Davidson (1984:78) claims, "requires that [Conrad's] narrator reveal such facts as he knows in roughly the same order in which those facts become known." This does impose a certain rough linearity on the novel which the opera appropriates while it largely ignores the prominent shifts in time and perspective. The reason for Conrad's utilisation of such a complex strategy is, according to Davidson, "to place before the reader the same essential problem that is faced by the various characters in the novel." Like them, the reader is forced to rely on the surface appearance of events and actions in an attempt to understand Razumov. This process reveals an essential aspect of the ultimate meaning of the novel - that appearances are deceptive and, as Davidson says, "the perceptive reader should, paradoxically, be surprised if he is not surprised." In the novel one can therefore discern a process of "postshadowing instead of foreshadowing. Large, crucial events point back to underlying motives instead of emerging from a character's obvious intentions and effort" (78). What emerges from this narrative strategy is a heightened sense of irony and an almost paralysing ambiguity.

1.2. Unreliable narration.

It is crucial to consider the function of Conrad's narrator at this point since an important aspect of the operatic adaptation of this novel is the disappearance of the narrator as a dramatic character in the events; but, it will be argued, some of his function is taken over by the orchestra in the opera. Eagleton (1970:21) observes that "[t]he relation between the narrator and his subject-matter provides, in a sense, the total structure of the novel". The complexity of the narrative structure can also be traced back to problems of narrative inconsistency which lie partly in an inconsistency in the narrator himself, reflected in his method of narration. The narrator's

constant confirmation of his presence in the narrative is ostensibly intended to alert the reader to the fact that his manifest task is one of reportage rather than interpretation or creation. However, there are many examples of such 'creativity' in his reporting of events, particularly in his presentation of Razumov's journal as an apparently literal transcription of his thought processes which, of course, is a narratological impossibility. One example of this difficulty occurs when Natalia visits the Château Borel: the extensive use of dialogue in what is, in fact, a recollected account casts doubt on the alleged transparency of the narrator's report. Recounting this incident, the narrator attempts to explain his function as presenter of the narrative and preempt any criticism of his role: "The above relation is founded on her narrative, which I have not so much dramatized as might be supposed" (Conrad 1989:178). Lothe (1989:274) remarks that passages such as this illustrate "to what extent the language teacher not only narrates, but also performs an editing activity."

These narratorial assertions compel the reader to question the narrator's often-stated objectivity, distrust of which is heightened in the next paragraph by his justification of the extent of his knowledge of the events in the narrative and his acknowledgement of the 'temptations' of art:

Wonder may be expressed at a man in the position of a teacher of languages knowing all this with such definiteness. A novelist says this and that of his personages, and if only he knows how to say it earnestly enough he may not be questioned upon the inventions of his brain in which his own belief is made sufficiently manifest by a telling phrase, a poetic image, the accent of emotion. Art is great! (179)

His subsequent insistence on the reliability of the sources for the integrity of his narrative must be cast into doubt by comments such as these and has the obvious effect of drawing attention to the narrative process itself. (Eagleton (1970:28) maintains that the device of the narrator enables the novel to "satirise the limits of English empiricism by the portrayal of passionate experience beyond its scope, without permitting that experience to be undermined.") Perhaps the clearest subversion of the narrative convention in the novel comes in chapter 4 of Part Fourth where the narrator describes the letter that Razumov writes to accompany the sending of his journal to Natalia. The narrator explains how he has edited what Razumov began to write: "After some passages which have been already made use of in the building up of this narrative, or add nothing new to the psychological side of this disclosure ... comes a page and a half of incoherent writing..." (330). Razumov's letter itself is presented without narratorial comment but the origin of the description of Razumov's subsequent actions is unclear. There can be no source for this description which contains quoted monologue passages and is a clear case of narrative inconsistency (or unacknowledged omniscience) which seems to contradict the narrator's assertions of objectivity.

Many commentators have remarked on the difficulties that the employment of this kind of narrator presents. Cox (1974:104) considers that the use of a narrator is "a most unsatisfactory device" in that his "insistence on his lack of imagination appears ridiculous, for he recounts his tale with compelling force." The physical difficulties facing Conrad in order to manoeuvre the plot in such a way that the narrator could be present at crucial events has also provoked criticism. Cox, for one, insists that Razumov's comment in the crucial confession scene, "How did this old man come here?" may well be echoed by the exasperated reader and he considers that this presents severe technical problems for the novelist: "He is himself a participant during important scenes, and this double role, as uncomprehending bystander and imaginative narrator, muddles his effects, particularly when he is describing his impression of Razumov in Geneva" (104).

However, one can see the narrator's role in the novel from a different perspective. Conrad himself, in his 'Author's Note', defends his narrator as "useful to the reader both in the way of comment and by the part he plays in the story." There is no doubt that the novel would be very different without him. He is both part of the action of the novel and present in the narrative at the diegetic level of the text and is therefore representative of a personal subjective point of view (an intradiegetic narrator of the second degree). But he is also detached from the events both from a technical viewpoint as well as through his frequently stated lack of cultural affinity with and insight into the Russian character. (Razumov's reaction to the narrator would seem to be a strong counter-argument to the narrator's view of himself. As Raval (1986:140) observes, the narrator seems "diabolical to Razumov because his is a reflective, though reticent, consciousness capable of penetrating Razumov's darker motives, as well as his intentions toward Natalia.") It soon becomes apparent in the novel that the narrator's role is, as Lothe (1989:266) describes it, not only "as a narrator in the technical sense (as teller of a story), but also as reflective observer. His function ... is not merely narrative but thematic as well." The novel is, in a sense, as much about the narrator as it is about Razumov. Lothe underlines this point by noting the unevenness of the narrator's comments and reflections in the sense that "the customary emphasis on distance and detachment may suddenly give way to a surprising understanding of the characters' problems and an unexpected similarity of perspective ... this form of variation makes the narrator more interesting, and not only as narrator but also as character."

1.3. Double perspective.

The reader's ambivalence about the contribution of the teacher of languages to the narration is experienced in the context of Conrad's double perspective throughout the novel. This is an important consideration for its operatic adaptation. The centrality of the narrator is implied in the very title of the novel: his are the 'Western eyes' through which the events and characters are observed. However, much of what transpires in the novel seems to the reader to come directly from the tortured consciousness of Razumov himself, apparently without mediation. The result of

this is a constant double frame of reference which frequently juxtaposes the conflicting world views of Razumov and the narrator and adds an important source of creative tension in the novel.

The narrator portrays himself as representative of the qualities of moderation and decency - Berthoud (1978:163) describes these characteristics as "commonsense raised to the level of intellect" - which make it difficult for him to confront the forces of irrationality which verge on the barbaric. (Berthoud (1978:168) also sees the narrator's antithesis in the character of Peter Ivanovitch whose "cynical idealism" confronts the narrator's "practical humanism", a conflict which, in the narrative, takes the form of "a contest for the possession of Natalia Haldin's soul.") The reader is continually made aware of the irony inherent in this situation. Tanner (1981:165) alludes to the narrator's ostensible shortcomings:

To make such a reasonable man recount to us some deeply irrational occurrence, to make the nightmarish material pass through the complacent filter, to make the western eye strive to get into focus some seemingly unwestern form of experience - this is to achieve a double irony.... The narrator may convince us of the undesirability and remoteness of his material, but his material may convince us of the inadequacy of the narrator's complacent virtues. The frame delimits and places the picture, but the picture can challenge and even ridicule the frame.

This double frame of reference, or, double perspective as Berthoud (1978:179) describes it, occurs "within Razumov himself, through the narrator's interpretation of his diary, which shows what the world looks like to him; and outside him, through the narrator's own observation of him, which shows us what he looks like to the world."

As telling as the narrator's artless expression of his aversion to most of the people who inhabit his narrative ("I confess that I have no comprehension of the Russian character" (56)), is his insistence on his limited qualifications and incompetence for the task he has undertaken: "To begin with I wish to disclaim the possession of those high gifts of imagination and expression which would have enabled my pen to create for the reader the personality of the man who called himself ... Razumov" (55). Gurko (1979:195) comments that the narrator

fussily observes that he is not a novelist writing a novel. This awkward pretence, common to the fiction of Conrad's day and an archaic cliché in our own, is peculiarly irritating to the contemporary reader. But Conrad intends it as an expression of the professor's character, another sign of the fussiness and academicism that limit his capacity for experience.

One could argue, however, that this is just one example of the novel's self-consciousness in that much of its concern lies with the nature of language and writing. Hawthorn (1979:122-123) accepts the existence of this traditional narratorial device but insists that Conrad, in these disclaimers, goes beyond this:

What it does is to remind the reader of the fictional nature of what he is reading, that behind the statements of the teacher of languages which, in fictional context, are 'true' are the words of Conrad the author, which are 'false'. Or are they? It is possible that, taken as the words of Conrad rather than the teacher of languages, [these passages are] rather like one of those deliberately ambiguous statements of Razumov's.... In this of all Conrad's novels we are encouraged to detach ourselves from the reading process.... The result is that the functions of response and criticism are combined: we respond, and then survey our response.

Hawthorn here, of course, refers to the metafictional aspects of the novel.

Lothe (1989:267) cites an example of what he considers to be one of the most "productive narrative variations" which manifests itself in Part First of the novel where "a narrative which defines and introduces itself as personal takes on authorial appearance in several sections of the text." The narrator, "appearing to forget his own reservations ... assumes more knowledge of Razumov in the middle of the chapter than at the beginning of it" (269). He is seen increasingly in an evaluative mode rather than as a purely neutral recorder of events and, indeed, his actual involvement in the events of the novel becomes more pronounced as the narrative proceeds.

As the medium through whom the other characters are presented to the reader, the narrator, unreliable or otherwise, plays an important role in the final 'meaning' and effect of the novel. It has frequently been noted that the narrator's relationship to his source - Razumov's journal - is characterised by increasing vagueness in that the narrator's own thoughts and emotions and those of Razumov become more and more confused and interchangeable. What the narrator sees as his main function as the rational presenter of an account of the events in Geneva is a role which is frequently assumed by Razumov himself, whose tortuous psychological wrestling with himself is epitomised by his ultimately futile attempt to rationalise his behaviour. This dialectical relationship between the narrator and the characters he describes underlies Lothe's (1989:288) view that one of the characteristics of the narrative is that the many voices it encompasses are

all modulated through the ever-present voice of the language teacher. There is a sophisticated interplay of voice and perspective in this novel: the narrative perspective of the language teacher as personal narrator influences the tone, and partly also the content, of the voices he claims to report, and yet the perspective is not wholly unaffected by these voices.

The fact that we as readers are so dependent on the narrator's interpretation of the events contributes, in no small measure, to the ambiguity of the novel. Here, too, the analogy with the orchestra-narrator presents itself: it 'controls' the voices it presents yet is also affected by these voices. A melody sung by a character can be taken up by the orchestra-narrator, which suggests, perhaps, that there is more than just an illusion of autonomy for these voices.

1.4. Metafictionality.

With much of the narrative having its apparently unmediated source in Razumov himself, the novel has, in effect, two narrators, which raises another important issue: their relative (un)reliability. Both the teacher of languages and Razumov consider themselves reliable, but a certain skepticism must attach to their utterances as they are both, in a sense, rivals for Natalia Haldin. An important element in this unreliability constitutes a vital thematic concern of the novel: the novel's self-reflexive emphasis on the problems of writing and narration, activities that deeply concern both the narrator and Razumov. The novel opens with the teacher of languages commenting on the unreliability of language:

Words, as is well known, are the great foes of reality.... To a teacher of languages there comes a time when the world is but a place of many words and man appears a mere talking animal not much more wonderful than a parrot. (55)

Not only is the status of the novel as a verbal construct immediately called into question, but, it is suggested, reality itself is similarly constructed. Naturally, as a teacher of languages, the narrator is preoccupied with words and language as a medium as well as with the construction of his own narrative. Providing, as Lothe (1989:265) notes he does, "a unique mixture of information ... and evaluation and reflection", his routine assertions of inadequacy can be discounted as they contradict the undoubted skill of his narrative presentation. Lothe (1989:289) concludes that "we begin to regard his reservations as a peculiar mixture of assumed modesty and severely limited understanding of his own narrative activity." His aphorism, "[w]ords, as is well known, are the great foes of reality" (55), sums up much of the problematic of the novel: how to approach reality other than through language. Gurko (1979:194) comments that the narrator

hears voices, the voices of Russia, whose formal words he understands well enough but whose emotional significance lies outside both his sympathies and imagination. To him, the tragedy of life is the tragedy of language, and words ... are a conspiracy to keep meanings and intentions from being communicated.

The difficulties inherent in the processes of writing and narrative construction are examined throughout the novel. According to Szittyá (in Lothe 1989:290), the metafictional aspects of the novel are to be found in "[i]ts concerns are with the sufficiency of fictions as bases for life; with the possibility of interpretation; and ultimately with the insecurity of the novelists's work." In this light, one can regard the many narratorial intrusions into the novel as essentially self-reflexive elements which draw the reader's attention to its textuality. Hawthorn (1979:125) notes that "words are not allowed to flow through the reader's mind, but keep catching his or her attention and announcing themselves as words in their own right, not as invisible carriers of meaning." In this sense, what is regarded as an early modernist text has elements of postmodernism within itself.

2. Joubert's operatic narrative and modernism.

Whereas Britten's adaptation of *Billy Budd* responded to the modernist elements in Melville's novel with a work of great power and subtlety, Joubert's version of *Under Western Eyes*, while theatrically effective, does not reveal a similar discursive or dramaturgical sophistication in its operatic interpretation of Conrad's novel.

2.1. The role of the narrator.

Considering how important the role of the narrator is in the novel, it is significant that he does not appear as a character in the opera. This would seem to indicate that a profound source of the effect and meaning of the novel is sacrificed, not to mention one of its central characters. In one sense the novel can be seen as a study of the triangular relationship between the narrator, Razumov and Natalia as well as a contest of wills between the narrator and Razumov. An example of the importance of the narrator as a character in his own right in the novel is to be found in Part Fourth where Razumov makes his dramatic confession to Natalia with the narrator as onlooker. This episode is dramatic - even melodramatic - in conception and can be regarded as the climax of the novel, and of obvious appeal to any adaptor for the stage. The equivalent scene in the opera has its own dramatic values, but these are explored in essentially musical terms; however, the operatic scene loses some of the wider resonance of the novel that the narrator's presence lends. This is an instance of the operatic form imposing its own values and conventions, which differ from those of spoken drama, on the narrative.

It can be argued that the role of the teacher of languages is assumed, to some extent, by the orchestra. We have seen in earlier operas examined in this study how the orchestra provides a distinctive commentary which gives a broader, and sometimes contradictory, perspective to the utterances of the characters on stage. In terms of Cone's (1974:12) point that has been developed in this dissertation, that opera is essentially narrative, "a novel and not a play", and that operatic characters exist only within the context of the orchestral narration rather than as free and independent figures, one could argue that, in fact, Conrad's narrator has not disappeared in the operatic adaptation but has assumed a different guise.

2.2. Other character transpositions.

The librettist, Cedric Cliffe, has conflated or excised completely several characters in the novel. Characters who have disappeared in the opera are Peter Ivanovitch, Madame de S, Prince K, General T, and many of the minor figures. Several characters undergo a transformation: Tekla, for logistical reasons, becomes the daughter of Lasparov (whose daughters, in fact, remain shadowy figures in the novel), while the character of Nikita is somewhat transposed into Grisha, who is broadly similar to Nikita, but shares some features with Peter Ivanovitch. The student

Kostia in the novel becomes Volodya in the opera - a hybrid of Kostia and the other students who make fleeting appearances in the novel. The librettist also personalises some of the nameless revolutionaries of the novel in the form of M. and Mme. Andreyev and 'Uncle' Sasha.

2.3. Comparison of fictional and operatic structure.

The following table compares the chapter contents of the novel with the scene contents of the opera:

Novel

PART FIRST

Narrator indicates the provenance of R's record.

1. Assassination of Mr de P. R's background - Prince K. Haldin arrives, asks for assistance. R leaves.

2. R goes to tavern - beats Zemianitch. Vision of Haldin's ghost. R to Prince K, then to General. R tells about Haldin's escape plans. R returns to lodgings. Haldin leaves and R sleeps.

3. R returns to lectures. He is thought to be implicated and learns of Haldin's arrest. Kostia willing to help. Letter summoning him to Mikulin - long discussion. Learns of Haldin's execution. Leaves on question, 'where to?'

PART SECOND

1. Narrator describes the Haldin women. Tutor to Natalia. Reads of Haldin's arrest in newspaper.

2. Narrator meets Peter Ivanovitch and learns of his escape from Russia.

3. Narrator and N discuss her mother and Russia. First mention of R. N is curious about her brother.

4. N describes visit to Chateau Borel and Madame de S. Discusses Haldin with Tekla. N meets R and describes him to narrator. R embarrassed by meeting. Another meeting between N and R and narrator.

5. Narrator alone with R - discuss situation in Russia. R talks of 'mission'. Narrator asks R to visit Haldins.

PART THIRD

1. R looking over bridge. N tells narrator of her fascination with R. R meets Peter I and Madame de S

2. R at Chateau Borel. R nauseated by what he sees and hears. Speaks to Tekla who criticises the revolutionaries.

3. R and Sophia discuss revolution. R concerned not to reveal anything. R impressed with Sophia but enjoys deceiving her.

4. Sophia introduces R to Nikita. Tells R that Zem hanged himself. R concerned about the facts coming out. Laspara asks him to write for journal. R decides to begin diary.

Opera

ACT ONE

1. R's Lodgings

R alone - reveals he is not interested in politics. Haldin enters asking for help. Killed Minister of Police. Reveals plans for escape. R agrees to go to Zemianitch

Interlude

2. R returns, obviously nervous - Haldin tells him about his family. Haldin leaves - shots, Haldin killed. Policemen and Mikulin enter who questions R. Allows R to leave.

ACT TWO

1. A Park in Geneva

Swiss couple. N and Mrs H enter. Group of schoolchildren. N sings Russian song. Lasparov and Tekla tell of arrival of R. Sophia and R enter. Revolutionaries discuss R - mixed feelings. Haldins introduced to R. R and N discuss Haldin. R left alone - reveals attraction to N and mental anguish.

2. Lasparov's Flat

Tekla sings lullaby. R enters and she tells

PART FOURTH

1. Return to beginning - interview with Mikulin. R haunted by ghostly presence of Haldin. Kostia steals money from father - R flings it out of the train.
2. Narrator shocked at R's appearance. Meets N looking for R to bring him to her mother. Both search for him.
3. Return to find R with Mrs Haldin. R confesses to N and leaves. Narrator stays with N who is devastated.
4. R sends diary to N. Goes to apartment of Laspara. Confesses and is beaten by Nikita. Found in city by Tekla.
5. Narrator and N meet - she gives him diary. Two years later he meets Sophia who informs him what has happened.

him about her past. Other revolutionaries enter - some suspicious of R. R defended by N. Sophia with letter - death of Zem. All drink toast to R.

ACT THREE

1. The Park

N alone - wishes to help R. R enters and N questions him about Haldin. N offers him her love. R begins to tell her the truth. Realises he must tell the revolutionaries. Leaves N distraught.

2. Lasparov's Flat

All revolutionaries there. R enters and confesses. Grisha takes him out and beats him. All leave and Tekla assists R who is deaf. Ends with her stroking his forehead.

As can be seen from the above synopsis, the structure of the opera differs considerably from that of the novel, obviously focusing on a much smaller number of incidents and following a linear trajectory. The act structure of the opera reveals its antecedents in nineteenth-century romantic opera (it can also be compared with both versions of *Wuthering Heights*). The trend in twentieth-century opera has been more towards a two-act structure (see *Billy Budd*, *Voss*, and *The Aspern Papers*) or a continuous form with a more flexible structure. The first act of the opera, which consists of two interlinking scenes, roughly approximates Part First of the novel. The setting is confined to Razumov's lodgings, however, and Razumov's visits in the novel to the tavern and Prince K and General T are not staged. The terrifying suspense that Razumov experiences in the novel, not knowing what has happened to Haldin, is sacrificed in the opera where Razumov hears the shot that kills Haldin immediately after he leaves Razumov's lodgings. The interview with Mikulin is broadly similar to that in the novel and also incorporates elements from Part Fourth of the novel where the narrative doubles back to its beginning. What is lost in the opera is the tension created in the novel through the reader's uncertainty about the motivation underlying Razumov's activities in Geneva. The reasons for his increasingly irrational behaviour only become completely apparent in Part Fourth where it is revealed that he is actually spying on the revolutionaries for Mikulin. Mikulin's enigmatic question, "where to?" in response to Razumov's desire to 'retire', which ends Part First, becomes the line "You will come back to us Mr Razumov: you will come back!" (taken from Part Fourth of the novel) which ends Act One but which does not carry quite the same sense of ambiguity and hopelessness as in the novel.

The second act of the opera moves to Geneva with the first scene taking place in a park in the city. The Haldins, and most of the revolutionaries, are introduced in this scene, and the first meeting between Natalia and Razumov occurs. The second scene in this act takes place in Lasparov's flat. This sets up the first important encounter between Razumov and Tekla, and Razumov's apparent innocence in the eyes of the revolutionaries is confirmed by the arrival of the

letter describing the death of Zemianitch. This second act incorporates material drawn mainly from Parts Third and Fourth of the novel. The third act consists of two scenes: the first scene dramatises the major encounter between Natalia and Razumov, largely based on chapter 3 in Part Fourth of the novel; and the second scene consists of Razumov's confession to the revolutionaries and his beating, and ends with his being comforted by Tekla. This final scene in the opera is largely constructed from material taken from chapter 4 of Part Fourth.

Of course, much of the sense of feverish movement depicted in the novel, where in Part First Razumov frequently moves between his lodgings and the university, is lost in the necessarily more static structure of the opera. Also less apparent is the sense of Razumov's restlessness in Geneva and his frequent chance, yet important, encounters with the narrator and various members of the revolutionary fraternity. An important omission in the opera is any real attempt to recreate the fascinating and over-heated atmosphere of the Château Borel which gives the second half of the novel much of its distinctive flavour. Although Peter Ivanovitch and Madame de S are not major players in the actual events of the novel, the encounters between them and the three main characters of the novel carry much of the revolutionary 'subtext' that constitutes Conrad's examination of the nature of revolution and its effect on its participants.

3. Act One: modernist ambiguity and irony.

The difficulties encountered by this essentially romantic and conventional operatic approach to Conrad's modernist text will be analysed in the first act of the opera. It will be argued that *Under Western Eyes* is partially successful in conveying Conrad's ironic vision. The opera consists of relatively long scenes which are frequently characterised by the extensive creating of atmosphere and tension, and these scenes are, in many ways, more representative of traditional operatic scenic structure than the shorter, filmic scenes which much contemporary opera employs. The opening of Act One functions almost as a framing device in establishing the character of Razumov. His reaction to an off-stage explosion: "Nothing to be seen. Just another fool, I suppose, risking his life for some silly cause. Can I never be left in peace?" (Joubert 1968:4), is indicative of his apolitical and rather reclusive nature. A voice is heard off stage singing a simple, folk-like song which helps early on to provide some Russian 'atmosphere'. It also disturbs Razumov who soon reveals his impatience with the singer, Volodya, whose function is less complex than Kostia and the unnamed student of the novel. Whereas in the novel Kostia's meetings with Razumov occur only after his betrayal of Haldin, Volodya here acts merely as a foil against which Razumov can react, thus enabling the librettist and composer to establish Razumov's character fairly quickly. It is soon evident that Razumov is single-minded in his pursuit of his goals: "I have a degree to get" (10), and he reveals some resentment after Volodya has sung of his own father's wealth: "I never knew a father. I'm Nobody's Son!" (15) (which will later be recalled when both Haldin and Natalia fondly remember their father). Razumov's

music contrasts with Volodya's song-like discourse, as evidenced first in his agitated reaction to Volodya, and then in the transformation of Razumov's vocal line into an apparently directionless, undulating melody:

(Ex. 1.)

no - bod-y's Son? Left for my nurs - ing down in the vil - lage,

Left to be dragged up af - ter a fash - ion, By

A discursive variation then takes place with the insertion of a passage of spoken dialogue over the accompaniment of a trill in the orchestra. This has a defamiliarising effect in its interruption of the dominant discourse, and it functions in a similar way to classic melodrama through its use of 'background' music as an accompaniment to a spoken text. The theatrical analogy can be further extended in that Razumov is, in fact, 'acting' out a little 'drama' for Kostia, dramatising his experiences in school:

(Ex. 2.)

when you go to the school.... 'You there, what is your

name?' Please, Sir, Kyril: 'Yes, Kyril, I know. But you must have another name. What is your second, your father's name?'

And then the mo-ment you dread-ed, the mo-ment of shame,

(spoken) 'Please, Sir, I don't know! 'Is that so, indeed, is that so! Can't tell us his father's name: the boy is no more than a fool!'

He has to assume two different voices, his own as a young boy and that of the schoolmaster, while the 'drama' further contains his 'own' voice which sings rather than speaks. Here in miniature is an example of the polyphonic (in the Bakhtinian sense) nature of opera, three 'different' voices in combination with the ever-present commentary of the orchestra. In this self-reflexive moment Kostia - the stage 'audience' - is representative of the actual audience watching the opera, the naturalistic illusion is momentarily suspended, and the performance draws attention to its own artifice.

Something of Razumov's painful experiences as a child as well as his struggle as a student is conveyed in the subsequent exchanges, and the opera attempts to particularise his background in contrast to the novel which tends to cloud his early experiences in ambiguity. The operatic adaptation has difficulty with the ambiguity in the novel, and reveals an impulse to concretise ambiguities of all kinds. Furthermore, there is no mention of Razumov's ambivalent relationship with Prince K in the opera. Razumov's vocal line is characterised by an incongruous lilting quality; this is further influenced by the 12/8 rhythm which is reflected in the upper section of the orchestra. However, the lower section of the orchestral part has a predominantly 4/4 rhythm which creates a rhythmic tension against the 12/8, a tension which echoes the pain in Razumov's words, but is not found in his vocal line. It is almost as if the 'narrator', embodied in the orchestra, is commenting on what Razumov has said - Razumov's lyrical vocal line is thus being contradicted by the orchestra which fills in what perhaps cannot be expressed as well by the words. Here one can see a typical operatic tension at work: the vocal line gives the singer a chance for vocal display which seems to have little to do with the actual 'truth' of his words and of the situation; that expressive function, however, has been taken over by the orchestra.

We see another structural departure from the novel as Volodya joins Razumov in a quasi-duet: "...the great Victor Haldin -/Now there is a man for you.../The pattern of all that is finest and best,/The Liberal leader, the man they look up to" (23-24). The mention of a character before his actual appearance is a standard theatrical device to increase tension. The difference between the two genres is noticeable in that in the novel the drama of Haldin's appearance lies in its complete unexpectedness. Feeling that he is in the right frame of mind to work on his important essay, Razumov resolves to "put in four hours of good work" (63). This is the essay that he hopes will open up significant career opportunities for him and the irony of the situation lies in the fact that it is Haldin's appearance which shatters any possibility of these opportunities materialising. Conrad's description of Haldin's arrival is melodramatic:

All black against the usual tall stove of white tiles gleaming in the dusk, stood a strange figure, wearing a skirted, close-fitting, brown cloth coat strapped round the waist, in long boots, and with a little Astrakhan cap on its head. It loomed lithe and martial. Razumov was utterly confounded. (64)

An obvious difficulty facing librettist and composer, however, is the audience's ignorance of Haldin's revolutionary background and Razumov's indifference to this activity, and this information is supplied at this point in the opera. The novel implies a resistance on Razumov's part towards Haldin and all that he stands for. There is an element of free indirect discourse in the narrator's comment that Haldin "was not one of the industrious set" (64) which is taken up more directly in the opera in Razumov's words: "I want nothing to do with politics, Nothing to do with Haldin" (27). In a sense, the first segment of this scene functions as a prologue to the opera and this impression is heightened with the sound of Volodya singing the same melody with which he entered, thus 'framing' this first part of the scene as Razumov resumes his position at the table where he reads out what he had written before being interrupted. Once again, his utterance takes the form of speech delivered above an orchestral accompaniment and his final line, "Direction not Destruction. Unity not Disruption", heralds the arrival of Haldin, the irony being strongly apparent in that Haldin embodies, in Razumov's eyes, all the negative forces he has just listed. The opera loses much of the irony of the novel where Razumov writes these lines *after* he has betrayed Razumov to the authorities, having had some first-hand experience of the nature of this revolution and its devastating effect on his own life. In the novel these comments naturally then seem to justify his actions.

The drama of Haldin's entrance is emphasised by a complete silence in the orchestra as Haldin *speaks* Razumov's name. The agitation of both Haldin and Razumov is reflected in the rhythm of their subsequent vocal lines, with their short, tense phrases. This exchange differs markedly from the equivalent exchange in the novel where Haldin gives a lengthy explanation of his reasons for choosing Razumov as a refuge. Razumov's silence during this justification establishes the important theme of silence in the opera as in Conrad's novel. His first reaction in the novel to Haldin's revelation that he has killed the minister is a suppressed "cry of dismay" (65) and what is further described by the narrator as "a sort of half-derisive mental exclamation, 'There goes my silver medal'", to which Haldin remarks "'You say nothing, Kirylo Sidorovitch! I understand your silence'" (65), with all its attendant ironies. The opera radically alters this with Haldin pleading for Razumov's help while Razumov agitatedly insists on being informed what Haldin has done. Haldin's disclosure precipitates an explosion in the orchestra and, in contrast to the novel, a strong and verbalised reaction from Razumov. The long and, at times, philosophical explanation of the background of Haldin's actions which then follows in the novel is transformed into a nervous, sparring exchange between the two in the opera, characterised by a nagging refrain-like question of Razumov's, "You murdered him?", which is repeatedly sidestepped by Haldin, until Haldin is forced into a somewhat lengthier justification of his actions:

I killed him, yes, - and am proud of it;
It is no murder to kill a man like that.
For our country's sake, for Freedom's sake,
For the sake of the children whose fathers he exiled,
For the sake of the widows whose husbands he butchered,
For the sake of Russia, for Justice, for Freedom,

I killed him, yes, and am proud of it. (42-44)

Again Haldin's rising vocal line is an indication of the strength of his emotion and the first segment of this scene concludes with his repeated phrase, "God damn his soul!" (45) in the lower part of his range which seems to invite a response from Razumov.

The vocal casting of both Haldin and Razumov as tenors is slightly unusual, but the high voice does suggest some of the romantic revolutionary ardour of Haldin. Haldin emerges from the opera as a generally more heroic figure than in the novel, although there is the suggestion of a similar status in the novel in the narrator's comment, "he had a great personal prestige with his comrades and influenced their thoughts" (64). However, the magnifying effect is inevitable in opera: characters are 'enlarged' through their musical portrayal. The fact that Razumov is a tenor befits his role as romantic lead, albeit an unconventional one. One is aware of the skillful exploitation of vocal register in the exchanges between Razumov and Haldin. Haldin's explanations are interrupted by repeated interjections from Razumov, "Don't ask me to help you", which are uttered at the extreme lower limit of his vocal range. The contrast with the soaring vocal line of Haldin is strongly apparent, the actual vocal pitches of each character assisting the signification of the words in conveying their emotional state. The upper range of the voice has more brilliance and carrying power and suggests Haldin's agitation and revolutionary fervour, while Razumov's low-pitched interjections indicate that he is embarrassed by his refusal of assistance. The similarity, at times, between their respective vocal lines also suggests a form of vocal competition between them which reflects in musical terms the drama of their contest of wills. Characters in opera frequently attempt to overwhelm opposition by sheer vocal power.

Haldin's vocal line generally lies higher than that of Razumov and his plea for help has an urgency which threatens, vocally, to overwhelm Razumov:

(Ex. 3.)

The musical score for Example 3 shows a vocal exchange between Haldin (R) and Razumov (H). Haldin's part begins with a rising vocal line on the notes "did you come to me?". Razumov's response, "You were a man," is on a lower, more stable pitch. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The exchange continues with Razumov's repeated phrase "I can't help you I can't" and Haldin's concluding line "that much I saw:".

This is perhaps an illustration of the powerful effect that Haldin's personality exerts on Razumov in the novel where, when Razumov leaves the room, the liberating effect is immediate: "his thinking powers were no longer crushed by Haldin's presence - the appalling presence of a great crime and the stunning force of a great fanaticism" (71). However, Haldin's assertion in the

opera: "You have it in you, that I know,/To strike a blow for Freedom's sake./I cannot have misjudged you so" (52-53), seems to rouse Razumov to more strenuous resistance and, significantly, his vocal line frequently commences on the same pitch as that of Haldin, but then extends higher up the range and finally forces Haldin into silence so that Razumov can state the reasons for his reluctance to help:

Why should I risk my life, my all,
To help a Cause which leaves me cold?
Peace, peace is all I ask,
Peace and the chance to do my work,
Just to be left alone,
Just to be left alone.
Oh, leave me, leave me,
For God's sake go! (53-55)

These final, emotionally charged words anticipate the outburst in the orchestra which ends as abruptly as it began with Haldin's obvious question and sober appraisal of the situation, "How can I go while it is still daylight? I should be seen and compromise you as well" (57). The impassioned discourse of the previous pages is temporarily halted, but the tension is still latent in the orchestra as it punctuates Haldin's comments, threatening to break out once more:

(Ex. 4.)

Razumov's offer of refuge until sunset then does precipitate another flare-up from Haldin which culminates in his question to Razumov, "Suppose they find that I have been with you - What then, Kyril, what then?", which is bitterly echoed by Razumov, "What then, indeed, what then?" His comment, repeating Haldin's verbal phrase also uses Haldin's musical phrase, but an octave lower, the lower pitch extending and emphasising Razumov's ironic and bitter tone:

(Ex. 5.)

Verbal and musical repetition is one device that is frequently exploited in the opera to indicate the ever-present irony in Conrad's novel. Again this is an example of how the effect of what, in purely verbal terms, appears to be a moment of relatively low intensity can be considerably intensified by using musical devices such as tonal and rhythmic repetition. This moment does reflect something of the anger and bitterness which Razumov experiences in the novel as Haldin explains why he chose Razumov as his refuge: "You have no one belonging to you - no ties, no one to suffer for it if this came out by some means", an explanation which Razumov listens to "almost sick with indignation" (67).

Another point of musical and emotional stasis is reached with Haldin's explanation of his plan to escape from St Petersburg. Again, there is a hiatus in the orchestra which provides only a chord over which Haldin speaks. One has the sense here, however, that spoken dialogue is being used more as exposition than its more frequent use as a heightening effect. The opera follows the novel fairly closely in terms of action with Razumov agreeing to go and see Zemianitch and offering Haldin his bed. These actions are accompanied by continuous music. The stage darkens during this musical interlude which repeats rhythms and themes from the previous scene. The lights go up on the same setting as Razumov re-enters with Haldin still asleep. An obvious difficulty faced by an operatic adaptor is how to communicate interim events. This is partly overcome in visual terms by having Razumov, as indicated in the stage directions, look "out of the window, obviously nervous and expecting something", which might arouse suspicions in the audience. The audience is unaware that Razumov has betrayed Haldin and equally unaware of the mental torment that he has experienced in attempting to rationalise his actions, a state of mind which is powerfully portrayed with intense psychological realism in the novel.

There is an attempt to depict Razumov's mental state in the orchestral interlude linking these two scenes, yet even though this strikingly vivid musical discourse seems to 'narrate' events, it lacks the explicitness of a verbal text to clarify its 'meaning'. Significantly, the narrator in the novel at this point also wrestles with the difficulty experienced even in the more exact verbal medium in conveying the "tumult" of Razumov's thoughts: "they cannot be reproduced here in all their exclamatory repetitions which went on in an endless and weary turmoil" (72). This scene in the opera illustrates the persistent view that music cannot convey explicit 'meaning' without extraneous illustrative factors being present, although, ironically, music might better be able to convey certain aspects of the particular mental process that the narrator in the novel describes - certainly something of the "repetitions" mentioned, repetition and variation being essential aspects of musical form. One is reminded of the accuracy of Said's (1991:46) observation that music is the least denotative yet most formal of the arts.

The opera also loses much of the sustained irony of the exchanges between Razumov and Haldin during the equivalent scene in the novel where the reader's inside knowledge of Razumov's betrayal of Haldin colours everything that passes between them, including even the "mocking spirit" (96) engendered in Razumov. (This irony can be heard in Razumov's unspoken impulse when he arrives back, "I have given you up to the police" (95) as well as in his actual "muffled" reply to Haldin's enquiry about what he had arranged: "It's done", with its allusion to the betrayal in *Macbeth*.)

This scene in the opera, with its short musical phrases, is fairly successful in suggesting something of this tension and irony. Haldin's agitation is indicated by his sudden determination to leave which culminates in the line, "I must not be too late" (71), ending on an optional high B natural. This diverges significantly from the novel where Haldin's realisation that Razumov does not understand or sympathise with his revolutionary sentiments forces him to leave the room suddenly: "'So be it,' he cried sadly in a low, distinct tone. 'Farewell then'" (101). In the novel his departure is as melodramatic as his entrance:

Razumov started forward, but the sight of Haldin's raised hand checked him before he could get away from the table. He leaned on it heavily, listening to the faint sounds of some town clock tolling the hour. Haldin, already at the door, tall and straight as an arrow, with his pale face and a hand raised attentively, might have posed for the statue of of a daring youth listening to an inner voice. Razumov mechanically glanced down at his watch. When he looked towards the door again Haldin had vanished. There was a faint rustling in the outer room, the feeble click of a bolt drawn back lightly. He was gone - almost as noiseless as a vision. (101-102)

In the opera he is restrained by Razumov and Haldin's comment, "What a brain you've got! You think of everything", is echoed by Razumov, again using Haldin's exact verbal and musical phrase - a further ambiguous indication to the audience that all may not be as it seems. The stage direction indicates that this is an aside which offers an additional clue. The 'subtext' of this segment of the scene therefore is conveyed both visually and musically rather than simply verbally: Razumov's actions, as indicated in the stage directions, have to convey his agitation while the inherent irony of the situation emerges from the music rather than the text. Of course the opera conveys little of the at times bitter debate between Haldin and Razumov which occurs prior to Haldin's exit in the novel where lengthy reflections by both characters on their individual situations do not translate into the brevity essential for opera. However, what might appear to be a verbal slip when in the opera Razumov questions Haldin, "tell me, if you... *When* you escape, where do you plan to go" (73), could be construed as further ambiguity surrounding Razumov's actions. Razumov very obviously keeps Haldin talking about himself and it is at this point that the first mention of Haldin's sister occurs. Significantly, she is introduced by Haldin with a florid melismatic musical phrase on an unverballed "ah" which functions as a musical modulation into a new key and acts as a bridge passage into a formal arioso for Haldin: (Ex. 6.)

(Ex. 6.)

The musical score for Ex. 6 consists of two systems. The top system shows a vocal line (soprano) with lyrics "but ah, my dear Na -" and a piano accompaniment. The bottom system is marked "36 Poco adagio e sostenuto" and includes the vocal line "Na-ta-lia!" and piano accompaniment with a "p cresc." marking.

Here, one immediately notices how the musical discourse assumes a more formal, lyrical mode, indicating the transition to a higher level of intensity when compared with the more recitative-like previous segment of the scene. The audience cannot fail to be alerted by the emergence of the new discourse (different in tempo, rhythm, and tonality) that a moment of perhaps greater significance than the preceding passages is about to occur, and the name "Natalia" signals an important new element in the opera.

The lyricism of the passage is appropriate for Haldin's recollection of his sister, but his words also carry an element of irony, not yet fully apparent to the audience:

I wonder how the jealous gods
 Who parcel out our destinies
 Should give so radiant a girl
 As sister to a man like me.
 A mind that cannot be ensnared
 By protestation or pretence,
 A mind that knows the ways of sin,
 Yet keeps its total innocence.
 The truth is native to her lips;
 So candid, yet so gently wise;
 Serenity adorns her brow,
 And ah! she has such trusting eyes. (76-78)

Haldin ends this lyrical passage with the same melismatic phrase with which it was introduced, but using the line, "she has such trusting eyes", a verbal and a musical phrase which will function as a leitmotif in the opera. In purely musical terms, the repetition of this phrase indicates the closure of this formal, 'aria' section, and this is further emphasised by the echo of this phrase in the orchestra which modulates back into the original key. Wallace (1983:27) compares musical modulation with scenic 'modulation' in fiction, remarking that "[c]omparable to abrupt harmonic

change in music is abrupt contrast between the moods or locales of adjacent fictional episodes." (Significantly, in the novel Razumov learns of Haldin's mother and sister before he leaves the room to betray Haldin which heightens the effect of his later duplicity in Geneva.) During Haldin's expansive moment, Razumov has been unable to do more than repeat the phrase "Mother and sister, he has both!", each time on one pitch, a musical indication of his sense of bitterness and outrage at what has befallen him, unwilling or unable, as indicated by his rejection of melody, to share in Haldin's brief moment of recollected bliss.

The abrupt orchestral flourish which announces the new key, with its impulse of new energy, rouses Razumov from the self-absorbed contemplation of his own situation and, hurriedly looking at his watch, he insists that it is time that Haldin went. In a strongly ironic passage which further exploits the melismatic phrase that introduced his arioso, Haldin sings: "My one true friend,/God sees what you have done for me tonight./Whatever happens in the days to come-/I and my dear ones never will forget/What you have done for me tonight" (79-80), this melody now assuming the function of a leitmotif which will increasingly come to signify the betrayal of Haldin. Again, all Razumov can do is echo Haldin's words without melody, increasing the impression of his acute discomfort. One must bear in mind that this is all that is available to the audience to indicate that something has happened during Razumov's absence and which is obviously causing him such distress. Haldin's departure now is swift and Razumov, as indicated in the stage direction, is irresistably drawn towards the window, but before he actually looks out, he repeats Haldin's line, "She has such trusting eyes" (81), using Haldin's melody. Through the use of this musical and verbal repetition, the audience's attention is once again focused on Haldin's sister although they do not know as yet what role she is going to play in the events. (Of course eyes play an important thematic role in the novel and there is a reference to virtually every character's eyes at some point.)

The adjective "trusting" is about to assume intensely ironic overtones, for at this moment three shots ring out and Razumov staggers back from the window exclaiming in *sprechgesang*: "They have killed him! Oh, had it to be that?" (81-82), which finally reveals to the audience his complicity in the betrayal of Haldin. The composer uses *sprechgesang* rather than full tone at this point to signify the intensity of the moment - Razumov's full realisation of what he has done, which is visually and aurally emphasised by his "hysterical sobbing" and hiding his head in his hands. The whole segment of this encounter between Haldin and Razumov differs substantially from the novel; changes are made mainly for practical theatrical reasons. It is necessary both from the point of view of plot and for musical considerations that there has had to be an extended musical exchange between the two characters. It has been necessary to establish the possibility that a relationship might develop between Razumov and Haldin's sister, and there has been a musical necessity for a more lyrical development after the rather 'dry' exchanges between them as well as a need to establish thematically the connection between the betrayal of Haldin and Razumov's later relationship with Natalia.

The constantly ironic tone of the novel is now, to some degree, matched in the scene between Mikulin and Razumov. A rapid orchestral figure heralds the entrance of two policemen followed by General Mikulin who quickly assumes control of the situation. He is a composite figure of General T and Mikulin of the novel whose several meetings with Razumov are described in Part First and Part Fourth and which are here combined into one scene in the opera. Again there is a divergence from the sequence of events in the novel where Razumov discovers that his lodgings have been searched by the police before he actually meets Mikulin. This, and the disturbance of his papers, are described as affecting him "profoundly, unreasonably" (112) and obviously influence his subsequent relationship with Mikulin. Ostensibly to the policemen, but actually for the audience's information, in the opera Mikulin quickly details Razumov's role in events and then seats himself at the table with Razumov. There is a distinctive rising sixth figure in the orchestra which is echoed in Mikulin's vocal line and which gives his vocal delivery a suave yet menacing quality, complementing his appearance and demeanour:

(Ex. 7.)

The musical score for Mikulin's vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line with lyrics in Russian and English, and a piano accompaniment with a prominent rising sixth figure. The lyrics are: "zu - mov, the man who did us such you-man ser - vice, who brought us the vi-tal in-form-a - tion, who told us where to find".

Eagleton (1970:25) argues that in the novel Conrad tends to caricature the revolutionaries while presenting the autocrats in a 'neutral' fashion: "[t]he result is to make Mikulin's manipulative tactics appear less reprehensible than they really are". In the opera, Mikulin has an urbanity (it is suggested that he is something of a sybarite in the novel) largely as a result of the elegance of his music, but his authority and menace are never underplayed. He quickly assumes control over Razumov and, glancing at Razumov's notes, in an echo of the first scene, he speaks rather than sings what is written on them, the spoken lines giving the words an added emphasis.

It becomes apparent that the shooting of Haldin was ostensibly not part of the original plan, but the truth of this, like so much else, remains ambiguous. Mikulin's apparently unconcerned attitude towards Haldin's death at this point, rather than after a period of questioning, contributes to his ambiguity as a character. In the novel, a further source of tension is created by Razumov's knowledge of Haldin's arrest and the agonising uncertainty about his fate:

He stood still, his ear turned to the panes. An atrocious aching numbness with shooting pains in his back and legs tortured him. He did not budge. His mind

hovered on the borders of delirium. He heard himself suddenly saying, 'I confess,' as a person might do on the rack. 'I am on the rack,' he thought. He felt ready to swoon. (103)

The opera chooses the perhaps more theatrical option of having Haldin's death occur just off stage but in full view of Razumov who is able to describe the course of events from his window. Another significant difference between novel and opera is the narrator's intrusion in the novel at the beginning of the third chapter which introduces the period prior to Razumov's exchanges with Mikulin. The narrator expands at some length about the difficulty of his task which is

not in truth the writing in the narrative form a *precis* of a strange human document, but the rendering ... of the moral conditions ruling over a large portion of this earth's surface.... I turn over for the hundredth time the leaves of Mr Razumov's record, I lay it aside, I take up the pen.... But I must apologize for the digression. (105)

This has the effect of distancing Razumov's experiences from the reader who thus is able to bring Razumov's actions into perspective. The fact that Razumov is summoned by Mikulin also has the effect of increasing the tension experienced by Razumov at the possibility that the authorities might want him to confront Haldin in person.

Mikulin, in the opera, proceeds to question Razumov in a duet passage in which the orchestral accompaniment follows both vocal lines very closely. This questioning occurs to the tempo marking, *Allegro vivace*, during which first Razumov's, then Mikulin's vocal lines, follow one another in canon. The musical structure of this exchange takes the form of a duet (in the long tradition of tenor and baritone duets) yet strongly conveys the impression of the cat and mouse game being played by Mikulin who has much of the "mild and thoughtful manner" (120) described in the novel and which Razumov does not perceive as immediately threatening. Indeed, there is much in this scene in the opera which illustrates what the novel describes as Razumov's growing sense of dependence on Mikulin, expressed in Razumov's realisation that "Councillor Mikulin was, perhaps, the only man in the world able to understand his conduct. To be understood appeared extremely fascinating" (284). Razumov realises that Mikulin is "the only person on earth with whom [he] could talk" (289). In the opera their alternating vocal lines are underscored by parallel passages in the orchestra but after some fruitless questions from Mikulin, the direction of their respective vocal lines is reversed, with Razumov denying Haldin's friendship to a falling phrase and Mikulin's astonishment at this portrayed in his continuing rising phrase:

(Ex. 8.)

ff sf

R I was no friend of his! I was no friend of his! I scarce - ly

M friend? You were no friend of his? You were no friend of his? Come,

ff sf

These changing musical patterns increase the effect of a battle of wills evolving between them.

The tightly formal musical structure of this segment of the scene is effective in conveying one's sense of Razumov's inability to escape Mikulin's probing questions and being snared in Mikulin's verbal and musical web. Each denial by him is immediately followed by the seemingly inevitable question, "You were no friend of his?" from Mikulin, which functions several times as a rapid bridge passage to the more extended musical development of the scene. (The more usual form of operatic ensemble of this kind frequently has two characters expressing similar sentiments although there is, however, a long tradition of the use of the duet form in opera where two characters oppose each other. One thinks of the great friendship duet between Posa and Don Carlos, as well as the confrontation between Philip and the Grand Inquisitor, in Verdi's *Don Carlos*) The musical climax of the duet is reflected in Mikulin's apparent reluctance to pursue this game and his desire once more to assert control. The whole tempo of the exchange slows into the original tempo of their first discussion, with Mikulin's vocal line once more using the distinctive rising sixth phrase. The scene provides a good example of a moment in opera where something as seemingly abstract as musical tempo and distinctive musical figures makes an important contribution to the 'meaning' of a scene.

With a more relaxed musical tempo, Mikulin assumes his suave persona once more, very much a man of the world expressing eminently reasonable sentiments (in the novel this is described as his "shrewd simplicity" (282)):

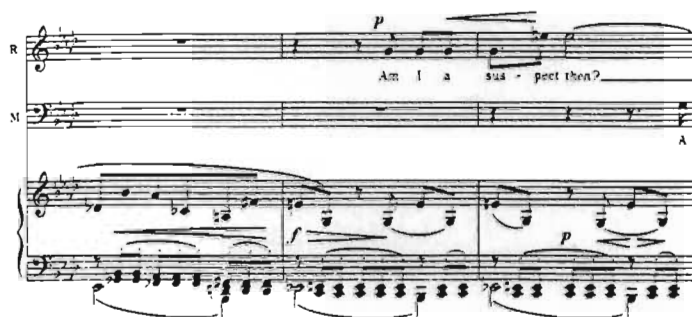
A trivial error by the way
Can be retrieved another day,
Always assuming no excess of pride.
Authority has not so stern a face,
As minor poets say;
It has its gentler side.
Authority can find a handsome place,
Make clear the path, throw open every gate
For those who - shall we say? co-operate. (105-107)

In answer to Razumov's plea, "Can you not leave me to work in peace?" Mikulin remarks that "these things arrange themselves" (108), which reflects Mikulin's comment in Part Fourth of the novel, "Things are ordered in a wonderful manner" (283). This example of how the opera libretto very rarely uses text verbatim from the novel but frequently employs it as a basis for constructing its own expressive text reveals the librettist's concern with matters of clarity, intelligibility, and singability. Again, the interjections from Razumov are musically similar to those in his scene with Haldin where his observations were uttered on one pitch. In this instance he seems to be in a similarly hopeless position which once more is reflected by a comparable rejection of melody. This use of a vocal line on one pitch has an incantatory, almost ritualistic quality, as if Razumov has already resigned himself to his fate and is merely going through the motions. He is repeating phrases that he has used twice before and they seem to have lost all meaning for him, much as

musical response in religious ceremonies frequently loses its original purpose and meaning in repetition.

Mikulin's smoothly melodic vocal line is obviously more expressive and 'powerful' than Razumov's whose first departure from a single pitch is to assume Mikulin's distinctive rising sixth phrase, an unmistakable musical indication of dominance by one character over another, and one that is used frequently in the opera:

(Ex. 9.).



The verbal phrase during which this occurs is Razumov's question, "Am I a suspect then?" (The ambiguity of Razumov's position in the novel is, of course, achieved by the paradox of Haldin's remaining silent and refusing either to incriminate him or exculpate him.) The suggestion that Mikulin has more important designs on Razumov than implication in an assassination soon becomes apparent when he suggests that Razumov might be able to serve his country by infiltrating a revolutionary cell in Geneva. (The novel indicates that in the interim between Mikulin's first meeting with Razumov and his subsequent ones, Mikulin had assumed "the direction of the general police supervision over Europe" (291) which obviously increases Razumov's usefulness as someone who, in the minds of the revolutionary sympathizers, is credited "with a mysterious complicity in the Haldin affair" (293).) Mikulin here, for the first time, repeats a phrase of Razumov's, subtly inverting the 'normal' sequence. The mention of that city brings forth the *spoken* and unfinished exclamation from Razumov: "Geneva! That is where..." (112). Mikulin's plan has the beauty of simplicity, and a further example of the complete control he now exerts over Razumov is that Razumov again invariably echoes Mikulin's phrases, both verbally and musically. Finally, Razumov breaks free from the musical stranglehold and asks: "Am I free then? Can I go out? My head is throbbing. I need air" (116-117). Mikulin's reply is a falling sixth, the musical inversion seeming to indicate that he now has absolute mastery of the situation. Razumov is musically reduced once again to an utterance on a single pitch. Mikulin's final comment to Razumov is the ambiguous line: "You will come back to us Mr Razumov: You will come back" (119), which contains something of the ambiguity of Mikulin's question "where to?" in the novel which he poses in response to Razumov's desire to "simply retire" (130) at the end of Part First. However, it more directly reflects Mikulin's comment in Part Fourth of the novel as he bids Razumov farewell after their first meeting: "You are going away free as air, but you shall end by coming back to us" (283). The orchestra concludes the

scene with an almost derisory echo of this rising sixth phrase which is so characteristic of this second scene.

Scene 2 in the opera illustrates how effectively musical accompaniment is able to emphasise and even extend meaning, conveying some of the pervasive ambiguity and irony of the equivalent events in the novel. One hears echoed in the orchestra phrases sung by both Mikulin and Razumov which are frequently extended, inverted or transformed in some way, much as a narrator would speculate from a seemingly objective perspective on his characters in a novel. The parallel scenes in Conrad's novel contain many such passages of narratorial speculation even though the narrator professes to be recording and imparting only what Razumov's journal contains. This narratorial speculation is reflected in the opera in the controlling role of the operatic narrator - the orchestra. The use of a particular and distinctive musical figure which plays a dominant part in the musical structure of a scene makes the composer's intentions immediately apparent. The composer, through the orchestra, draws attention to the words and actions of the characters and simultaneously persuades the audience to reflect on what they have seen and heard and to retain these musical figures in their memory. And as the orchestra has virtually unlimited reserves of sonic power on its side, it is able to assert its view of these characters and their actions, much as the events of the novel are filtered through and coloured by the consciousness of the narrator. This function of the orchestra is further illustrated in the postlude to this scene where the orchestra, playfully echoing Mikulin's phrase, seems to comment ironically on Razumov's situation and his naive belief in his supposed 'freedom', much as a fictional narrator would do in a similar situation in a novel. This once again emphasises opera's affinity with the novel, musical interludes or postludes of whatever form being a uniquely operatic device.

4. Act Two: psychological investigation.

4.1. Scene 1: the aria.

In the second act of Joubert's *Under Western Eyes*, the psychological investigation is intensified through the use of larger set pieces, with the focal point of the act being Razumov's extended aria which ends this scene. The action shifts from Razumov's lodgings in St Petersburg to a cafe terrace in a park in Geneva. A Swiss couple is seen seated at a table, a staging device obviously suggested by the passage in the novel which mentions:

that solitary Swiss couple, whose fate was made secure from the cradle to the grave by the perfected mechanism of democratic institutions in a republic that could almost be held in the palm of one's hand. The man, colourlessly uncouth, was drinking beer out of a glittering glass; the woman, rustic and placid, leaning back in the rough chair gazed idly round. (189)

This couple is used to dramatise the narrator's attitude towards the Swiss in the novel, and in the opera, too, the 'exoticism' of the Russian emigrés is set in contrast to this backdrop. After some preliminary scene-setting bustle, the Haldin women enter. They are characterised in the novel by a gradual accumulation of detail when the narrator first calls on them with the intention of providing a reading course in English for Natalia. The first meeting is briefly dramatised in the novel and the narrator's main impression gained from this meeting is of Natalia's beauty, dominated by her eyes, the reader having earlier been alerted to her eyes by her brother. The second, more extended meeting occurs on the day that the narrator brings news of the assassination of the minister. The subsequent meetings are clouded by the knowledge of Haldin's disappearance and the women's premonitions of disaster which seem to be confirmed by the report in an English newspaper of Haldin's arrest - the irony being that Haldin, of course, has long since been captured and executed. From the beginning, the narrator's relationship with Natalia is seen in an ambiguous light:

She directed upon me her grey eyes shaded by black eyelashes, and I became aware, notwithstanding my years, how attractive physically her personality could be to a man capable of appreciating in a woman something else than the mere grace of femininity. Her glance was as direct and trustful as that of a young man yet unspoiled by the world's wise lessons. (132-3)

The irony inherent in the mention of her "trustful" eyes as well as "a young man" is not lost on the reader, who will remember these phrases from Part First.

In contrast to the novel, the opera abruptly reveals their knowledge of Haldin's death which, of course, removes the air of uncertainty which colours the equivalent section of the novel. In the opera, Haldin's importance to the two women becomes immediately apparent in their exchanges. Their knowledge of the existence of Razumov is explained by Natalia who reminds her mother of Haldin's having mentioned in a letter that "There is one among them, only one,/A man of truly noble soul,/A man to love, a man to trust,/A man whom one could call a friend" (129). (In the novel it is, in fact, Peter Ivanovitch who first mentions the arrival of Razumov in Geneva (152) to the Haldin women. Haldin's description of Razumov occurs in a letter to his family and is read by Natalia to the narrator: "Unstained, lofty, and solitary existences" (158).) Again the irony of these words is obvious. Her excitement is caused by the thought of meeting her brother's friend, but the relationship that will develop between Natalia and Razumov is, in fact, foreshadowed in her music. When she sings the lines, "But if perhaps one day - who knows?/Some happy chance should let me meet him,/What joy to clasp him by the hand,/To kiss the hand that Victor held,/To welcome Victor's one true friend!" (131-3), her vocal line soars to a high B flat underpinned by pulsating chords in the orchestra and her lyrical outburst suggests that their inevitable meeting will lead to mutual attraction and the resultant psychological torment for Razumov. Although her words convey the promise of a romantic

relationship it is the music underpinning the words that conveys the intensity that this relationship will have for Natalia. With the potency and immediacy of music she is immediately characterised as having an ardent nature. However, the opera naturally loses much of the important characterisation of Natalia which occurs in her many conversations with the narrator in the novel and which he later recounts in great detail but with questionable insight. (The narrator frequently describes his observations of Natalia and how he is able to 'read' her character in her face and, particularly, in her expressive eyes.) In contrast, her mother is perhaps more strongly characterised in the opera than in the novel where she remains a rather shadowy figure. One could regard this stronger characterisation as gratuitous, but it does reveal the necessity in opera for strongly delineated characters, as well as to illustrate how the immediacy of music tends to make even shadowy characters more vivid than their fictional counterparts. The operatic Mrs Haldin's cynicism is shown by her dry riposte to Natalia's overwhelming desire to meet Razumov: "Victor's swans were sometimes geese" (134). This first segment quickly establishes the relationship between the two women and their feelings about their dead son.

Natalia and her mother are interrupted by a group of schoolgirls and their teacher who come to inspect the statue of Rousseau which dominates the park. The teacher questions the girls about the life of Rousseau, which takes the form of spoken dialogue underscored by a muted chord in the orchestra - another instance of the extensive use of spoken dialogue in the opera. The irony in the novel of having Razumov write his diary in the shadow of Rousseau has been noted. Tanner (1981:168) remarks that "in his inward agony and utter isolation Razumov is a living rebuke to the whole Rousseauistic concept of man." Razumov makes it very plain in his journal that he holds the Swiss bourgeoisie in contempt, despite the fact that the country offers him asylum. There is something of a similar reaction from Mrs Haldin and Natalia in the opera which seems to be provoked by the schoolgirls' mechanical answers to the teacher's questions and the banality of their song with its obvious melody and parallel thirds. The teacher's final admonition to the girls also has its ironies: "Remember, Geneva has always been the home of freedom of thought, a refuge for the exile, a resting place for the fugitive...(with a doubtful glance at the Russians)...provided they obey its laws" (136). The teacher's dialogue and the mechanical nature of the schoolgirls' song (which is described in the score as "rather jejune"), are framed by Natalia's romantic outburst preceding this segment and her Russian song which follows immediately after. The composer is able to suggest, through musical rather than verbal means, the exoticism of the Russian exiles in contrast to Swiss conventionalism. Mrs Haldin's immediate reaction is a mimicking parody of the schoolgirls' song preceded by the observation; "How smug the Swiss are! Everything prettily ordered, Everything nicely in place; No passion, no fire" (138). She then requests Natalia to sing a "real song ... one of our Russian songs, To take out the taste of the prim and the pretty" (141).

Natalia's song reflects an enduring duality in opera. Her mother's request that she sing immediately changes her 'status' in the opera from a character in the drama to a 'performer' in

her own right, a process which deliberately draws attention to the artifice of the moment. Hawthorn (1979:121) resists the popular notion that Conrad was the least self-conscious novelist when compared with his contemporaries and considers *Under Western Eyes*, in fact, to be Conrad's most self-reflexive novel, arguing that it "relentlessly teases away at certain recurrent problems about the relationship between real-seeming artifice and reality." Joubert's operatic version of the novel does not deliberately examine the nature of the art form in the same way as, it will be shown, a work such as *The Aspern Papers*, but it is at moments such as these that the self-interrogatory nature of opera becomes apparent. The formal demarcation of the song from the surrounding discourse emphasises its importance in relation to the preceding events. A change in the dominant discourse in opera generally indicates a change in the level of intensity, and in this case the musical style of the song also clearly denotes Natalia's passion. The song's melodramatically florid vocal line is reminiscent of the musical phrase used by Haldin when mentioning his sister to Razumov:

(Ex. 10.)

The musical score for Ex. 10 consists of three systems, each with a vocal line (marked 'N' for Natalia) and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system has the lyrics 'Call my lover to'. The second system has 'me. Call him here to'. The third system has 'me. call him. Here as I sit and a.' The piano accompaniment features a prominent, rhythmic pattern in the right hand, which is echoed by the vocal line.

Used in this context, it sounds as a further estranging device for the Russian exiles in their present Swiss context. This musical 'reminiscence' functions somewhat differently from leitmotif, suggesting atmosphere rather than any explicit idea or event.

Here, too, the orchestra fulfils some of the function of Conrad's narrator. The teacher of languages is at once fascinated and repelled by the Russians and it is this tension in his relationship with Natalia which contributes to much of the interest in his character in the novel. In the opera, the orchestra echoes Natalia's vocal line in the song without ever really fully supporting her. There is none of the typical doubling in the strings of a character's vocal line which occurs when the orchestra seems to fully 'affirm' what a character is expressing. In a similar fashion to the novel's narrator, the orchestra seems to be 'experiencing' conflicting and

contradictory emotions in regard to Natalia. There seems to be an almost conscious effort to retain some sense of detachment which does not fully succeed.

One can also grasp in this song the significance of the 'grain' of the voice as opposed to the verbal meaning. The words of Natalia's song are unexceptional and call to mind countless similar folksongs on the theme of desertion:

Call him, wind of the south,
 Call my lover to me.
 Call him here to me, call him,
 Here as I sit and await him,
 Wait for the rapture to be,
 Wait for the clouds to part,
 For the taste of his kiss on my mouth
 And the song in my heart.
 Call him back to me, call him
 Here as I sit deserted,
 Here as I sit with my pain,
 Pining alone and apart
 With the babe at my breast,
 And the knife in my heart. (141-147)

What is important is the sound of Natalia's voice - the 'meaning' of this scene lies in the vocal quality rather than in the words. The floridness and high tessitura of the vocal line work against the intelligibility of the words in any case, and it is the plangent and ardent sound of the voice which conveys Natalia's capacity for passion (this becomes increasingly apparent during the course of the opera), and emphasises her 'strangeness' in terms of her bland surroundings. The implication that the Swiss could never express themselves in such emotionally charged music corresponds to Eagleton's (1970:30) similar comments about the English in the novel:

What is admired in Nathalie Haldin and Sophia Antonovna, is a 'nobility of soul'.... By abstracting that 'spirit' from the particular political projects within which it is realised, English culture can be satirised for its paucity of passionate imagination.... The 'style' of Russian existence - its 'mystic' inwardness and dramatic poetry - is used to criticise the inert pieties of England.

Eagleton here touches on a crucial issue in regard to the operatic adaptation in that due to the loss of the English narrator in the opera an essential conflict is lost: the contrast between "civilised thought and alien experience" (31) which is at the heart of so many of Conrad's works. The contrast in this scene between Swiss 'normality' and the Russian 'foreignness' is, in some ways, an attempt to make up this loss, but it also reveals the failure of this adaptation fully to respond to the subtlety of Conrad's novel. Obviously, without the narrator, his peculiarly 'English' qualities are sacrificed, and the satiric treatment of the Swiss is an inadequate substitute.

The arrival of Lasparov and Tekla break the mood, but Natalia's excitement is increased by the information that a Russian student, Razumov, has arrived in Geneva. Although the

connection is not explicitly made, it is consistent with Natalia's impulsive character for her immediately to assume that Razumov was Haldin's friend. As soon as Natalia and her mother leave, Razumov enters, accompanied by Sophia who, together with Lasparov, persuade him to write for their journal. Lasparov and Sophia move aside to discuss Razumov and the composer and librettist employ the quintessentially operatic device, the ensemble, to communicate simultaneously the feelings of the three characters. It is at a moment such as this that opera diverges most markedly from spoken drama and reveals its affinity with the novel. As opposed to opera, spoken drama is unable simultaneously and intelligibly to convey the thoughts of more than one character, in fact, something fiction itself is, strictly speaking, unable to do. What is apparent here is a dramatic situation which would be extremely problematic to construct in spoken drama with its dominantly linear structure, but which occurs quite naturally in operatic discourse. What is also noticeable in this ensemble is the way in which Razumov's vocal line is highlighted in the orchestral accompaniment through both rhythmic and melodic repetition, without the audience losing the sense of what Sophia and Lasparov are saying. Their vocal lines are essentially conversational, as if the audience were overhearing snatches of their conversation while focusing primarily on Razumov's thoughts. In a sense the scene is being focalised through the consciousness of Razumov, much the same as would occur in a novel.

The mood of this exchange is broken by the advent of Grisha, a composite of Peter Ivanovitch and Nikita. Grisha has most of the sadistic qualities and functions of Nikita but the deep voice of Peter Ivanovitch. In the descriptions of Nikita in the novel, much is made of his voice: "the abrupt squeaks of the fat man seemed to proceed from that thing like a balloon he carried under his overcoat" (260), and his jealousy is compared to that of "a fashionable tenor" who is upstaged by "the performance of an obscure amateur" (261). Significantly, the composer gives Grisha a rising sixth phrase which is strongly reminiscent of that used by Mikulin: (Ex. 11.)

21 Allegro con spirito

G

What do you know of life? Have you reel - ed - ed run for your life?

mp *mf*

simile

The obvious intention is to establish a musical link between the two characters who perform similar functions for their opposing masters. This link is an ambiguous one as Grisha might be a double agent, as his counterpart in the novel, Nikita, turns out to be. In this instance a musical phrase is used as an ironic leitmotif, but again with a more than usually complex function - both to remind the audience of the similarity of these two characters and, more subtly, to suggest the possibility of duplicity on the part of Grisha. The link with Peter Ivanovitch in the novel is obliquely established in Grisha's brief arioso during which he implies experiences which

approximate those described by Ivanovitch in the story of his escape from Russia and which has assured him his literary fame. However, the aspects of his character that link him directly with Nikita are more strongly suggested. His contempt for the intellectual revolutionaries is made plain by his final, spoken comment: "Ugh! These children make me sick! I need a drink" (179).

Sophia explains to Razumov who Grisha is and that his function is to "kill for the Cause" (181), and warns him to "be careful of him" (183), displaying many similarities with her counterpart in the novel. (In both the novel and the opera, she is the most sympathetically drawn of the revolutionaries.) The return of Natalia and her mother heralds the first meeting between Natalia and Razumov. In the novel, their initial contact at the Château Borel is through their eyes ("their eyes had met") and Razumov responds to Natalia "as no one could help responding" but is forced to turn his gaze away. The narrator further notes that the impression of this first encounter had "nearly suffocated [Razumov] physically with an emotional reaction of hate and dismay" (183). The narrator urges Natalia to describe her reaction which elicits the ironic remark that "[h]e seems to be a man who has suffered more from his thoughts than from evil fortune" (184). This first meeting in the novel is circuituously described by the narrator and the strength of Natalia's reaction to Razumov only gradually becomes apparent. She is aware of the powerful effect her presence has had on Razumov but her reading of his reaction as emotion produced by his finally meeting his great friend Haldin's sister is ironically erroneous: "He positively reeled. He leaned against the wall of the terrace. Their friendship must have been the very brotherhood of souls! I was grateful to him for that emotion, which made me feel less ashamed of my own lack of control" (187). Her final comment, "Mr Razumov seems to be a man of few words. A reserved man - even when he is strongly moved" (188), shows more perception on her part, but still emphasises her essential misreading of his reaction and the ambivalent reactions Razumov generally provokes.

Their meeting in the opera is not depicted with the same level of subtlety. Natalia's ardent nature is illustrated by her greeting of Razumov, where she repeats the words her brother used to describe him: "There is among them, only one,/A man of truly noble soul,/A man who one could call a friend,/A man to love,/A man to trust" (188-189). Here the opera does approach the novel in terms of its levels of irony as not only are Natalia's words ironic as regards what the audience knows about Razumov's actions, but the obviously sincere passion of her music also increases the irony. She uses a musical phrase which starts on a high C flat and which continues with a soaring vocal line strongly contrasting with Razumov's more vocally restrained greeting, which, in turn, reflects his unease with the situation. This is the start of a large-scale ensemble which begins with Natalia's question: "Can it be true?" (191) using as a musical reminder a rising melody similar to the song she sang earlier in the scene. She is interrupted by her mother's bitter and doubly ironic comments: "So this is Victor's friend,/This is the true, the loyal one./Where was he when my Victor died?/ Where was he when they killed my son?" (192). When Razumov is joined in duet by Natalia, he echoes rather than dominates her vocal line - a musical indication of his wariness

but also indicative of the fact that she already exerts a powerful attraction on him. The ensemble continues with comments by Lasparov and Sophia which emphasise their faith in their cause and the necessity for trust, in contrast to the scepticism expressed by Grisha. The rapid eighth-note phrases of Natalia and Razumov contrast with the slower, candid quarter-note phrases of Sophia which illustrate the frankness of her character, as opposed to the more ambiguous reactions of Mrs Haldin, Lasparov and Grisha to the situation which can be heard in their more complex rhythmic phrases. In this way, Sophia becomes the dominating presence in this ensemble and it is her combination of determination tempered with humanity which is emphasised by the composer, reflecting something of Conrad's sympathetic treatment of her in the novel where she is described as being "respected, trusted, and influential" (256-257).

The first meeting between Natalia and Razumov in the novel occurs much more privately than in the opera and is coloured by the narrator's speculations concerning the future relationship between them. The narrative at this point has a double source in that the basis of his information about Razumov's feelings comes both from the diary as well as from Natalia's interpretation of Razumov's reaction and her description of Razumov's effect on herself. The exchange between the narrator and Natalia takes place in the park which, as he discovers from Natalia, is where she has suggested to Razumov they meet, and this has the effect of producing elaborate and romantic conjectures on the part of the narrator:

It was here, then, I thought, looking round at that plot of ground of deplorable banality, that their acquaintance will begin and go on in the exchange of generous indignations and of extreme sentiments, too poignant, perhaps, for a non-Russian mind to conceive. I saw these two, escaped out of four score millions of human beings ground between the upper and nether millstone, walking under these trees, their young heads close together. (189)

The initial contact in the opera between Razumov and Natalia is brief, obviously with little of this narratorial 'subtext', and their vocal lines in the ensemble, although following a similar rhythmic pattern, move in opposite directions, suggesting mutual hesitation and uncertainty. The ensemble is concluded by Grisha, speaking: "Bah! I'm sick of this nursery" (206). (The suspicions of Grisha tend to undermine the tension in the opera by alerting the audience to the possibility of Razumov's double role). Transitions from one segment to another in the opera are frequently effected by means of spoken dialogue rather than by employing purely musical options. The rest of the characters gradually follow Grisha off stage with a final word of warning from Natalia to Razumov to "beware of that dangerous man" (208). Razumov is left alone on stage - the obvious cue for a moment of psychological revelation, and the culmination of all the previous musico-dramatic development.

The dramatic soliloquy, once a staple of drama, has fallen out of favour in the modern theatre whereas the operatic equivalent, the aria, in its diverse manifestations, is as fundamental in much contemporary opera as it has been virtually throughout opera's development.

Psychological exploration in modern drama is achieved as much, or even more, through the revelation of characters' mental states in their actions and dialogue (or silences) rather than in these profoundly performative solo moments. Comparable explorations of mental states in the novel are frequently achieved through techniques such as 'stream of consciousness', or through extensive utilisation of free direct or indirect discourse. These are devices which can be seen to have their counterpart in the operatic aria which must be viewed in its totality in this regard, as a synthesis of words and music within the controlling presence of the narrator - the orchestra. The strongest parallel is with free indirect discourse techniques in the novel where the 'voice' of the narrator and that of the character merge, just as the orchestral accompaniment and the vocal line of the singer are intertwined. The verbal signification is only part of this total meaning and cannot be considered in isolation.

Peter Conrad (1977:113) makes the perhaps obvious but nevertheless significant point that "opera makes inefficient drama because it takes so much longer to sing a phrase than say it". Opera is bound by much stricter temporal demands than spoken drama and is generally much slower moving, but Conrad sees this, "novelistically", as its "justification, for in extending the phrase it allows its characters time to reflect on and absorb the implications of what they are uttering". This indicates an essential aspect of the nature of opera which virtually from its very beginnings has been a binary form, divided into the equivalent of recitative and aria. Even though the formal divisions between these two modes have at times seemed to have disappeared in modern opera, this dualism, however, still persists, if only at a more subliminal level, and in the operas examined in this study this transition from a lower to a higher level of intensity has frequently been noted. Peter Conrad, although formulating it more extremely, makes a similar point in his discussion of the novel and opera:

Music tends to subdue and inundate its text, and this confirms opera's adherence to the novel. For as music invades a text, it re-enacts the process Schopenhauer discerned in the creation of a novel. He made it a rule that a novel would be the finer the more it concentrated on inner life to the exclusion of that outer life which belonged to the dramatist opera has conceded that music can probe states of mind but not advance actions. The formal balance of eighteenth century opera virtually institutionalizes this conflict between drama and novel: plot is dealt with in the brisk gabble of recitative, while in the arias music intervenes to describe a static condition of spirit. In setting words, opera obscures them by transmuting them into notes. In providing music to accompany a drama, it subverts that drama into a sentimental or psychological novel. (115-116)

Even in the contemporary popular equivalent of opera, the musical, this binary distinction is apparent as the plot is carried predominantly by the dialogue while the songs are generally the moments for a character to reflect on what has just happened, or might happen, or their present state of mind.

Razumov commences his aria with a vocal line which is characterised by semitone intervals, also a characteristic of Natalia's music. Again, as in the preceding ensemble, this ironic

'repetition' can be regarded as the result of Natalia's powerful effect on him; her music dominates him even without her physical presence. There is a moment in the aria, deliberate or not, where Razumov, reflecting on his situation, describes himself as a "rogue so double-dyed", the allusion to *Hamlet* introducing several moments of self-consciousness in his aria and perhaps indicating that Razumov, too, sees himself as imprisoned by his destiny. Arias in opera, as moments of character revelation but also occasions for self-conscious virtuoso vocal display, reveal a fundamental tension where the conflict between opera as drama and opera as 'performance' becomes more apparent in the self-conscious theatricality of the moment.

The sense of the theatrical becomes even more pronounced with Razumov's line, "Am I condemned to live like this,/Condemned to play so false a part" (215), the analogy with *Hamlet* again implicit and Razumov's self-conscious awareness of both the necessity for personal concealment as well as his role in a larger drama becoming more explicit. This might be seen in relation to Razumov's observation to the narrator in the novel, made after his second meeting with Natalia where he is obviously struggling with the conflict between his attraction to her and his conscience: "I am not a young man in a novel" (197). This exchange takes place close to the theatre, which is mentioned by the narrator, and there is some elaborate role-playing by both the narrator and Razumov in this scene in the novel. In Razumov's meeting with Sophia in Part Third, she shows great insight in her analysis of his character and she remarks at one point: "What are you flinging your very heart against? Or, perhaps, you are only playing a part" (248). Natalia, in contrast, describes herself as "no actress" (303), and one is aware that the act of dissimulation is very foreign to her - she is the character with the 'trusting eyes'. The theatrical analogies increase towards the end of the novel where a strong self-reflexive element becomes apparent. This is taken up to some extent in the opera.

Razumov's self-conscious awareness is prominent in the first part of his aria which is introduced by a verbal leitmotif: the phrase, "she has such trusting eyes", introduces the aria and links the first part with the second. He sings of himself as being "Compelled to hide my dark distress/Beneath a painted smile.... The puppet of malignant Fate" (210-211). This self-consciousness increases when he refers to himself in the third-person: "Pull yourself together, man!/There is work to be done" (217-218). Musical leitmotif is also employed in its formal sense with the use of the rising sixth phrase on the verbal phrase "Writing reports for Mikulin.... There is plenty of writing to be done!" (218); the musical phrase immediately calls Mikulin to mind and reminds one of his influence on present events. Here the music is again able effectively and immediately to evoke the 'presence' of a character from an earlier part of the opera by the simple repetition of an identifying musical phrase. The composer and librettist also allude to one of the major concerns of the novel: the process of writing itself and the nature of 'truth'. Appropriately, at this point in the aria, Razumov has wandered up to the statue of Rousseau which dominates the park and he turns and directly addresses the statue as a fellow intellectual:

Aha, Jean-Jaques, my friend!
 You were a writer too.
 What did you write, my friend?
 'Man was born free,
 And everywhere he is in chains'.
 Ah God, What beast so tightly chained,
 What beast so tightly chained as I? (218-219)

The reference is obviously to the writer in his role as author of *Du contrat social*, but this reference could be seen as more inclusive and refer to Rousseau not only as the thinker concerned with the political condition of man but also Rousseau's belief in the primacy of the passions and their connection with music. It might also allude to Rousseau, the operatic composer, well known for his insistence on the importance of melody over harmony which was the subject of the "Guerre des Bouffons", the controversy which arose in Paris between 1752 and 1754 and which was essentially concerned with the rivalry between French serious opera and Italian comic opera. Rousseau sympathised with Italian opera which he saw as embodying simplicity of melody and accompaniment as opposed to the complexity of harmony and moribund traditions characteristic of French opera. This was reflected in his belief in the superiority of rustic virtue as opposed to aristocratic corruption. This direct reference to Rousseau in *Under Western Eyes* is one of those frequent moments of 'intertextuality' so characteristic of opera where the art form, through a reference to the nature and history of the form itself, reflects on its own identity.

Joubert's opera itself is characterised by its wealth of melody. He (1969:471) remarked that *Under Western Eyes* is "pre-eminently a singers' opera" and further observed that "the characters reveal and express themselves through what they sing (as in Verdi) rather than let the orchestra do it for them (as in Wagner)". This would seem to indicate a subordinate role for the orchestra, but this is not borne out in practice, a fact which Joubert acknowledged: "Nor does this mean that the orchestra has a subsidiary role". Joubert acknowledges his use of the effective musical device of a recurrent theme: "Most of the principal characters have their own representative themes or intervals which stand for certain attributes of their personality or character" (471). Joubert's bias towards melody rather than harmony would seem to align him with Rousseau rather than with the French aristocracy - both from a musical as well as a political point of view!

Razumov's line, "And everywhere he is in chains" (218-219), again incorporates 'Mikulin's' distinctive phrase - the obvious implication being Razumov's recognition that Mikulin is his gaoler. The scene ends with the visual image of Razumov thrusting "his hands out together in front of him, as if manacled" (219), a visual analogue of the sense of imprisonment that dominates Razumov's mental state in the novel and that is epitomised in the images of entrapment which characterise this aria: "Entrapped like some poor fly,/Caught in a web of circumstance" (210). In the equivalent scene in the novel where Razumov becomes aware of the statue of Rousseau, he decides to write about his experiences: "To write was the very thing he had made

up his mind to do that day" (278). He resolves that "this was the place for making a beginning of that writing which had to be done" (279-280). We see here the operatic version of Razumov's thought processes in the novel. It is as if the proximity and connotations of the statue of Rousseau forces Razumov in the opera to reveal his innermost thoughts in an aria, whereas Razumov in the novel does so through his writing.

4.2. Scene 2: ensemble.

There is a long orchestral interlude which leads without a break into Scene 2, set in Lasparov's flat where he is seen typing while Tekla is dusting the room. In a brief interlude of recitative above an orchestral chord, it is immediately apparent that she is completely dominated, both verbally and musically, by him. He soon goes out of the room and she takes a miniature from her pocket to which she croons a lullaby. This is a further example of the deliberately formal separation of the song from its surrounding discourse with the added defamiliarising effect of its being sung in Russian. The use of a language different from that of the opera is another instance of the intertextual nature of opera on both a verbal and musical level with the 'foreign' language having its own resonances, the composer relying on an operatic audience familiar with the standard repertoire to bring to this moment their experience of Russian opera and song. This 'defamiliarisation' can also be seen as part of a phenomenon which Peter Conrad (1977:5) identifies as the desire of operatic audiences "to listen to works performed in languages foreign to them because they know that incomprehension exalts and mystifies". Obviously, in this case there is no necessity for the audience to understand the meaning of the words of this lullaby as its meaning is apparent in Tekla's gestures as well as the particular quality of the music which is easily recognisable as a lullaby, including the hummed introductory phrases.

The entrance of Razumov leads into the first extended meeting between him and Tekla and enables the composer and librettist to establish a relationship which makes the ending of the opera more plausible. Tekla reveals something of her background which resembles that of the character in the novel. There is little sign, however, of the critical attitude that the character in the novel shows towards the revolutionaries. Razumov is described in the novel as understanding that "the bitterness accumulated in the heart of that helpless creature had got into her veins and, like some subtle poison, had decomposed her fidelity to that hateful pair" (236). Although her background is more briefly sketched in the opera compared to the novel, the grinding poverty and injustice described are, however, justification for her revolutionary ideals. Gradually the rest of the revolutionaries enter and begin their meeting which seems mainly to consist of formally introducing Razumov to all the members of the group. This scene in the opera has as its basis the vividly visualised gathering of revolutionaries in the hotel in Geneva in Part Fourth which Natalia and the narrator observe as they search for Razumov. The scene is described in some detail by the narrator who much later recalls this striking picture and remembers "the glimpse [he] had of that motionless group with its central figure" (309) and that he, as a Westerner,

thought that the old, settled Europe had been given in [his] person attending that Russian girl something like a glimpse behind the scenes. A short, strange glimpse on the top floor of a great hotel of all places in the world: the great man himself; the motionless great bulk in the corner of the slayer of spies and gendarmes ... all mysterious in the half-light, with the strongly lighted map of Russia on the table."
(309)

The operatic representation of this graphic description in the novel is obviously of interest to the adaptor as his cast has a substantial number of relatively minor characters who can be effectively deployed in an ensemble scene.

The conversation of the revolutionaries leads naturally to a discussion of the death of Haldin and the general conclusion reached is that he must have been betrayed, with Grisha pointing the finger of suspicion at Razumov. This too, parallels the depiction of Mikulin in the opera, in that the threat Grisha poses to Razumov is suggested both verbally and musically by a rising interval in his vocal line - frequently a seventh or an octave rather than a sixth - the larger interval perhaps suggesting the more immediate danger. Once again, hints of Razumov's complicity in Haldin's death are musical as well as verbal. Grisha's final question, "Who can know more about it than he? Razumov?" (264), is left hanging on the rising sixth, explicitly identified with Mikulin, a musical interval which is taken up by the other voices on stage. The rising sixth is used by Joubert here as an all-purpose means of suggesting ambiguity. There is, of course, the danger that the repeated references to Razumov's possible complicity in the death of Haldin might detract from his later, climactic confession (the tension lies in the fact that the stage characters do not know of Razumov's guilt - the audience knows and the tension resides in wondering whether the stage characters will find out). However, the irony in many of the utterances of both Razumov and the group of revolutionaries is emphasised in this scene.

Razumov's reaction to Grisha's question is muted: "I have little to say" (264), his vocal line simple, and his description of the course of events which has led him to Geneva ends with the comments, "I have lost my hopes of a career/I am back at my beginnings./And all is to do again" (270). Razumov, who is obviously under pressure, is inhibited in this reply, a fact which is illustrated by his frequent recourse to repeated notes rather than melody. Everything that he says will, for the audience, be coloured by dramatic irony, and his resistance to melody reveals his inner struggle. Grisha again attempts to orchestrate the reaction with his dominantly angular vocal line. He continues to repeat the answer to his own question, "so conveniently", using the same melodic phrase which incorporates 'his' interval, and it functions as an ironic refrain, with each repetition growing in menace. Razumov appeals to Lasparov but Natalia intervenes, using the power of her upper vocal range in an attempt to subdue Grisha's threat. Here the conflict between her and Grisha is played out primarily in vocal terms and the strength of her passion appears superior to his threat. It is more than just a matter of sheer vocal power but rather the

effectiveness and sincerity which are suggested by her lyricism as opposed to the angularity and force of his vocal line which, in comparison, lacks the essential 'truthfulness' of hers.

The mixed reaction of the rest of the group to the situation is reflected in a rhythmically complex ensemble which grows organically out of this dispute, incorporating much repetition. The ensemble builds towards a climax which is, however, interrupted by a rhythmic knocking at the door, a rhythmic figure which the audience has come to associate with the revolutionaries. It consists of two parts and the stage direction indicates that "All freeze into silence till the code is completed. Then the 'Thugs' open to Sophia, who enters in great excitement, carrying a letter" (287). Apart from its essential theatricality, the interruption of a large-scale ensemble to create suspense in this manner is part of operatic tradition (one immediately thinks of the interruption and entrance of Edgardo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* which leads into the famous sextet). A device such as this places *Under Western Eyes* firmly in the tradition of nineteenth-century romantic opera. In this case it is Sophia who enters with the letter from St Petersburg which reveals who it is that betrayed Haldin. True to convention, the revelation of the name is delayed so that the ensemble can speculate on the identity, creating suspense both dramatically and musically as the ensemble is left hanging on an unresolved chord while all plead with Sophia to give the name. This she does by reading the letter over a sustained chord in the orchestra.

The intrusion of speech once again illustrates the underlying truth in Peter Conrad's (1977:137) extreme assertion that the trend in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century opera is that "song seems to be the banal medium in which the characters conduct their daily lives, while speech becomes the extraordinary medium reserved for spasms of poetic uplift." While this is not a particularly poetic moment, it certainly is one charged with theatrical intensity and suspense. In most of the operatic adaptations examined in this study, the occurrence of these moments of heightened intensity which use spoken rather than sung words frequently increases theatrical effect while refocusing the attention on the art form itself. Conrad remarks of Strauss's *Capriccio* that it "reverses the operatic history it extols by making song aspire to the condition of speech such a breakdown occurs at critical moments in later works" (137), and this is perhaps best exemplified in the development and frequent use of *sprechgesang* - the operatic approximation of speech - in twentieth-century opera.

The letter in the opera, as in the novel, reveals the identity of Zemianitch, its contents are similar to the news of the death of Zemianitch sent in the novel by Sophia via Natalia to Razumov ("Please tell Mr Razumov that I have made public the story which came to me from St Petersburg. It concerns your brother's arrest.... He was betrayed by a man of the people who has since hanged himself" (310)), and seems fully to absolve Razumov from any suspicion. The letter is used in the novel to increase suspense as Sophia informs Razumov that she "thought it would be more effective" if she should "show the letter itself at large" (269), thus creating a further source of tension in Razumov's mind. Of course, the use of a letter as a means of precipitating

and releasing tension in opera is well known, with many examples in the repertoire. This is another moment of heightened intensity in the opera where speech interrupts the dominant discourse. On this occasion, however, there is more than one voice involved, and it becomes a mini-drama (with elements of true melodrama in that the dialogue is accompanied by a sustained chord in the orchestra) within the wider work with asides from Razumov expressing his relief. It also recalls the earlier moment in Act One (Ex. 2.) where Razumov 'acted out' his childhood experiences:

(Ex. 12.)

SOPHIA (*reading*): "You will have heard of the man Zemianich...."

RAZUMOV (*aside*): Zemianich!

SOPHIA: "Zemianich the sledge-owner, who was to help Victor to escape. We knew this and we had our eye on him. From the time when Victor was killed, Zemianich regularly had a suspicious amount of money. He had always been a drunken lout, but now he began to drink more and more. When he was drunk, he was indiscreet, and he let fall hints how the Devil had come to him and tempted him the night that Victor was caught."

RAZUMOV (*aside*): Ah! I know who that Devil was!

SOPHIA: "The more he drank, the more miserable he became, and it was clear that his conscience was troubling him. Finally one night, though he still had plenty of money left, he went into a shed and hanged himself."

ALL: Hanged himself!

SOPHIA: "There is no doubt at all in our minds that it was he who betrayed Victor, that his money came from the police, and that he was finally overcome by remorse. The mystery of Victor's death is solved."

NATALIA: Thank God, oh, thank God.

RAZUMOV (*aside*): Then I am safe!



The response of the revolutionaries, led by Sophia and Natalia, is one of relief as they resume the 'action', once more in the medium of song, and their acceptance of the contents of the letter is reflected in the jaunty 6/8 rhythm and distinctive musical figures which dominate their reactions, reminiscent of Razumov's explanation of his involvement with Haldin and his journey to Geneva. Again one notes that the dominance of one or more characters over others is depicted musically as well as verbally. That only Grisha remains sceptical is underlined by his resistance to this insidious 6/8 rhythm. The rest, led by Lasparov, prepare to drink a toast to Razumov. This segment is formally separated from the previous discourse by a slower tempo and the arioso quality of Lasparov's opening lines, an instance of opera's well known penchant for ceremonial moments of this kind - a toast drunk by the full company on stage is almost an operatic cliché. By using traditional operatic devices such as this toast, the opera inevitably draws attention to itself.

Lasparov is joined by Sophia and gradually the other voices enter the ensemble, with Natalia's vocal line soaring above the rest in a high-lying and rapidly-moving figure, indicative of her joy. She is observed by Razumov in an aside, "She has such trusting eyes!" (303-4), the now familiar phrase carrying a similar irony. Grisha remains unconvinced but his reservations are drowned by the voices of the rest who join in a toast, "Good health to Kyril Razumov! Good health to Victor's friend." (305). Sung in unison, this echoes Razumov's previous phrase, "I thank you all, I thank you" (304), repeating its rhythm as well. The repetition of words on a single pitch is characteristic of occasions in this opera where irony and ambiguity are particularly prominent and where melody seems inappropriate. This is such an occasion, fraught as it is with conflicting tensions and cross-currents. One can perhaps draw a loose parallel with the reversion to speech at moments of high intensity, discussed above. It is as if the expressiveness of melody, and even harmony, is distrusted at such moments. The orchestral postlude which ends the act seems at first unambiguously to echo the joyful mood of the characters on stage, but the menacing quality of 'Grisha's intervals' can be detected in the final bars of music and the act ends on this ambiguous note of joy and foreboding, perhaps an accurate reflection of Razumov's state of mind.

5. Act Three: self-reflexive theatricality.

5.1. Scene One: Razumov and Natalia.

The dramatic trajectory of the novel moves towards the final, climactic scene between Razumov and Natalia in Part Fourth where he at last 'confesses' to her. The accumulation of theatrical metaphors is subsumed into the melodrama of this scene. It is, however, not merely theatrical but is markedly self-reflexive as well, a quality which is sustained throughout by the presence of the narrator who acts as an 'audience' during this encounter between the two protagonists. The first scene in Act Three of the opera is devoted to this crucial last meeting between Natalia and Razumov and the entire musical development culminates in the increase in intensity and deployment of the full range of discourses available to the composer.

In the novel, the reason for their meeting is the fact that Natalia, in an attempt to shield her mother's health, has not yet revealed Razumov's presence in Geneva. Noticing her mother's deteriorating condition and the fact that she suspects her of deception, Natalia finally discloses that Razumov is in the city. She determines to find Razumov and take him to see her mother and seeks the assistance of the narrator. Not finding him at his lodgings, they return to her home to find that Razumov has come to see her mother and appears to have explained everything to her, the effect of which Razumov describes in his diary:

The fifteen minutes with Mrs Haldin were like the revenge of the unknown: that white face, that weak, distinct voice; that head, at first turned to him eagerly, then,

after a while, bowed again and motionless - in the dim, still light of the room in which his words which he tried to subdue resounded so loudly - had troubled him like some strange discovery. (317)

This whole scene in the novel is melodramatic. The theatricality of the occasion is perceived by the narrator who catches a glimpse of Mrs Haldin through the open door as Razumov leaves the room: "The thought that the real drama of autocracy is not played on the great stage of politics came to me as, fated to be a spectator, I had this other glimpse behind the scenes, something more profound than the words and gestures of a public play" (316). The setting of the scene that plays itself out between Natalia and Razumov is given further theatrical emphasis by the narrator: "The light of an electric bulb high up under the ceiling searched that clear box into its four corners, crudely, without shadows - a strange stage for an obscure drama" (319). The narrator functions self-consciously as the 'audience' for this final drama. Even Razumov, although wracked by powerful and conflicting emotions, is perceived by the narrator as "watching himself inwardly" (323), and Razumov contemplates the effect his words have on Natalia: "...as though he were turning the knife in the wound and watching the effect" (325). The narrator draws on the discourse of opera to describe the sound of Natalia's voice and the potent effect of her vocal timbre on Razumov:

Her voice, with its unfeminine yet exquisite timbre, was steady, and she spoke quickly, frank, unembarrassed. As she justified her action by the mental state of her mother, a spasm of pain marred the generously confiding harmony of her features. I perceived that with his downcast eyes he had the air of a man who is listening to a strain of music rather than to articulated speech. And in the same way, after she had ceased, he seemed to listen yet, motionless, as if under the spell of suggestive sound. (323)

Razumov's final revelation of his betrayal of Haldin epitomises the melodramatic quality which the narrator has emphasised. In reply to Natalia's repeated entreaties that he explain his ambiguous comments he finally bursts out:

"There is no more to tell!" He made a movement forward, and she actually put her hand on his shoulder to push him away; but her strength failed her, and he kept his ground, though trembling in every limb. "It ends here - on this very spot." He pressed a denunciatory finger to his breast with force, and became perfectly still. I ran forward, snatching up the chair, and was in time to catch hold of Miss Haldin and lower her down. As she sank into it she swung half round on my arm, and remained averted from us both, drooping over the back. He looked at her with an appalling expressionless tranquillity. Incredulity, struggling with astonishment, anger, and disgust, deprived me for a time of the power of speech. Then I turned on him, whispering from very rage-
 "This is monstrous. What are you staying for? Don't let her catch sight of you again. Go away!..." He did not budge. "Don't you understand that your presence is intolerable - even to me? If there's any sense of shame in you..." (328).

Razumov's confession is, ironically, a silent one. This is Razumov's last attempt to get beyond the ambiguity of language before he is finally, ironically, committed to silence by Nikita in the

novel.

The narrator's descriptions of Razumov's reactions intensifies the theatrical dimension. Razumov is described as "framed" in the "searching glare of the white ante-room", as if on stage. The visual aspect of the scene is further emphasised by the description of the dropped veil as being "intensely black" in the "white crudity of the light". Razumov's actions themselves take on an exaggerated quality as he stoops with an "incredible, savage swiftness" (329). The narration is couched in the overdetermined and hyperbolic language of melodrama which is set against the scene's underlying qualities of irony, ambiguity and the ever-present implication of the inadequacy of language which is symbolised by Razumov's mute gesture. The final moments of this scene in which the narrator attempts to speak to Natalia, increase, if anything, the melodrama when he looks at her in "silent horror" in the "poisoned air" of the "corrupted dark immensity claiming her for its own, where virtues themselves fester into crimes in the cynicism of oppression and revolt" (329). She finally breaks her silence:

"It is impossible to be more unhappy..." The languid whisper of her voice struck me with dismay. "It is impossible... I feel my heart becoming like ice." (329)

It is obvious that Conrad's theatrical conception of the scene would lend itself to dramatisation. The opera-maker has to realise this scene in musical and visual terms, and the importance of the orchestra becomes apparent in its attempt to accent the lurid quality of the events in the novel.

There is a strong irony in operation in the novel in that it is obvious that the narrator is crucial as observer of the scene; his observations give the scene its power, and yet this is contradicted by the repeated stress which is placed on his actual irrelevance in terms of the events which he narrates. During this final confrontation Razumov turns towards the narrator: "Slowly his sullen eyes moved in my direction. 'How did this old man come here?' he muttered, astounded" (329). Eagleton (1970:29) maintains that the purpose of emphasising the narrator's irrelevance "is crucial to the novel's intentions." Both the narrator and Razumov oppose revolution and seem to have similar points of view on many issues but "just as it is detrimental to English decency for the narrator to be too closely identified with Razumov, so it is damaging to the 'heroic' nobility which Razumov comes to embody for it to be associated with the cautious conventionality of the old man." In many ways, it is this ironic "heroic nobility" of Razumov's which emerges most strongly in this scene in the opera. In a scene like this the operatic 'narrator' is crucial in giving the scene its effect and focus, yet the 'drama' of the events occurs solely between the two protagonists and in this sense the 'narrator' is, therefore, superfluous. It is part of the orchestra's function, like the narrator, to move in and out of focus as the narrative requires.

The setting of this scene in the opera is once again the park which immediately gives the scene a more 'public' quality than the almost claustrophobically theatrical setting in the novel.

Natalia in the opera enters "in some agitation" (309), obviously waiting for Razumov to arrive. The scene consists of several quasi-discrete segments with the first larger formal section devoted to an aria for Natalia during which she reflects on her relationship with Razumov. This whole scene is long; however, it is the synthesis of the verbal text and the music which holds the audience's interest as both elements simultaneously probe Natalia's psychological state. Again one notices how the verbal text, while on its own providing the impetus for this exploration, is heavily dependent on the music for the full meaning of the scene to emerge.

Natalia commences the first part of her aria with a vocal line reminiscent of her song in Act Two, revealing her concern with what she perceives as Razumov's unhappiness which she is unable to understand:

How can I speak, how voice my fear
In words that will not hurt his pride?
How offer him the help he needs,
Poor lonely quiv'ring soul?
I know he is not happy here;
I sense behind the life he leads
Some secret that he strives to hide,
Some undiscovered goal. (310-312)

The first part of the aria has a rapid tempo with alternating rising and falling short melodic phrases which convey something of Natalia's unease, and the lack of any apparent melodic resolution suggests a similar inadequacy in her answers to her own questions. The rapid tempo opens the act with a sense of urgency and expectancy: the audience is aware that some kind of climax in the relationship between Razumov and Natalia is imminent. A slight shift in emphasis then occurs in the aria. Natalia now attempts to probe more closely the reasons for this indefinable feeling of distance that she senses on Razumov's part:

I see beneath the outer shell
A conflict that divides his heart;
I sense uncertainty and doubt
Behind a smiling mask.
I know, Ah God, I know too well
That he is forced to play a part.
What brings his agony about?
Ah, that I dare not ask. (312-314)

The libretto incorporates some of the theatrical imagery which permeates the parallel scene in the novel. We have seen how aware Razumov is of playing a role and of his ability to hide his true feelings behind a "smiling mask". It is obvious that he is as much of an enigma for Natalia now as he was for her when they first met, and many of her questions remain unanswered, but, unlike in the novel, she reveals some as yet unformulated suspicions. These are questions which cannot be answered by Natalia herself and the aria now takes another direction with tremolo strings providing an increased sense of agitation:

I dare not ask and yet at times -
 In the half-light of sleep and waking
 There falls on my unwilling eyes
 A glimpse, a visitation of the truth,
 A truth that chills the blood,
 A truth so horrible and grim,
 I cannot let myself believe it;
 I force my eyes to shut it out.
 My heart would break if it were so;
 I dare not ask, I must not know.
 And yet...And yet... (314-317)

As Natalia's sense of foreboding increases there are rapid rising figures in the orchestra which first suggest and then enhance this feeling of agitation. Her speculation begins to take a more concrete form, and the line, "A truth so horrible and grim," suddenly has an octave leap in the vocal line which is completely unexpected and, following the convention that has been established in this opera, activates a strong sense of menace. The high B natural is indicative of her unease, and a similar leap on the words "My heart" has a comparable effect. The rising intervals on the repeated phrases, "And yet...", emphasise her consciousness of unanswered questions. The significance of the structure of the vocal line is obvious. Although an upward leap cannot on its own signify anything, in the context of this verbal and musical synthesis, these intervals certainly increase the tension and stimulate the expectation of what is to follow, carrying as they do connotations and echoes from previous scenes. From a musical and structural point of view, they also facilitate the transition into the new section of the aria which modulates into a new key. A problem that gradually emerges during this aria concerns how much Natalia actually suspects that Razumov is implicated in the death of her brother. There is no suspicion at all in the novel that she questions Razumov's relationship with Haldin and therefore the impact of Razumov's 'betrayal' is greater. (One has the feeling that the opera tends to dissipate something of this tension in the construction of a 'dramatic' aria for Natalia.)

The words of the second part of the aria are concerned with an examination by Natalia of her own feelings as opposed to direct concern with Razumov. There is a warmer quality to the music aided by the slower tempo as well as the flowing melodic line and the new key; which has elements of the opening of the aria but is now transformed by the new tempo which also contributes to an impression of sincerity and truth through the contrast with the faster previous section:

What love is this that cherishes its blindness,
 That hugs its bonds, though yearning to be free?
 Where is its courage, where its loving kindness,
 That hates the darkness and yet dreads to see?
 What truth more horrid than the want of knowing.
 What night so dreadful as the want of day?
 The tide of truth will not abate its flowing,

Try as we will to stem its onward way.
 Not for myself, then, but for him who needs me,
 Not for my solace, but for what is right,
 I must pursue the road where duty leads me.
 Let there be light, O God, let there be light! (317-320)

(It is interesting to note that the slower section of the aria uses a five-foot poetic line as opposed to the faster section which is divided predominantly into four-foot lines, the 'longer' line demanding a broader musical setting which results in a slower tempo.) Natalia sings "let there be light" which is an ironic echo of the narrator's observation in the novel: "I saw the gigantic shadow of Russian life deepening around her like the darkness of an advancing night" (210). The sense of balance that is obtained by the use of contrasting ideas or emotions in each line of the operatic text finds its parallel in the vocal line which hovers around a two or three note interval, frequently returning to the same pitch or one which is close to that with which the phrase began. The doubling of the smoothly flowing vocal line by the strings in the orchestra enhances the feeling of compassion and sincerity. This is a moment in the opera where Natalia has the opportunity to reveal something of her character, and is also the first really 'solo' number for her in the opera - her song in the second act was more a 'performance' for her mother's benefit than a moment of character revelation. This aria is 'composed' by herself in Cone's (1974:60) sense of "the character, not the singer ... 'composing' the aria, producing a subconscious musical response to a specific dramatic situation". This aria takes the form of a 'true' soliloquy and therefore can be regarded as reflecting her innermost feelings without any element of awareness of being 'overheard' by anyone. It is not a flamboyant, virtuoso aria; florid vocal display for its own sake, in contrast to her first song, would be inappropriate at this point. The aria also functions as an introduction to the following scene with Razumov which is certainly the emotional climax of the opera.

The entrance of Razumov increases the tempo of the music and both Natalia's and Razumov's vocal lines consist of short, agitated phrases, frequently ending on one pitch which is immediately assumed by the second voice. This brings a conversational element into the scene without it losing its sense of urgency and energy, and the change in musical discourse naturally contrasts with what has gone before and what is to follow. Although concepts such as tempo and dynamics are frequently alluded to in spoken drama (generally in terms of production imperatives), the importance and effect of these elements can never be as profound when compared with what is available to the musical theatre composer. The change in atmosphere between Natalia's aria and this next passage is effected through a radical change in the musical discourse which includes elements such as tempo, dynamics, tonality and rhythm and which immediately signals to the audience, without the need of verbal or visual signification, that there is a change in intensity and energy comparable, perhaps, to the effect of a change in lighting in the theatre.

Razumov's unease is immediately apparent in musical terms in his unwillingness to match the leaps in Natalia's vocal line when he repeats her phrases:

(Ex. 13.)



He is finally roused to do so when she mentions her father, and Razumov's repetition of her musical phrase: "He had a father!" (323) echoes his own words from Act One. Indeed, this whole section of the scene between Natalia and Razumov can be seen in terms of a musical recapitulation of the scene between Haldin and Razumov in Act One (71-75). In both scenes, one character takes up the pitch from the other and their words are set to repeated notes on the same pitch. This deliberate and intense musical reminder of the earlier scene immediately establishes a strong link between them. The powerful irony lies in the awareness that Razumov in the first scene had just betrayed Haldin, and here he is contemplating a similar 'betrayal' of Natalia, although one that obviously does not carry the same risks for her as her brother. What is also interesting is that the name of Natalia was first introduced in a musically similar passage in Act One when Haldin fondly recalled his family, thus establishing a further link between the two scenes and increasing the sense of betrayal. Here, of course, Natalia speaks of her brother as well as recalling her father's sense of justice, just as Haldin had done, revealing the important influence that the father had on son and daughter: "He was so brave,/So much the man,/He put new heart in all of us./I think I never knew him angry/Unless he saw some evil thing,/Some cruel or unkindly act -/And as the boy so was the man" (323-5). (The father is not mentioned in the novel). That Razumov is impressed by what Natalia has told him is shown in his exact repetition of her phrase, "And for that cause he died" (326), the repetition once again signalling the ambiguity of his remark. The musical element again supports and further extends the purely verbal signification.

Another change in the level of intensity is heralded by a change in tempo and Natalia attempts to draw information about her brother out of Razumov who responds unwillingly, 'using' Natalia's musical phrases as if unwilling or unable to 'create' his own. Natalia renews her attempts with more vigour, evidenced by her rising vocal line, which forces an alarmed reaction from Razumov. Natalia cannot restrain herself any longer and again the tempo increases and the key changes for a new section of the scene to commence. This takes the form of an arioso for Natalia. The slower tempo with its fervent quality indicates another rise in the level of intensity. The first part of the arioso is characterised by falling phrases as Natalia expresses to Razumov her perceptions of him:

Ever since you came among us,
 I have watched you like a sister,
 With the eye of loving-kindness.
 I have seen that you were lonely,
 That you were not as the other,
 That you seemed to bear a burden, (331-332)

At this point she expresses her conviction of: "Something terrible and secret/That oppressed your mind and spirit". These two phrases are sung on repeated notes on the same pitch:

(Ex. 14.)

The second part of the arioso then inverts the falling phrase which characterised the vocal line of the first part and now, with a rising vocal line, Natalia sings: "I have offered you my friendship,/But you welcomed it so coldly,/You have seemed so hard and distant". This does not elicit a response from Razumov and again she returns to the repeated notes on one pitch low in the register: "You have shrunk into darkness/Like a man who dreads the sunlight". Now, with what appears renewed energy, she once again begins the rising vocal line which will soar to a high C in climax:

Yet I know that this belies you,
 That your heart is warm and gentle,
 That beneath a cold demeanour
 You have yearned for love and kindness.
 take it then, my help and friendship,
 Help to ease your heavy burden.
 Do not, do not cast it from you. (333-334)

Here one can see how the musical structure can parallel the signification of the words. The melancholy weight of the sentiments expressed by Natalia in the first section of the arioso is reflected in the 'heavy', falling vocal line. The phrases low in the register are thoughts that she utters with difficulty, 'dark' thoughts which require the darker vocal quality. However, when the new thought strikes her that there is a way through love to salvation for Razumov, the vocal line rises as if in answer to her mental trajectory and the soaring vocal phrases echo her offer of

assistance to him. It is not as if there is anything remarkably original in the way that these lines are set to music, but the synthesis of both the words and music reveals how opera is able, through essentially conventional means, immediately to present a character such as Natalia. It is not merely that the vocal line 'mirrors' the sentiments expressed by the words, but that it appears to be an organic process in which the words and music virtually generate each other, without one element in this synthesis taking precedence over the other.

The final part of Natalia's arioso calls for new resources from the composer. She sings the words, "you cried for friendship, and I heard your crying,/My help I offered you with all my heart./In this I will admit of no denying./Grant me your confidence, or let us part" (335-336). As she comes to the final phrase, it is as if she has forced a response from Razumov and he replies as the key changes from D flat to A. The effect of a modulation such as this is powerful, and, of course, has no equivalent in spoken drama. Obviously this is achieved by the narrating orchestra which is able to effect these changes of scene and atmosphere with a speed and effectiveness similar to that in fictional narrative. It is as if the orchestra-narrator has, through a change in focalisation, for example, been able to depict the scene from a new and perhaps unexpected point of view.

Razumov's reply takes the exact form that Natalia's arioso has taken. Here one sees how a traditional musical structure, in this case two verses of a song which form two symmetrical halves, can also extend the verbal meaning of the scene. Razumov's arioso also uses the falling vocal line to express his unhappiness: "Never, since I came among you,/Since we first talked together/Have you failed in loving kindness./True it is I have been lonely,/True I am not as the others;/True it is I bear a burden" (336-337). Just as Natalia's 'dark' thoughts were expressed by low, dark tones, so does Razumov express similar thoughts with similar music: "The secret which I carry/Has oppressed my mind and spirit.... If I could not then expect it,/If I seemed to greet you coldly," (337-338). Again, in the same way as Natalia, this seems to force him to reconsider the situation, which causes his vocal line to rise in imitation of hers: "Do not think I am ungrateful,/Do not scorn me, dear Natalia,/For despite a cold demeanour/I have yearned for love and friendship" (338-339). It is as if he has 'heard' Natalia's music and it has had the effect of galvanising his energy and forcing him to reflect on his condition and consider what Natalia is offering. It is not simply a matter of the two characters on stage each singing a verse of a 'song'; a moment like this grows organically out of the drama that is taking place on stage, with the characters as it were spontaneously 'composing' their own music which, in turn, reflects their psychological state, each still considering what the other has said, hence the 'similarity' in their music (of course, within the constraints imposed by the orchestra-narrator who 'narrates' these characters in music). In such a way the conventional forms of opera have 'meaning' and purpose: the purely verbal signification of the text and the sensuous quality of the music are extended into a truly 'dramatic' whole - profoundly different in conception and nature, however, from spoken drama. Joubert's opera is distinguished by its use of a generally conservative structure and

musical idiom and perhaps does not reveal the subtlety of several of the other works examined in this study, but this does not detract from its theatrical effectiveness.

To complete this symmetrical musical structure, Razumov and Natalia now join in duet. At first their vocal lines move in canon with each other (in a similar fashion to Razumov and Mikulin in the first Act) which reflects the sense of the words they sing:

Natalia
Take it then my help and friendship,
Help to ease your heavy burden,
Do not, do not cast it from you.
You cried for friendship and I heard your
crying;
My help I offered you with all my heart.
In this I will admit of no denying.
Grant me your confidence or let us part.

Razumov
Why I cannot take them gladly,
All the tender gifts you offer,
That, ah that I cannot tell you.
Could you but know the torment of
refusing
That which I long to take with all my
heart!
But this rejection is not of my choosing.
Believe me, oh believe me, or let us part.
(339-343)

As the emotion seems to draw them closer together, this, in turn, pulls their vocal lines together in unison. However, the words they sing would appear to suggest the tension that underlies their relationship. In a sense we see here a traditional operatic device in that the words that a character sings are undercut or even contradicted by the accompanying music - even their own vocal lines - in an ironic narrative commentary. The verbal text of each character can be seen to reflect the conscious aspect of the situation with all its potential pitfalls, while their vocal lines suggest the unconscious in which both feel an almost irresistible attraction for each other. Musically, this final section balances the symmetrical halves of their respective ariosos to form a satisfying musical whole, but the exigencies of musical structure alone do not determine the 'meaning' of the scene. Meaning here seems to develop organically out of the total situation, neither component of the binary form - words or music - exerting a dominance over the other.

The almost ecstatic mood is broken by Natalia with the ambiguous line, "I know I have said too much, or not enough" (343). To the marking *allegro agitato*, she determines that she will be bold and speak as her heart instructs her. This bridge section, characterised by vocal leaps in her vocal line, reveals a strong similarity with the opening of the whole scene. Razumov attempts to interject but the vocal force of Natalia's utterance brushes him aside. To an even brisker tempo, Natalia pledges herself to him:

I know it is no common thing I do,
I know the world would censure what I say,
But for us two these things can have no weight;
Convention, custom, are as trifling toys,
The little fictions dear to little people.
I sense between us a mysterious bond
A bond transcending all commitments else.
I offer you my love!
And in that name I claim the right, for better or for worse,

To share what burdens lie before you,
 To be the partner of your secret thoughts.
 I am your wife, if you will marry me.
 If not, I do not care;
 I still am yours. (346-350)

The striking thing about this segment of the scene is that the vocal line is distinguished by a resistance to melody. This effect has been observed before in the opera, but not to this extent. It is almost as if Natalia, through the strength of her emotion, finds that melody is not expressive enough. Her words come increasingly quickly, apart from the line "I offer you my love", the words emphasised by quarter notes with a sustained tone on 'love'. Here, of course, the opera moves away from the novel with this unambiguous declaration of Natalia's; it is as if opera needs finally to break through this ambiguity, the passions must finally be given 'voice'. At last Razumov is roused by Natalia into response. At first his utterance is similar to hers but slowly his vocal line assumes a greater angularity, as if he is gradually able to withstand Natalia's entreaties and find his own 'voice'. His resistance to her increases in intensity and the scene assumes the form of a dialogue:

Razumov
 Natalia! Ah, what can I say?
 You offer me so rare a thing;
 And I must cast this gem away,
 Reject your tender off'ring.
 Believe me, it is not my will
 That sets me such a part to play;
 My destiny pursues me still
 And stifles what my heart would say.
 There is no hope for me and you,
 No binding fast of life to life;
 There only lies between us two,
 Dividing us, a naked knife.

Nothing! nothing! can you not see?
 Must I explain?
 Must I strip myself bare in your sight?

Ah, but I must, I must -...

Natalia

Ah no! Ah no!

Poor heart - poor heart!

It cannot be; it must not be.
 It cannot be; it must not be!
 I have offered all I have to give.
 What more can you ask of me?

No, no! I have asked too much of you.
 Do not tell me, (350-355)

Whereas Natalia's vocal line retains its single-pitch character, Razumov attempts to force her to assume the features of his vocal line.

There is yet another change in tempo as Razumov at last begins his actual 'confession'. This scene in the novel is characterised by the indirect and ambiguous way in which Razumov reveals his role in the betrayal of Haldin. His full confession to Natalia, in fact, takes place later, in the form of his diary which he posts to her. In the novel, he introduces this confession with an analogy, with each refinement more closely approaching the truth:

But suppose that the real betrayer of your brother - Zemianitch had a part in it too, but insignificant and quite involuntary - suppose that he was a young man, educated, an intellectual worker, thoughtful, a man your brother might have trusted lightly, perhaps, but still - suppose...But there's a whole story there. (327)

This is Razumov's strategy, to turn the whole confession into a 'story', which will somehow diminish his 'role' in it (this self-narrativising of Razumov's reflects a wider aspect of the novel where every character has a 'story'). The opera appropriates and extends this metaphor with Razumov 'fabricating' his own story in a similar moment of narrative self-reflexivity:

Suppose there was a man,
A young man, almost a boy.
Suppose him a child of shame,
A bastard, nobody's son.
Suppose that over the years,
By the toil and the sweat of his brow,
He had worked his way in the world,
Till his goal was nearly in sight,
To earn his bread like the others
In a decent sphere of life,
To hold his head up high
And wipe out the shame of his birth. (358-360)

The music of this section grows out of the text: as Razumov weaves more and more elements into the 'story', the pitch gradually rises, then suddenly drops when Natalia interjects, and then once more begins to rise. In verbal terms Natalia's interruptions have little effect on the flow of Razumov's story, although in musical terms they force his vocal pitch down which means that he has to begin the process again. This happens three times until Natalia can stand it no more and using her wider vocal range and superior vocal power she forces Razumov into silence with her high A natural (364). She insists that she trusts him regardless of what has happened in the past, and the word 'trust' naturally evokes from Razumov the familiar leitmotif, "She has such trusting eyes" (366). Hawthorn (1979:105) remarks of the novel that Natalia's eyes "are the eyes of Eve" and thus unable to detect evil, but they also "persuade Razumov ... to be innocent - to reveal his guilt to her." They may "entice Razumov's thought to the very edge of blackest treachery, but they also cause him to draw back from it." In the opera, it appears that Natalia does actually 'see' the evil but will not confront it.

The tempo is halved, which suits Razumov's more reflective tone and he has come to the realisation that it is not to Natalia that he must confess:

Ah God, you are right, you are right.
It is not to you I must tell it;
You are too good, too kind;
There would be no penance in that,
Not that way does atonement lie.

There are others to whom I must tell it.
 Lasparov, Sophia, Grisha.
 There only can I strip off the mask,
 There only can I shed my burdens,
 No matter what happens afterwards. (367-368)

Once more Razumov's utterance is reduced to repeated notes on a single pitch with the occasional but unconvincing melodic flourish. The brief interlude of melody of the preceding passages has vanished, and he returns to reality, realising that only in a full confession to the other conspirators does salvation lie, and he once again uses the metaphor of the 'mask' behind which his life in Geneva has been lived. Natalia's attempts to dissuade him are to no avail. Razumov's insistence on confession has now appropriated Natalia's wide upward vocal leaps which characterised the opening of this scene and musically this has the effect of a frame, completing the musical architecture of this lengthy scene and conveying the impression of the completion of Razumov's thought processes which will result in his confession to the other revolutionaries:

(Ex. 15.)

The musical score for Ex. 15 consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line for Natalia (N) and a piano accompaniment (P). The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the word 'no!' on a high note. This is followed by a series of repeated notes on a single pitch, with the lyrics 'I must, I must. There is no oth - er way.' The piano accompaniment provides a rhythmic and harmonic foundation with various chords and melodic lines. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'There is no oth - er way.' and 'Good-bye, dearest Na-'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic support.

Razumov's departure is swift. Kissing Natalia on the forehead he rushes off stage and she cries out after him, her rising phrase ending on a high C flat. She "stumbles against a seat. As she recovers herself and stands clutching the back of the seat, the waiter starts to put up a shutter on the cafe window" (371). This induces a final melodramatic response from Natalia: "Put up the shutters! Shut out the world! I am the most unhappy girl alive" (372). One can compare this to the equivalent moment in the novel where she says: "It is impossible to be more unhappy" (329), with its similar sense of theatricality.

The strength of the mutual passion of the two protagonists is well conveyed in the foregoing duet and accurately reflects the narrator's comment in the novel concerning Razumov:

"he had discovered that he needed her - and she was moved by the same feeling" (322). Operatic exigencies dictate a much more explicit declaration from both protagonists which again suggests the difficulty that conventional opera has in depicting subtle shades of emotion. If the ending of the duet is typically melodramatic in operatic terms, it has, nevertheless, something of the same quality of psychological truth which is so characteristic of the novel. This scene in the opera, paradoxically, is not as overtly theatrical as the equivalent scene in the novel. In a sense it remains unfinished, for although Razumov has indicated his complicity in the death of Haldin, it lacks the melodramatic finality of Razumov's line in the novel as he points to his breast and says: "It ends here - on this very spot" (328). What is also very noticeably absent is, of course, the mediating presence of the narrator in this episode in the novel; the opera cannot replicate the self-reflexivity of his acting as a critical, self-conscious 'audience' of the 'performance' that takes place in front of him. In the opera the scene, for all its skillful construction, is essentially conventional in that it follows traditional operatic models but does, however, retain something of the obliqueness and ambiguity of the final exchange between Natalia and Razumov in the novel. The operatic scene that comes most strongly to mind here is the final scene from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* which exhibits a similarly complex musical structure reflecting the changing emotions of its two protagonists.

The final view of Natalia's strength and determination imparted by the narrator's description of their last meeting is lost in the opera. The narrator notes that to his "Western eyes she seemed to be getting farther and farther from" (343) him, and comments that "there was no longer any Natalia Haldin, because she had completely ceased to think of herself. It was a great victory, a characteristically Russian exploit in self-suppression" (344). The last view of the equivalent operatic character of necessity remains conventional - the soprano as tearful victim, although the long orchestral postlude to this scene does attempt to convey something of Natalia's strength of character through the recapitulation and variations on themes associated with her. However, the music cannot explicitly articulate the novelistic insight into the character of Natalia.

5.2. Scene two: narrative closure: language and silence.

The final scene of the opera, which begins with dialogue rather than music, is preceded by a long musical interlude. The revolutionaries are meeting in Lasparov's flat and tempers appear frayed as they discuss some pedantic details of "Clause forty-two of the manifesto" (380) above a sustained chord in the orchestra. Like the schoolgirls' lesson in Act Two, it is as if the triviality of their endeavours prevents their 'translation' into music and it is only Sophia's exasperated interruption which reactivates the music. Sophia, as in the novel, is presented sympathetically in the opera and her importance as a character is indicated by the fact that she is given an aria. Although not taken directly from the novel, much of her aria has its genesis in the lengthy discussion she has with Razumov in Part Third of the novel where he becomes aware of her integrity and mental strength: "Stripped of rhetoric, mysticism, and theories, she was the true

spirit of destructive revolution. And she was the personal adversary he had to meet" (257). Her aria has an allegro introduction which silences the other revolutionaries and leads into an andante section in which she expands on her revolutionary ideals:

I see a land...
 God send that I see clear!
 Where want and suffering shall cease,
 A land swept clear of tyranny and fear,
 A land of liberty and peace.
 I see a land where Tzar and potentate
 Are ground beneath the people's heel;
 I see an all-embracing mother state -
 Providing for the common weal. ((384-385)

In a similar fashion to Natalia's aria at the beginning of the previous scene, the slow tempo and the lack of vocal display for its own sake, coupled with the expressive vocal line, give her words a fervour and sincerity. One gains the impression from the verbal and musical 'text' of Sophia's aria that the two women have much in common. This view of the women would seem to correspond to Eagleton's (1970:30-31) view of the novel that it "is the women anarchists - Tekla, Nathalie, Sophia - who are admired, for what they symbolise are essential qualities of 'being'; the men who wish to realise those qualities in action are frauds and freaks."

The comments of the other characters at the conclusion of the aria are short and rather caustic, and reveal a less visionary and altogether more prosaic view of mankind. They are interrupted by the first part of the familiar knock at the door which causes consternation among the group. After a tense orchestral passage, the second half of the knock is heard and Razumov enters. Razumov's confession to the revolutionaries reflects his intentions expressed at the end of the previous scene and which have their source in the novel where he writes to Natalia: "There is only one more thing to do for me" (333). He is described by the narrator as "the puppet of his past" (334) in that he waits for midnight, which was the time of his betrayal of Haldin, to visit the revolutionaries. Amid the excitement of his unexpected entrance, Razumov announces that he has something to say. The scene in the opera conveys much of the atmospheric quality of the novel: "The whole company's attention was riveted on the new-comer, dripping with water, deadly pale" (335-336). Razumov sings the lines: "I know what I must say to you,/And I must say it now./It is, oh, so very simple;/Words of one syllable will do" (394), the simplicity of his intentions somewhat contradicted by the rather florid vocal line with its implication of uncertainty and unease. As if in reaction to this, the actual confession is painfully brief and *spoken* on one pitch rather than sung: "I betrayed Victor to the police,/I sent him to his death.":

(Ex. 16.)

47 poco adagio

R I know what I must say to you, And I must say it now. It is,

pp

oh, so very simple: Words of one syl - la - ble will do.

pp (colla voce)

R I betrayed Victor to the police, I sent him to his death.

(This contrasts with the more lengthy explanation given by Razumov in the novel where he uses the analogy of "a certain student" (336), finally directing the attention to himself with the line, "Haven't you all understood that I am that man?" (337)). Coming as this does after the previous aria of Sophia and the rapid ensemble of the revolutionaries, the sound of the spoken words, this time without any orchestral underscoring, is electrifying, and certainly bears out Lindenberger's (1984:87) assertion about a similar moment in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* which can be applied here, where he maintains that "we are meant to recognize these words as the spiritual climax of the opera". There is immediate and general consternation and Razumov, without any elaboration, further describes his role:

I am a spy of the police;
 I am paid by Mikulin
 To report on all you say or do.
 I did it to save my skin.
 That is all. (396)

The rather toneless quality of this confession changes rapidly with his final comment: "Ah! I have spoken, thank God, I have spoken,/And I have exorcised those trusting eyes!" (397-398), (which occurs for the final time in the novel in his diary which he posts to Natalia). This is almost screamed on an alternating high A flat and A natural but on the word 'exorcised' the voice executes a florid downward run using the 'trusting eyes' vocal phrase. The melismatic falling phrase, in this context, conveys Razumov's belief that he has finally exorcised those eyes from his brain. The visual image of him collapsing into a chair emphasises this, and one has the impression that this is both a spiritual as well as a physical collapse after exorcism of the demon that has possessed him since St Petersburg. It is both the brother and the sister of whom he is

finally free. Of course his confession contains the ultimate irony of whether it actually finally purges and saves him or dooms him.

There is complete consternation among the revolutionaries with some calling for a trial and others resisting. The ensemble is silenced by Grisha who approaches Razumov with his familiar menacing music characterised by its rising intervals. The actual beating of Razumov occurs off stage and only "two heavy blows" are heard. The novel has a detailed and vivid description of the attack on Razumov which describes him as coming "to rest in the roadway of the street at the bottom, lying on his back, with a great flash of lightning over his face - a vivid, silent flash of lightning which blinded him utterly" (339). For a moment Razumov is both blind and deaf. In the opera Razumov is thrust back into the room by Grisha with the announcement that he will "never spy again he will never hear again" (411-412), and the other revolutionaries gradually leave the darkened room where Razumov is left lying in front of the stove.

For obvious practical reasons Razumov is now discovered by Tekla, unlike in the novel where after wandering in the rain, the deafened Razumov is found by Tekla in the street after having been knocked down by a tram. In a scene reminiscent of her lullaby in the second act of the opera, Tekla takes Razumov's head in her hands, the opera taking its cue from the description in the novel where she finds him and takes "his head on her lap" (340). This iconic representation ends the opera, with Tekla now singing the same lullaby that she sang to the miniature, the recapitulation of the song having increased poignancy in this context. Razumov gradually rouses himself and realising that he is condemned to a permanent silence beyond ambiguity and that Tekla is ministering to him, sings: "There drops on me like an angel's wing,/A touch of tenderness, a healing hand,/A mystery I cannot understand,/A shaft of pity from the mercy-throne,/A gentleness I have never known" (425-426). Razumov experiences a strong sense of release: "Ah dare I hope then that my debt is paid,/My sin compounded my atonement made?" (428) which reflects his thoughts in the novel written in his diary after his confession to Natalia: "You were appointed to undo the evil by making me betray myself back into truth and peace" (331), and his realisation: "In giving Victor Haldin up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed most basely" (333). Although Tekla is with him, there is a strong sense that Razumov is virtually unaware of her presence and that these final moments in the opera approximate the emotions and feeling of atonement that characterises the final entries in his diary. Tekla assures him that she will look after him, a confirmation of Natalia's judgment of her in the novel: "While there are travellers ready to fall by the way our Tekla will never be idle. She is a good Samaritan by an irresistible vocation. The revolutionists didn't understand her" (343). Razumov raises himself for one final passionate outburst:

There comes indeed a warm suffusing glow,
That laps me round and tells me this is so.
The sinner feels his tribulation cease,

and finds forgiveness and the kiss of peace. (430-431)

(Razumov's deafness indicates the necessity for a suspension of disbelief as it is a situation perhaps unique in the history of opera where the protagonist is beyond the reach of the medium in which he has his being.)

The opera, obviously, cannot offer a similar sense of ambiguous closure as in the novel where the subsequent careers of the revolutionaries are subjected to brief ironic scrutiny (epitomised by Sophia's supremely ambivalent comment about Peter Ivanovitch as being "an inspired man" (349)). The final tableau in the opera is described in the stage directions: "She strokes his forehead with one hand. He reaches up and clasps the other. The fire in the stove flares up and lights his face on which there is a look of peace" (432). Significantly, the last vocal utterances of the two characters is wordless. It is as if the signifying power of words has become superfluous - a reflection of the beginning of the novel which made plain its distrust of words: "Words, as is well known, are the great foes of reality" (55). The 'reality' now is supravocal. They softly sing "ah" while the simple melody of the lullaby is carried in the orchestra which itself gradually fades to nothing.

The ending is subdued, with many of the questions raised in the opera remaining unanswered. It avoids any glib answers as to the nature and effectiveness of the revolutionaries who are generally portrayed in much the same ambiguous way as their counterparts in the novel, with only Sophia being seen in a positive light. Natalia disappears at the end of the opera, in a similar way to the novel where she 'disappears' into Russia. The character of Natalia is explored in some depth in the opera, with aspects of Sophia's view of her evident: "She has a faithful soul, an undaunted spirit and an indefatigable body" (346). Razumov emerges as the most rounded portrait: the frustrations of his life in Petersburg are well depicted as are the agonizing torments of his life of deception in Geneva. The opera, particularly through the music, is able to enter his troubled mind and it is this psychological aspect of character which links the opera most consistently to the novel.

Although the opera has several vividly realised scenes (particularly that between Razumov and Mikulin) and strongly delineated characters, the focus is essentially on Razumov with Natalia mainly fulfilling the role of 'love interest'. Of course no operatic version can have the complexity and subtlety of Conrad's novel, but Joubert's opera succeeds in theatrical terms. Essentially a work in the romantic tradition and conservative in its musical idiom, its most notable moments are, to some extent, the ensemble scenes, although the focus is finally on Razumov and Natalia. Natalia is, in many ways, the conventional operatic heroine and therefore it is in Razumov that most of the interest lies. The opera, in fact, seems to present a more positive view of Razumov than the vision which Eagleton (1970:26) observes "between what the novel shows us of Razumov and what it says of him"; Eagleton maintains that "the latter portrayal is a good deal

more admirable than the former". (Eagleton contends that "[t]he truth is that the novel, in pointing out reasons for genuine sympathy with its protagonist - his loneliness, his previously attractive character, his reasonable ambitions and their tragic collapse - lulls us at the same time into a tolerant attitude towards his less engaging traits: his violence, selfish cynicism and autocratic sneering.")

It is an essential aspect of the nature of opera to engender sympathy for its protagonists which perhaps results in a simplification of the complexity of some of the novelistic models. There is an element in the enhancing quality of music that elevates a character out of the mundane into something approaching epic proportions. It is in this aspect of opera, as much as any other, that one can see an essential difference between spoken drama and opera. In Büchner's play, *Woyzeck*, the title figure is a forerunner of the *anti-hero* of our century, but in his transformation into opera he assumes a more heroic status than the figure from the drama. In many ways, the operatic transformation of the play works against the playwright's intent and therefore one must judge the new work with different criteria. Razumov can be seen as a typical twentieth-century *anti-hero*, a figure that has found a central place in opera. Perhaps the seminal operatic figure in this regard is Don Giovanni, but twentieth century opera increasingly focuses on these kinds of figures. One need only turn to characters such as Wozzeck and Peter Grimes, the title figures of two major twentieth century operas, to see this illustrated. In the figure of Voss, the next work in this study, the unconventional hero reaches its apotheosis.

Chapter Four: *Voss*

Voss, the fifth of Patrick White's novels, appeared in 1957. Although it received initial critical acclaim in both England and America, it was less enthusiastically received in Australia, with one critic contending that the novel must be rejected on the grounds that White "is exploring, in an Australian environment, a mind, a way of thinking, that is foreign territory to most Australians" (in Walsh 1976:41). White himself resisted reactions of this kind, arguing that he "was determined to prove that the Australian novel is not necessarily a dreary, dun-coloured offspring of journalistic realism." He further explained that he had attempted to give the novel "the textures of music, the sensuousness of paint ... to convey through the theme and characters of *Voss* what Delacroix and Blake might have seen, what Mahler and Liszt might have heard" (in Walsh:41). This is amply illustrated in the novel's frequent reference to other art forms such as painting, music, poetry and drama. The importance of the novel in terms of White's oeuvre has often been acknowledged and it is generally regarded as his most visionary novel.

Voss, in a sense, can be considered as an historical novel as it has its basis in the historical figure of the German Ludwig Leichhardt whose last Australian expedition in the 1840s ended in disaster. The genesis of the novel has been described by White (in Walsh 1976:41) as occurring

during the early days of the Blitz, when I sat reading Eyre's *Journal* in a London bed-sitting room. Nourished by months spent traipsing backwards and forwards across the Egyptian and Syrenaican deserts, influenced by the arch-megalomaniac of the day, the idea finally matured after reading contemporary accounts of Leichhardt's expeditions and A H Chisholm's *Strange New World* on returning to Australia.

However, as an historical novel *Voss* must be seen in postcolonial terms as a work in which the novelist "deliberately set[s] out to disrupt European notions of 'history' and the ordering of time" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1989:34). This chapter will attempt to define certain features of postcolonial fiction embodied in the novel and examine how an operatic adaptation responds to them.

The opera *Voss*, based on a libretto by David Malouf, the distinguished Australian poet and novelist, and with music by Richard Meale, was first performed in Adelaide in 1986. It has received subsequent performances in Sydney and Melbourne and has been recorded for CD and video. It has enjoyed great popular acclaim (being regarded as 'the' Australian opera, which perhaps reflects the status that the novel enjoys), with Malouf's outstanding libretto being especially admired. A reviewer of the opera recording commented that the libretto "reads well" and noted that while "many of the characters, apart from Voss and Laura, have been reduced to mere sketches", Malouf "managed to touch on most aspects of the intricately woven narrative, if

only by means of a cleverly placed aside or a snatch of dialogue" (*Opera* 1987:1141). Malouf (1986:n.p.) admitted the difficulties facing a librettist, remarking that "[n]o libretto can reproduce the novel from which it is drawn. A novel, especially a great one, is itself unique, irreplaceable. The best a libretto can do is reproduce the experience of the book in a new and radically different form."

Although there was a more reserved reception for the music, the second act did come in for particular praise. *Opera* (1986:1370) described the work as "innovative musical theatre with a universal theme which is uniquely Australian without ever resorting to jingoism, cheap sentimentality or artificial colouring." Ewans (1989:523) mentions a frequent and valid criticism of the opera's "almost wholly European idiom", and quotes one of his students as describing it as "a fringe-dweller's opera". (This comment points towards the whole postcolonial debate which will be examined during the course of this chapter, but there is an unintentional irony in Ewans's later remark about his vision of the authentic Australian opera which "will never sound at all like Mahler"!) Ewans considers Meale's method as being ethnographic rather than attempting a true syncretism of a European art form with the Australian reality. Perhaps the musical quality that the critics were looking for is best expressed towards the end of the novel itself where the singing of the Aborigines is described:

The singing, as monotonous as grey earth, as grey wood, rose in sudden spasms of passion, to lie down, down, as the charcoal lying. The voices of dust would die right away. To rise and sing. One voice, alone, would put on the feathers of parakeets in gay tufts of song. The big, lumbering pelican voices would spread slower wings. (White 1960:377)

White's own response to the opera was ambivalent and echoes something of Ewans's view. He wrote to remind Meale after a concert performance of part of the opera that the novel was "austere and gritty" (Marr 1991:610), revealing his disappointment with the music. He acknowledged that his personal interest lay in difficult, contemporary music but admitted that much of the opera was "beautiful", remarking that his main criticism lay in the fact that he found the work too "romantic". However, after attending the opening performance of the opera in Sydney he wrote: "It was a stupendous occasion....It took me three days to recover both physically and emotionally; I relived so much" (629).

* * * *

1. The postcolonial novel and opera.

Postcolonial literature is distinguished by the dialectic between centre and margins, metropole and colony. Fundamental to this is the notion of "place and displacement" and a

concern with the "development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft et al 1989:8-9). It is within this search for personal and national identity that White's *Voss* can be located. Obviously the range of subject-matter in postcolonial fiction is vast but among the recurring themes that have been identified, are those of "exile, the problem of finding and defining 'home', physical and emotional confrontations with the 'new' land and its ancient and established meanings" (27). Most of these themes are also central to *Voss*, but the most important issue is what Ashcroft et al (1989:28) have singled out as a vital thematic of postcolonial fiction: "the journey of the European interloper through unfamiliar landscape with a native guide".

This journey has determined the superficially linear organization of *Voss*: the preparation for the expedition in Sydney, the expedition itself and the aftermath. The novel is divided into sixteen chapters but its structure is complicated by the intrusion of dreams and visions into the 'realistic' world of Sydney which results in the narrative being "treated polyphonically rather than chronologically; that is, events happen simultaneously in different places - in different keys ... so that the reader's awareness grows incrementally" (Weigel 1983:49). Its apparent linearity and seemingly realistic mode are further belied by the paradoxical psychological drawing together of the protagonists, Voss and Laura, the farther apart they are in physical terms. The narrative unfolds along psychological - even mythical - lines, and does not pursue their relationship in conventional terms. Wolfe (1983:104) observes that "[w]hatever form is imposed on the welter of material comprising the novel comes largely through dreams, telepathy, or poetic foreshadowing rather than through direct statement." The relationship between Voss and Laura is part of the larger dialectic of the novel; as Callaghan (1987:29) remarks, "[e]ach appearance Laura makes to Voss marks a moment in his development, or comments on a decision he has made."

The relationship between the two protagonists is developed by means of four brief meetings followed by several letters. By far the most significant development of this relationship takes place in dreams and visions, and their metaphysical and psychic union precludes the necessity for physical contact. Such a relationship would seem to lend itself to musical expression which conveys the emotional and the psychological so much more effectively than the physical. One of the strengths of opera lies in its "challenge [to] narrative convention" in which the "spiritual dimension is an inbuilt component of the art form, as independent vocal lines can be voiced simultaneously in a vertical ensemble that communicates over individual boundaries as well as time and space" (Patrick 1994:137). Malouf (1986:n.p.) points out that the "problem for a librettist is that it is *too* natural. What was daring in the novel might seem, on the stage, to be merely conventional." This chapter will examine how successfully this transcendental relationship is recast in operatic terms.

Ashcroft (1978:124) describes White as "pre-eminently a novelist of consciousness" but qualifies this statement by insisting that "the consciousness of reality does not preclude the

'mysteries' from man's experience, or deny the revelation of the hidden, the *transcendent*". Opera can be seen as the art form which, though seemingly rooted in naturalistic representation, perhaps more than any other investigates and celebrates the possibilities of the transcendence of consciousness. Adorno (1994:34) sees opera's strengths as lying in the depiction of the metaphysical and remarks that "[o]pera, hardly touched by philosophy, has sustained itself on metaphysics more than drama which contaminated its metaphysical content with conceptual contents." It is the prospect of transcendence immanent in all experience which is central to White's work and which makes a novel such as *Voss* so suitable for operatic amplification.

The journey of exploration in the novel is essentially a metaphysical one although the actual expedition to cross Australia in the 1840s is depicted in great physical detail (something which the opera can only do in limited, abstract terms). Edgecombe (1989:26) describes the expedition as "a painstakingly realistic documentation" which "coexists somewhat uneasily with half-defined, transcendental concerns that finally defy any diagrammatic exposition." This journey is a search for personal and national identity, and Meale and Malouf's opera is similarly concerned with the concept of 'Australia' both in the 1840s and the present. The "syncretic and hybridized nature of post-colonial experience" (Ashcroft et al 1989:41) characterises the novel with its wide range of discourses. The opera exploits a similar variety of discourses which, indeed, is a fundamental characteristic of the hybridity of the art form itself.

1.1. Character: from novel into opera.

The two protagonists in the novel are certainly 'operatic' in conception; both experience a sense of exclusion from their communities and, in the case of Voss himself, one has here to do with a figure who is essentially larger than life. Although Voss is the title figure of the opera and his role is the longest, Laura assumes equal importance. Morley (1972:120-121) remarks of the novel that "[i]t is no accident that the novel begins and ends with Laura, not Voss. The reader is led to identify with Voss through Laura, who possesses his faults and virtues on a human scale and achieves a self-knowledge which includes an awareness of the dangers of arrogance far sooner than does Voss." White's Laura is described by Brady (1975:25) as a "figure of honesty" who is a "corrective to the high-Romanticism, the passionate self-absorption, which tends to make readers and critics alike see in Voss a figure like Melville's Captain Ahab." While the operatic Voss is a more impressive figure, it is Laura in the opera who is the more sympathetic character.

In the novel Voss and Laura are, however, similar in many ways, not the least being that they are both introverted and experience difficulty in their relationships with others. This sense of alienation occurs in a society in which, as Knox-Shaw (1987:167) remarks, "cultural aspirations are ignored or reduced to a show", and in which alienation "carries the possibility of grace." They are alienated from a society which is, paradoxically, more arid than the desert through which Voss journeys (at one point the house at Pott's Point is referred to directly as a desert: "So

the party rode down the terrible basalt stairs of the Bonners' deserted house, and onward" (358)), and this exclusion finally enables both of them to achieve an ultimate transcendence. At the end Voss is dead but lives on through legend and myth, and Laura is seen in her society as not really part of it (she reminds her aunt: "I was never yours...except at moments, and by accident" (403)), but as having achieved a mystical communion with the land and an insight into the nature of Australia.

This sense of alienation is but one of many respects in which Voss and Laura may be regarded as amenable to a medium whose magnifying effect imposes "a necessary wilfulness on ... characters, obliging them to register spiritual developments in large gestures and resounding climaxes" (Conrad 1977:94). In the novel, both Laura's and Voss's behaviour is viewed as exaggerated, something which sets them apart from the other figures in their world. Voss, the explorer, might be seen to epitomise what Kiernan (1980:51) calls as "an image of modern man, rootless, no longer believing in God, yet uncertain of his nature and his relationship to the universe, recklessly, even self-destructively embarked on a quest to discover his potential and to assert it against the world." It is this Nietzschean quality in the title figure which has obviously been of great interest to the operatic adaptor.

Morley notes the strong connection of White's novel with earlier literature and describes Voss's journey as

deeply rooted in Western literature and tradition. His aspiration to know and experience everything belongs to the Faust legend treated by Marlowe, Goethe, Mann, Lowry, and others. Since Voss is his own tempter, he combines in one figure Faust and the tempter Mephistopheles. His journey is also a quest of the Grail. (151)

Morley also tangentially isolates several archetypal operatic topoi in her comments. The Faust story exists in countless operatic versions, and it will be argued in this chapter that there are elements of both Faust and Mephistopheles in *Voss*, and that the quest for the Grail which reaches its apotheosis in Wagner's great drama, *Parsifal*, a seminal work in operatic tradition, adumbrates many themes in Meale's *Voss*. If the figure of Voss contains many operatic elements then Laura is herself almost an archetypal figure. Edgcombe (1989:15) goes so far as to see in White's Laura, "an embodiment of the *Ewig-Weibliche*, the eternally feminine, in leading this Faust on - not as he imagines, to a suicidally invoked spiritual death, but to a fuller, life-affirming humanity." In operatic terms she has a long line of predecessors. Argyle (1967:45) maintains that White's Laura "fulfills the demands of the novel, which requires her to be Eve, the Virgin Mary, Gretchen, and a young woman of Australia in 1848." The opera investigates what it means to be a young woman in Australia, both in 1848 and, indirectly, in the present.

A distinguishing quality in White's novels is noted by Brady (1978:113) who describes characters in most novels as being motivated by "social ambition and erotic desire" while she sees

the motivating force in White, and particularly in *Voss*, as a "heroic longing" which calls upon characters to "contest the normal conditions of existence" and which lends these figures "epic stature". The origins of both the novel and opera reveal the influence of the epic. Since an anti-hero such as Razumov in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* can be invested with heroic and epic qualities, in the figures of Voss and Laura there would seem to be outstanding material for an operatic adaptor. A further point made by Brady alludes to a "melodramatic" quality in the structure of White's novels which has the effect of "dividing people, places and events into good and evil" (110). This would obviously accord with the melodramatic basis of opera and suggest a possible further affinity between *Voss* and potential operatic adaptation.

1.2. Language and writing.

It is primarily through language and writing that postcolonialism defines "itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place" (Ashcroft et al 1989:38). Language and the possibilities of its transcendence are vital thematic concerns of both novel and opera. Ashcroft et al (1989:82) note that "[t]he presence or absence of writing is possibly the most important element in the colonial situation": language does not "merely introduce a communicative instrument, but also involves an entirely different and intrusive (invasive) orientation to knowledge and interpretation." It will be shown how central the concept of writing is to both novel and opera. In many ways the situation in the novel reflects what Ashcroft et al establish as a "model" for the beginnings of post-colonial discourse: "the invasion of the ordered, cyclic, and 'paradigmatic' oral world by the unpredictable and 'syntagmatic' world of the written word" (82). The situation in the opera, where the two aboriginal characters, Dugald and Jackie, are 'mute', is symbolic of the "silencing and marginalizing of the post-colonial voice by the imperial centre" (Ashcroft et al 1989:83). (The Aborigines are marginalised by the colonists who are themselves marginalised.) This chapter extends the examination of the notion of both language and silence in opera (after Melville's profoundly ambiguous investigation in *Billy Budd* and Conrad's modernist ironisation of the notion of language in *Under Western Eyes*), this time in postcolonial terms: the exploration of that "profound silence between cultures which finally cannot be traversed by understanding" (Ashcroft et al 1989:86). It will be argued that this opera is an attempt, through the transcendental qualities of music, to bridge that gap and make that silence 'speak'.

2. Structure of the novel and the opera.

The fluidity of movement between Sydney and the Outback is perhaps the dominant aspect of the novel's structure and the opera responds to this with a similar flexibility within the conventions and practical restrictions of the modern music theatre stage. The following synopsis compares the chapter content of the novel with the scene content of the opera:

Novel

1. Sydney: Pott's Point:

Meeting of Voss and Laura. Voss's awkwardness. Mr Bonner and Voss discuss the expedition.

2. Sydney - Sussex St:

Voss discusses the expedition with Harry, Le Mesurier, Turner, Palfreyman.

3. Pott's Point:

Discovery of Rose's pregnancy. Laura's relationship with Rose. The picnic. Laura's second meeting with Voss. Affinity between them.

4. Pott's Point:

Night of party. Unexpected meeting with Voss in garden. Their relationship is deepened.

5. Sydney: The departure:

Laura's conversation with Palfreyman. Final meeting between Laura and Voss. Laura observes the departure of ship from Pott's Point.

6. Journey to Rhine Towers:

Beauty of the landscape. Meeting with Judd and his wife. Voss's dreams of Laura and his first letter. Beginning of expedition.

7. Sydney: Pott's Point:

Laura's growing closeness to Rose. Laura receives letter from Voss. Beginning of their non-verbal communication. Laura's letter to Voss.

8. Jildra - Outback:

Meeting with Boyle. Dugald and Jackie join the party. Voss sleepwalks. Arrival of Laura's letter. Departure of expedition. Stronger sense of communication with Laura. Celebration of Christmas. Voss rejects the meat. Loss of cattle. Judd nurses Voss after he is kicked by a mule. Letter to Laura. Dugald takes letter which he later tears up.

9. Sydney: Pott's Point:

Laura's growing identification with Rose's baby. Birth of child - Laura calls it "Mercy". Rose's death on morning of baptism. Funeral. Laura's letter to Voss.

10 Outback:

Relationship between Harry and Judd. Heavy rain. Voss nurses Le Mesurier. Stronger presence of Laura. Lose raft of provisions. Voss reads Le Mesurier's poems.

11. Sydney: Pott's Point:

Laura's devotion to Mercy. Preparations for Belle's wedding. Laura's awareness that Voss is 'lost'. Another letter to Voss.

12. Outback:

Spring. Palfreyman killed by aborigines.

Opera

Act I

Sydney 1845

1. The Party at the Bonners:

Voss speaks of his expedition. General concern about his complete sanity.

2. In the Garden:

Laura and Belle alone and then Laura joined by Voss.

Immediate sense of empathy.

3. Voss calls his Followers:

Various members of the expedition are introduced.

4. The Departure:

The send off by the whole company

Act II

Sydney - Outback

1. Voss finds Judd:

Conversation between Voss and Mrs Judd. Dugald and Jackie join the expedition. Departure.

2. Nightwatch:

Rose and Laura together waiting for the birth. Voss speaks to Palfreyman. Communication between Voss and Laura. His letter to her.

3. Christmas Day:

The party celebrate Christmas. Voss refuses to eat. Laura 'tells' Voss of Rose's death and birth of Mercy.

4. Voss Sleepwalks:

Voss slashes bag of flour with knife.

5. Delirium:

Splitting up of expedition.

13. Sydney - Outback:

Laura's illness. Laura's complete empathy with Voss. Expedition in a bad way. Harry's devotion to Voss. Laura's hair cut off. Mrs Bonner's love for Mercy. Appearance of comet. Le Mesurier cuts his throat. Voss takes wretched grub. Animals are killed. Laura and Voss now are one. Voss is decapitated and Laura's fever ends.

14. Sydney:

Laura meets Colonel Hebden after his unsuccessful search.

15. Expedition:

Colonel Hebden's expedition to find Voss. Judd's party - death of Angus. Death of Jackie.

16. Sydney - 20 yrs later:

Laura and Belle. Discovery of Judd. Laura meets Judd. Her final thought of Voss.

Voss is nursed by Judd who states that he intends to return. Scene assumes a surreal form with memories of Sydney mingling with Voss's dreams. Aboriginals appear and Palfreyman is speared. Le Mesurier cuts his throat and Judd leaves. Laura in fever nursed by Belle and Mrs Bonner and Voss and Harry together. Voss and Laura meet and she cradles his head. Jackie appears and decapitates Voss.

6. Epilogue:

Laura and reporter discuss Voss and then Judd appears who seems confused. Laura finally left alone with the statue of Voss.

As can be seen, the novel's characteristic temporal and spatial fluidity has been even further extended in the opera where seemingly unconnected events in Sydney and the Outback occur simultaneously and, increasingly, overlap on the stage. Both acts are continuous, with subdivisions occurring only in name while the action and music run uninterrupted. In the novel, the intrusion of Laura into Voss's thoughts and vice versa plays an increasingly dominant role, particularly in the final scenes which take on a progressively surreal aspect as the sense of time and place becomes more dislocated. The novel's structure reflects aspects of the Aboriginal concept of time as cyclical with the past being, in fact, recoverable in the present. Taylor (1987:45) claims that the "difference between the Aboriginal and the European time schemes is carefully charted" in the novel and it is in the realm of the dream "in which European and Aboriginal systems meet and blend" (55), an aspect of the novel's hybridity. She further explains how

Aboriginal mythology has allowed for the existence of two separate but synchronous time schemes. On the one hand, there is the profane realm, that of every-day life. Distinct from this is the sacred, in which all significant action takes place: this sacred sphere is designated 'the Dreaming' or 'Dreamtime'. Not all dreams are potent mysteries; there are those which are the product of the individual's needs and fears. Yet there are those dreams which have tremendous significance, and give the dreamer access to the sacred and the mythic.... Any action or episode which takes place in such a dream is a part of truth, more real than any event which occurs in the material world. The communication which takes place between Voss and Laura is thus not simply some kind of parapsychological understanding; it is a true communion in sacred time. (55-56)

It is largely this aspect of communication which is explored in the opera where, in fact, only one brief meeting between the two protagonists is depicted. (Laura speaks of a first meeting which

has, however, already taken place outside the operatic frame.) It is the crucial encounter at night in the garden which is represented in the opera and which has to lay the foundation for the development of their subsequent relationship.

The opera retains most of the important characters of the novel and has a large cast with seventeen principal characters as well as chorus but dispenses with characters such as Angus, Turner, Pringle, Sanderson and Boyle. It incorporates the two Aboriginal figures from the novel, Dugald and Jackie, but they are both, significantly, wordless, and are played by dancers. The original Adelaide production had a single stage set which was able to suggest Sydney, the Outback or both together. The opera calls for relatively large orchestral forces and chorus and the orchestration encompasses a wide palette of colours and dynamics.

3. Act One: conflicting discourses.

My analysis of the first act will establish the dual discursive structure of the opera and problematise the concept of language, suggesting its limitations as a means of communication.

3.1. The party at the Bonners.

The opera starts abruptly: a crashing orchestral chord reveals Voss silhouetted with his arms outstretched against what is ambiguously described as "out there" (Meale 1987:1) and, significantly, he 'shouts' rather than sings his first lines over a chord in the orchestra: "I will cross this country from one side to the other. I mean to know it with my heart. It is mine by right of vision":

(Ex. 1.)

Violento (J 116)

Voss (shouting across the following two bars): "I will cross this country from one side to the other. I mean to know it with my heart. It is mine by right of vision."

molto meno mosso (colla voce)

Immediately, in this statement by Voss, one sees an aspect of the librettist's method illustrated: culling lines from the novel and combining them in a new context - a method which generally succeeds brilliantly throughout the opera. Voss's first two sentences are uttered in the novel in reply to Le Mesurier's question: "Can you tell me ... if you are coming to this damned country for any particular purpose?" (33), while Voss's final line is, in fact, spoken by Laura in the previous chapter where Tom Radclyffe has, interestingly, made the earliest comparison of Laura to Voss, remarking that "Laura, together with the obsessed Herr Voss, is unafraid", to which Laura replies: "It is not my country, although I have lived in it". Tom's riposte, "It is not that German's" elicits her answer: "It is his by right of vision" (29). Even though these are not Voss's words, they are appropriate to him. The librettist applies this method throughout the opera. Ewans (1989:516) rightly maintains that Malouf's "reassignment gives the character of Voss an opening suggestion of *hubris* - in the full neoclassical sense of arrogant pride."

This must be one of the few occasions in opera where the first words of the title figure are spoken rather than sung and, as we have seen in the other examples examined in this study, this overturning of conventional expectation has the effect of focusing the attention on these words even more intensely than is customary and gives them an added dramatic force. The essence of Voss's quest is, in fact, contained in these lines; his is a journey of possession but his quest is inverted as he is finally possessed by the land itself.

As Voss's outburst ends, the orchestra ceases and a stage piano takes over and the stage brightens to reveal a party in progress at the Bonners. This represents the party described in chapter 4 of the novel during which the crucial encounter between Voss and Laura in the garden takes place. However, the first part of this scene in the opera is used to establish Sydney society which, as becomes apparent, is invariably accompanied by this piano.

The composer has incorporated authentic compositions (such as the opening piece: "La Sydney" by William Ellard) from the period into his score. At first these intrusions occur rather abruptly, but gradually they become more integrated as the distinction between Sydney and the Outback dissolves. The use of the piano and the recognisably 'old-fashioned' style of the music it plays functions as a complex form of leitmotif, signifying Sydney society for the audience. Of course it is not as simple as this as the 'Outback' discourse in the opera frequently intrudes into the Sydney scenes, and, indeed, increasingly dominates the opera as both Laura and Voss impose their personalities on all around them. The technique of using two distinct musical discourses to depict these two different physical and psychological areas takes its cue from the novel where Argyle (in Walsh 1976:46-47) notes that White chooses two verbal styles

to convey the differences of intention and circumstances of the members of the expedition on the one hand and of Sydney on the other. For those in the desert the language is filled with metaphor and the analysis metaphor presumes, to which is added some of the resources of the obsessed and humourless Voss's native

German. The language in which the Bonner group is described is much less poetic and self-revealing and more ironically dissecting.

Bosman (1989:129) describes the novel as combining "two submerged novel forms: the nineteenth-century or mid-Victorian social novel, which dominates the Sydney sections, and the psychological novel, which dominates the outback experiences of the other members of the expedition as well as Voss."

In a sense the achievement of the novel lies in its synthesis of several binary discursive systems: British - Colonial; Colonial - Aboriginal; social comedy - religious quest. There is a parallel in the opera in its synthesis of similar binary discursive systems: speech - singing; musical quotation - composition; social dancing - Aboriginal dance. Criticising the way in which Meale employs musical quotation, Ewans (1989:519-520) insists that the "use of direct quotation contrasts sharply with the technique of other modern operas - for example, those of Berg (both *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*), Britten (*Peter Grimes*) and Maxwell Davies (*The Lighthouse*) - all of which parody conventional dance music by presenting it in harmonically distorted form." One could counter this by arguing that the use of juxtaposition more strongly emphasises the absolute conventionality of the Bonner household. Ewans considers that the opera "depicts a colonial society without irony"; one can, however, argue that the abruptness of this juxtaposition, the deliberate 'normality' and banality of the piano music, rather than any harmonic distortion, is more powerfully ironic in the long-term. The fact that the piano music in the Sydney discourse is gradually subsumed through the overwhelming power of Voss's vision into the Outback discourse, suggests a process of syncretism which is the ideal both the novel and the opera strive towards. Sydney society is 'powerless' against the strength of Voss's (and Laura's) ultimate vision. (The fact that the piano is actually played on stage adds a further resonance to this scene in that there is an audience on stage listening and dancing to the music of the piano while being observed by the 'real' audience.)

In the novel there are several scenes which are typical of the nineteenth-century novel and which satirise Sydney society of the time. Kiernan (1980:50) sees the social satire in *Voss* as

perfectly distanced. Dramatically, as well as historically, White is detached from the colonial society he presents. The opening scene ... introduces the assured and ironically poised comedy of manners that is sustained throughout. Clearly the author relishes the opportunity he has created to appropriate the conventions, social and literary, of nineteenth century fiction: to turn the ironic aphorism and to summon up the precise establishing details ... which evoke this comfortable if decidedly colonial world. The generalising wit and ironic play with social distinctions ... are deftly employed to provide the sense of a whole society, from the military 'aristocracy' down to the emancipated servants who have adopted this country as their own.

In this society, Voss's obvious 'otherness' is enhanced by his neglected appearance, his awkward movements and his accented speech; but Laura is also depicted as being an outsider. However,

the shallowness of the society that wishes to exclude them is represented in the opera by the 'shallowness' of the music which depicts it, the prosaic quality of the piano is frequently contrasted with the full sonority of the orchestra which suggests something of the immensity of the country 'out there'. The chorus sing of the "scarecrow" Voss, which is the view of the returning church party in the opening scene of the novel (16), and then complacently describe the "spring nights in Sydney, our golden city" (5) which contrasts with their dismissive previous observation that Voss "means to cross the country looking for gold" (3). The chorus's repeated description of Sydney as their "golden city" (5) indicates an early stage in the colonial endeavour and illustrates what Ashcroft et al (1989:75) allege is a characteristic of such societies in their "obsession with nationalism, their unresolved passion for 'identity', and the conflict of both these impulses with the residual links to European culture."

Voss, who has been sitting apart from the rest, is now introduced by Mr Bonner in a quasi-recitative. Tom Radclyffe, who seems particularly sceptical of the whole enterprise, remarks that: "It has been shown that deserts prefer to resist history and develop along their own lines. I am inclined to think that you will discover a few blacks, a few flies, a few rocks and something like the bottom of the sea?" (12-14), sung with mocking repetition (in the novel these lines are spoken to Voss by Mr Pringle). Voss echoes the line, "Have you walked on the bottom of the sea", which interrupts the laughter, and is a line which functions as a leitmotif in the opera, occurring at moments of intense stress. This exchange between Voss and Tom illustrates the difference in attitudes between the colonists and Voss to their new country. The sound of Voss's music evokes both the physical size of the country and the metaphysical possibilities it offers, while that of Tom, with its constricted banality, suggests both the narrow provincialism of colonial society and a fear of the great, empty hinterland of the continent.

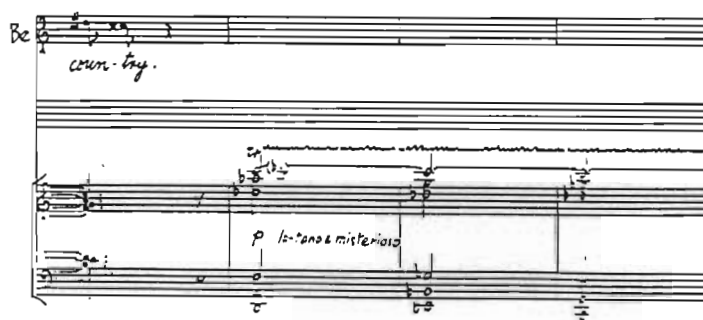
Voss introduces an important element into the opera as he sings to a rising phrase, "I have been there in my dreams"; the harmonic progression towards the word 'dreams' points it musically:

(Ex. 2.)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal part, likely for the character Voss. The score is written on two systems of staves. The first system is marked 'piu mosso (J60)' and 'rall.'. The lyrics 'I have. I have been there in my' are written above the notes. The second system is marked 'meno mosso' and 'accel.'. The lyrics 'dreams.' and 'that is' are written above the notes. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'mp' and 'p'.

It is in dreams that the 'real' expedition takes place - the journey towards an understanding of the self. Voss finishes his unsettling utterance with the line, "I am compelled into this country" (16), to which Belle responds, "Ah, this country", an 'uneasy' falling phrase that seems to be left incomplete with just a tenuous trill in the orchestra to support it. It is as if Voss has forced the colonists for a moment to consider their situation in this vast land and this prospect fills them with unease as a series of chords marked *misterioso* under the trill emphasises their unease. Tom, as the voice of 'normality' and accompanied by the piano, breaks the oppressive mood with the rather fatuous comment, "Of course, every man has an obsession" (17), and the rest of the company resume their 'chatter'. Again the conventionality of the accompaniment is still able to dispel the prophetic and threatening undertone of the preceding conversation. However, every now and then these evocative chords and the trill, which is a leitmotif signifying the Outback, are heard - *lontano* - which suggests the continual and almost subliminal presence of the outback in the consciousness of the colonialists even as they attempt to justify their sense of solidity and permanence:

(Ex. 3.)



Here it is the orchestra-narrator who undercuts the self-importance of the colonists from the same ironic perspective as the narrator in the novel. Tom then makes a remark, "Anyone who is disposed can celebrate a high old mass with the skull of a blackfeller and his own blood in central Australia" (21-22), a remark made by Boyle in the novel and one that carries many ironies pointing to the final 'eucharist' that is celebrated shortly before Voss's death. This is the cue for Belle "tauntingly" to observe to Voss, "You may send me a black-man's spear - with blood on it" (22-23). The second half of her comment is "suddenly hollow" as she looks into Voss's eyes as the mysterious chord once again briefly sounds. Belle, at this stage, seems no more than the female counterpart of Tom.

These initial exchanges in the opera, with their alternation between the threatening orchestral sonorities and the banality of the piano, do much to establish atmosphere and prepare for the scene between Voss and Laura (who, throughout this first section of the scene is a brooding presence on the side of the stage) which soon follows. Even in this brief scene it is apparent that a fair amount of characterisation has already been achieved and several of the main themes of the opera, musical and dramatic, have been established. The mood changes as Bonner

once more steps forward accompanied by a dotted figure in the orchestra which soon becomes associated with him:

(Ex. 4.)

BONNER Andante ma risoluto (J 80)

B *mf* I am be-kind you, Voss.

The world of so-lid bus'ness.

I-rich linens, and Swiss muslin,

Bonner's characteristic 'rhythm' suggests his enjoyment of the materiality of his "world of solid business" (25) in contrast to Voss's world of the spirit. The exchanges between Bonner and Voss serve to highlight the difference between Sydney and the Outback. Bonner, in the novel, is described by Walsh (1976:12) as "complacent and, although uneasy in the presence of the alien Voss, puffed with pleasure at his status as patron and pleasantly excited by the envy of others", while Edgecombe (1989:6) describes him as representing "nearly the whole of Australian colonial society, sealed off both physically and psychologically from the voyage of discovery in the desert that Voss and Palfreyman literally, and Laura mentally, undertake." The opera seems to endorse this critical view of the self-satisfaction of the colonialists.

Although Voss admits that his own background had a similar solidity to Bonner's, he describes it as "a house full of clocks" (27), the rapidly increasing tempo of the mimetic 'ticking' of the clock in the orchestra suggests the mental agitation experienced by Voss at the memory, implying that his journey is as much about escape from Europe as exploration:

(Ex. 5.)

Voice part: *house full of clocks all striking at different times*

Piano part: *un poco staccato*, *molto marcato*, *poco rit.*

This recollection takes the form of a lyrical passage with a particularly strong postcolonial emphasis in which he asserts his belief that destiny does not lie in birth but what one makes of one's own life: "It was the place I was born in but not where I began. We are born out of our own destiny. Not from a womb. And the death we go to is the one we choose" (28-29). Again, his words are portentous. The bass figure in the orchestra takes up the ticking of the clock but inverts it; the clock seems to 'wind down' as he speaks of the prospect of death which is emphasised by the strongly articulated 'ominous' orchestral chord which follows the word 'death'.

There then follows a moment of psychological insight as Voss's conversation with Bonner seems to have stimulated memories of his youth. The flexibility of the stage design enables the director to isolate Voss from the rest of the cast and his brief soliloquy provides the audience with their first real understanding of his motivation. This is the first of many such moments of introspection in the opera which exhibit the superficial form of arias but are used in a more complex way. The words which form the basis for this 'aria' are extracted from the first encounter in the novel between Laura and Voss on the Sunday where, having taken a sip of wine, he discovers, suddenly, that "[h]is throat was swelling with wine and distance, for he was rather given to melancholy at the highest pitch of pleasure" (13). A moment such as this is suggested in the opera; he has been sipping wine and his awkwardness has repeatedly been indicated:

I would wander in all weathers by day, by night, over the heath. Low windcombed trees under the moon would snatch at my clothes, the sand sucked at my boots. It was never far enough. That world was as small as a handkerchief. I knew then that I would set my boot down on my father's face, escape my mother's hands and leave her weeping beside the stove. Till the forests flowed like the sea, the sea, and I arrived on the underside of the world. But it was never far enough. My shadow is always out there, striding ahead of me. (30-35)

Voss's sense of alienation from his family finds a parallel in Laura who also feels no sense of allegiance to her adopted family; for both of them it has been a move from the Old World to the New. Voss's image of setting his boot down on his "father's face" is a graphic depiction of his perceived Oedipal need to renounce the influence of the father and to flee the family presence. Taylor (1987:41-42) notes that in the novel

[t]he past is a constant menace to Voss; it threatens to overpower the man he has made himself, and reassert the boy he had been.... He is comfortable only in dreams of the future.... The future is equated with distance, and hence with the possibility of conquest and the will. Thus it is that Voss's project is conceived of as a linear projection into space, a flight into the grandiose idea and away from banal memory.

Although Voss's vocal line has a lyric quality to it, as one would expect in a moment of recollection, the orchestral accompaniment is agitated, never allowing the voice to 'settle' either melodically or harmonically, illustrating the function of the orchestra-narrator. In the passage in the novel on which this aria is based (13-14), it is the authorial voice that 'speaks' but the narrative is frequently characterised by sections of free indirect discourse where Voss's own words seem to struggle through. In a similar way, the 'struggle' between Voss's vocal line and the orchestra is a reflection of this creative tension in the novel.

Mrs Bonner, whose role in the opera is much smaller than in the novel, perceptively voices her sense that Voss is "lost already. His eyes cannot find their way" (35-36), another line which functions as a leitmotif. The composer seems to make more use of verbal repetition than he does of musical repetition, although musical phrases do occasionally return. It is almost as if the linguistic virtuosity and density of the novel imposes itself on the final operatic form. Voss, as a character, is usually sunk deep in introspection which makes him oblivious to 'reality' - a form of blindness. The several occurrences of sleepwalking that take place in the novel are translated into the actual depiction of one such instance in the opera. This causes Judd, on the point of turning back, to comment bitterly to Harry that they are "in the hands of a sleepwalker" (251) - sleepwalking being another mode of blindness. Mrs Bonner's comment: "His eyes cannot find their way" (36), hangs in the air; it appears to require comment but no one attempts to provide any. The music threatens to grind to a halt but is again interrupted by the piano ("La Illawarra" by William Ellard), this time accompanied by a flute in another dance for the assembled guests. Again this intrusion of the different discourse abruptly changes the mood - the party atmosphere seems to dominate Voss's melancholy vision as he becomes visually isolated by the whirling dancers.

Bonner's distinctive musical figure initiates another exchange between them as he questions Voss about the map. Voss's reply is typical: "I do not need a map. The map is in my head....I have imagined it. Now it must be found. It is a country in search of its spirit. I am that

spirit. I will make my own map. The country is mine. I have only to walk into my kingdom" (39-41). Once again the contrast between Bonner and Voss is plain. As Wenzel (1988:95) remarks, "[f]or Bonner, a map represents a physical entity, which can be valued in terms of profit, whereas Voss sees it as a space to be explored." Bonner is out of his depth in a metaphysical conversation of this kind and attempts to impress upon Voss the fact that there are places that have already been named on a map, but Voss's response is typical: "Names are nothing. We do not possess things by giving them a name. We must become them" (43). This is uttered by Voss to Bonner's familiar figure, almost as if Voss is mocking Bonner's puny desire to possess through naming. This exchange reflects the wider postcolonial debate which concerns the construction of 'place'. As Ashcroft et al (1989:9) express it: "[t]he gap which opens between the experience of a place and the language available to describe it forms a classic and all-pervasive feature of post-colonial texts."

A change in tempo marking, however, indicates a change in intention and there occurs another of these brief, almost dream-like passages which are so characteristic of Voss's discourse. The words he sings are again portentous: "We must make the rivers flow out of our side. We must take the deserts into the empty places in our lives" (44). There is a veiled Biblical reference here as well as an allusion to the death that awaits Palfreyman. Voss now specifically links his desire with his dreams: "This country is mine by right of vision. I see it out there because I have already entered it in dreams and walk there among its shadows. It is like walking on the bottom of the sea" (45-46). The repetition of his earlier statement, both verbally and musically will come to haunt Voss:

(Ex. 6.)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal part (V) and piano accompaniment. The first system of music is for the vocal line, with the lyrics "walk there among its shadows. It is like walking on the". The piano part is marked with dynamics *f*, *mp*, and *mf*. The second system of music is also for the vocal line, with the lyrics "bot-tom of the sea. I have to ken the". The piano part is marked with dynamics *f*, *mp*, and *f*. Above the second system, there is a tempo marking "poco più mosso (♩ 84)" and a "cresc." marking. The score is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature.

In the novel the expedition literally struggles through blinding rain while in the opera the musical phrase with its awkward intervals aurally suggests something of the struggle over immense distances which the expedition will undergo and, as a leitmotif, this phrase will occur frequently during the opera.

Mrs Bonner again remarks on the fact that Voss is "lost" while Mr Bonner pleads with Voss that "men need a map" (48). Described as "breaking out of his dream" (in the novel, many of Voss's dreams and visions occur during his waking hours and do not require sleep), Voss turns to Bonner and says: "If I fail, Mr Bonner, I will write your name and your wife's name on a paper, seal it in a bottle, and bury it beside me. So that your name will be perpetuated in Australian soil" (49). This is declaimed entirely unaccompanied with a vocal line characterised by a lack of direction reflecting something of the meaninglessness of the gesture. The fact that the orchestra has completely ceased playing draws particular attention to the words of Voss's promise with its implicit mockery of colonial aspirations. This 'silence' from the orchestra-narrator seems ironically to indicate the "profound silence between cultures which ... cannot be traversed by understanding" (Ashcroft et al 1989:86): the 'gap' between Mr Bonner's world and that of the Outback cannot be filled. In the novel this comment of Voss's is uttered not to Bonner, but it is appropriate at this point in the opera, bearing in mind Bonner's insistence on the map and his attitude towards possession by means of naming. The futility of this action that Voss describes and the mocking tone with which he says it, deflate the pomposity and arrogance of the settlers. The journey that Voss is undertaking is, in metaphysical terms, into himself and for this he will not need a conventional map even though the journey (paralleling the physical one), will be long and full of anguish. Bonner's insistence on naming things betrays an insecurity on the part of the colonists which will only be overcome when they, like Voss and Laura, become part of the land. Voss's gesture also looks forward to the fate of his letter to Laura which is torn up by Dugald as well as the fate of Laura's prayers for him which Voss describes in the novel as "little pieces of white paper fluttering" (90). It is the ironic scrutiny to which writing is subjected in both novel and opera which locate both works within postcolonialism.

The stage focus then shifts onto Laura in the garden who is joined by Belle in a brief but telling exchange. Musically it is punctuated by the now less intrusive piano, heard in brief snatches as if from far away. The initial impression of Belle was of a young, empty-headed girl, but in this scene the basis for a more complex character is developed in preparation for her 'big' moment in the final scene of the opera. Her question in reply to Laura's assurance that they "are *meant* to be happy" (51): "And if I marry Tom and have a house full of children? Is that to be my life, Laura? Could I know it already? Could I have seen that so clearly?" (51-52), suggests a more thoughtful character when contrasted with the unquestioning attitudes displayed by most of the colonists. The sympathetic portrayal of Belle in the opera reflects the way she emerges in the novel (and a useful parallel can be drawn between Belle and Laura and Celia and Dorothea in *Middlemarch*). Belle and Laura are both compared in the novel to flowers: Belle is ravishing, "like any sudden spring flower", while Laura "would require her own climate in which to open" (79-80). Bosman (1989:123), discussing Belle's behaviour in the 'dockside scene', describes her as "a 'natural' being" who has a quality in her which "is as much native as it is natural". It is this 'natural' quality to which the vocal characterisation in the opera responds. She is a high, lyric soprano, as opposed to the warmer, fuller vocal sound of Laura's voice. Belle's high vocal line

has a spontaneity and simplicity which suggests an instinctual nature in direct contrast with Laura's more contemplative, yet more deeply passionate utterances. One notices in this brief exchange how the 'Sydney' discourse attempts to intrude but is resisted by Laura's discourse which seems to envelop Belle as well. Ewans (1989:517) views the libretto as "too conservative" and sees Malouf's creation of character as "cautious". His criticism rests on the assertion that the opera is not "self-sufficient without reference to the novel". One aspect of his criticism concerns the depiction of Belle whom Ewans maintains "does not attain the earth-mother-like status that she has in White's novel". One can argue that he has looked rather superficially at the way she is depicted purely in the libretto; her music and, to a certain extent, her verbal text, add a deeper dimension to her character, (as in the novel).

3.2. The Garden.

The brief exchange between Laura and Belle ends with a musical bridge passage with an almost dream-like quality which corresponds to the description of the party in the novel as "a night of drifting airs" (79). Voss moves towards the garden where Laura is still seated. Their meeting in the garden is significant in the novel as it is a moment of confrontation between them, a confrontation which also leads to self-examination. The physical setting is crucial with its strong contrast between the lighted drawing room and what is described as the "nihilistic darkness" (85) of the garden. It is further described as a "night anything could happen" (80). (In fact, many of the "suddenly occurring moments, in the sense of a sudden intense perception of self-identification with actuality" take place in semi or complete darkness (Brugman 1988:126).) Malouf has conflated Laura's first meeting with Voss as well as their subsequent meetings in the novel into this one scene in the opera. Laura, alone, describes their first meeting:

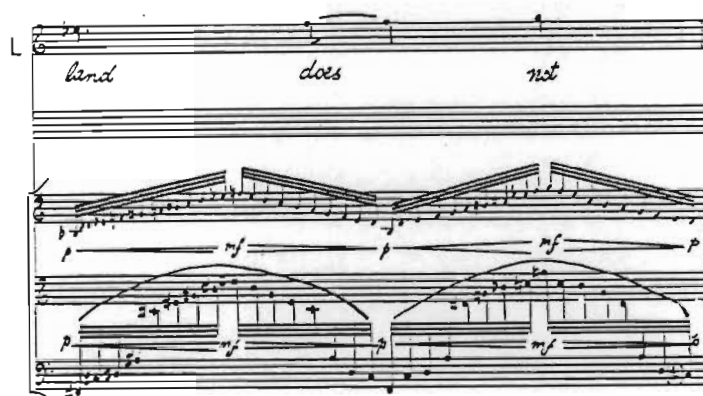
I was alone in the garden. Rose called. There is a stranger. I stepped into the house, out of the sunlight into a still room. He was there. So strange. A lightning stroke. No stranger after all but the sign I had expected. Miss Laura, Miss Laura, she called, Rose our awkward opaque angel. There's a stranger, a stranger, and stood breathing at the door behind me. I crossed the threshold. He was there. (58-64)

Even in a passage such as this, which contains elements derived from the opening of the novel, the librettist captures what Wenzel (1988:109) describes as White's use of "short, abrupt sentences evocative of stage directions" which "tend to focus the attention of the reader on the actors." Musically, Laura's vocal line is lyrical with the underlying agitation expressed in the orchestra which has a rapid and insistent upward moving figure. Here we see a direct echo of the opening of the novel: "'There is a man here, miss, asking for your uncle,' said Rose. And stood breathing" (7). What Laura is doing here, in practical terms, is describing for the audience her first meeting with Voss, but in so doing she is reliving the experience - a peculiarly operatic moment in which the operatic character as experiencing subject is seen in combination with the orchestra-narrator, both functioning as narrator. Here opera differs essentially from both drama

and the novel in being able to portray a character both reliving a past moment and having the narrator comment on that character's emotions as she relives them.

The second part of this 'aria' is concerned with Laura's coming to Australia: "All my childhood I had known this continent was floating here in the south and waiting for me. It was my fate though the land does not need me" (65-69), which suggests a different relationship to the country when compared with the other colonists. Her vocal line becomes more ecstatic and is supported by a repeated surging figure in the orchestra which is wave-like in effect:

(Ex. 7.)



The 'climax' is reached as her thoughts once more focus on Voss: "He too is a continent and has been waiting on the far shores of my life forever. He needs me. Voss - Voss. Johann. Ulrich. A strange name, though he is no stranger" (70-75). Her final comments convey a sense of predestination which is also prominent in the novel: "I crossed the ocean and this land was waiting. I crossed the threshold. He was there" (75-77). (In the novel Laura experiences this as "the sense of inevitability that they shared made her sound as if she were reading from a notebook" (87). According to Weigel (1983:50), Laura and Voss perform "as if they were reading scripts about which they had serious doubts".) Significantly, as she 'approaches' Voss, the orchestra gradually ceases in intensity and her final phrase, "He was there" is unaccompanied. It seems as if the function of the narrator is no longer necessary as memory gradually merges with actuality and Voss is discovered to be literally 'there' - on stage, with her. Remembered time merges with real time.

The confrontation between Voss and Laura in the novel is played out in the darkness of the garden with its cloying scent of the crushed geranium (85). It is portrayed as a moment where, as Graham-Smith (1982:22) remarks, their "true natures can prevail because there they are away from the affectation and studied formality of the people in the house." In the opera, there is a sense of hesitancy on the part of Voss, emphasised by the awkwardly low tessitura of his vocal line. He looks across at Laura: "She stands there, and here I stand. There is nothing between us, only space. Do I dare to cross it?" (77-78). The fact that 'only space' separates them is, of course, prophetic. (Voss, in the opera, retains much of the awkwardness and arrogance of the

character in the novel.) It is Laura who first confronts Voss with the question couched in the form of a statement: "So you are ready to make the crossing" (79), to which Voss replies: "I have already made it" (79). The word 'crossing' is ambiguous, with connotations of a sea crossing as well as the projected expedition. It also refers to Voss's previous question to himself regarding his relationship with Laura.

Voss remarks that standing and watching her has reminded him of an old song he used to sing which has its basis in the novel where he is given a book of German verse by Mrs Bonner. Laura, observing without participating, compares this moment to Voss's previous expression of homesickness which has prompted this gesture from Mrs Bonner. Laura senses that this is "again a dream ... but of a different kind" (81), and Voss's delivery of the poem is ambiguous: "Voss read, or dreamed aloud". The poem obviously disturbs Voss who "closed up the book rather abruptly". He is urged to translate but replies: "Poetry will not bear translation. It is too personal" (81), a reflection of the novel's concern with communication and the inadequacy of words. The opera uses a different text - Goethe's "Jäger's Abendlied" - as the 'song' that Voss remembers:

Silent and fierce I creep into the fields,
my fowling piece cocked ready.
And so clearly floats your dear,
dear, image before me.

Silent and gentle now you wander
field and delightful valley,
and ah, does a fleeting image of me
never present itself to you?

The image of a man roving the world
in ill-humour and in anger,
roving to eastward and to westward,
since from you he must part.

If I but think of you, I seem
to gaze into the moon;
a quiet peace descends on me,
but how, I do not know.

The use of a well-known text, both as a poem in its own right, and, more importantly, in the form of the famous setting by Franz Schubert, raises some important issues concerning the use of literal song in opera. We have seen many such reflexive moments in the operas examined so far in this study but they were generally 'songs' that the characters appeared to have spontaneously 'composed' themselves in response to a particular situation or emotion while in this particular case there is another level of 'meaning'. Many in the audience will recognise the words of the song but not the melody as they will recall Schubert's setting (Meale's music here has something of a Mahlerian quality - one thinks of the *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* settings - which is perhaps a subliminal response to White's expressed desire to capture the essence of a composer like Mahler

in his work). Such a moment is deliberately reflexive although the song appears to spring out of the action. But it is a remembered song which adds to the 'performance' quality of the moment - Voss is, for a moment, a singer performing to an 'audience' - Laura (and, of course, the 'real' audience), executing a song that seems to be well-known but is not. Added to this is the fact that the words of the song have a prophetic quality in that the narrative of the poem has implications concerning the situation facing Laura and Voss, which seems to suggest that the meaning of the poem springs out of its position in the larger narrative of the opera, and reflects that larger narrative. The song is thus operating simultaneously on several different levels. Laura's solo moment at the beginning of this scene differs from this in that her utterance is narrative while this is a mixture of narrative and performance. Its reflexivity has something of the quality which Dallenbach (1989:8) describes as the *mise-en-abyme*. That this moment differs from Laura's earlier 'monaural' narrative is obvious and is an example of Abbate's (1991:67) 'reflexive' narration.

Laura's reaction to the song, and the subsequent exchange, is ambiguous: "That was very - German, sir" (86). Voss counters with the remark: "There is no translation", to which Laura replies: "I know. Poems will not bear it. They remain themselves. We lose the words but catch the music" (86-87). This emphasises the opera's concern with the power of non-verbal communication compared to the unreliability of words to express 'truth', and is underlined by Voss's remark, "I try to catch your music" (87), an indication that the real communication between them is musical, rather than verbal. This is not to say that music in itself is a discrete 'language', but the fusion of words and music into operatic discourse is a kind of language that transcends the purely verbal, more connotative than denotative. In this opera the music assumes the function of the dreams and visions in the novel through which the main communication between the Voss and Laura takes place.

That Voss's line seems to require no reply is indicated by a pause in the orchestral accompaniment, a gap which suggests embarrassment for both in that the conversation has taken an unforeseen turn, and one fraught with the danger of self-exposure. The opera, at this moment, captures much of the narratorial style of the novel.

To what extent is this girl dishonest? he wondered.

Unaccustomed to recognize his own dishonesties, he was rather sensitive to them in others.

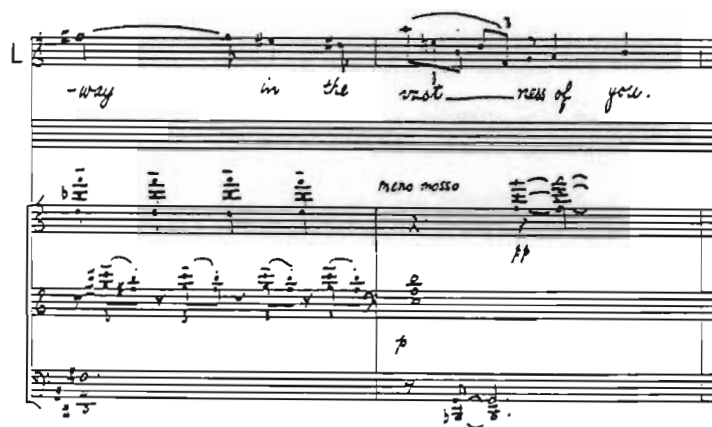
It is disgraceful, of course, Laura realized; I have come out here for no convincing reason. She was defenceless. Perhaps even guilty. (86)

The author's method is predominantly one of blurring the distinctions between narratorial comment and actual speech of the character - free indirect discourse. The music in the opera achieves a similar effect through the use of repetition and echo in the orchestra which reflects and comments on the character's utterance within its own discourse. This repetition frequently inverts

and redefines vocal themes and it is this synthesis of the vocal and the instrumental which constitutes the narrating voice of the opera.

Feigning interest in her supposedly mundane activities, Voss attempts to cover this awkward moment with his repetitive phrases (88) and description of the house as a "hive" and a "nest"; but Laura once again steers the conversation away from herself and reveals her enquiring nature with the line, "I imagine you by what I see of you" (90). However, the visionary side of her character soon emerges when she compares him to a desert in whose "vastness" words are scattered "like torn up bits of paper" (92). Edgecombe (1989:27) likens this moment in the novel to Catherine's declaring, "I *am* Heathcliff" in *Wuthering Heights*. He maintains that Laura's "*You are my desert*" "is in some ways an oblique paraphrase of Catherine's utterance", further insisting that it could be construed as "a cognition of a bridging similarity between two patently dissimilar people." (It is also through linguistic echoes such as these that *Voss's* antecedents in a wider metropolitan tradition are established:) Meale employs a melismatic phrase on the word "vastness" which is significant in the context of this opera where so little of this kind of vocal writing actually occurs:

(Ex. 8.)



The phrase also begins on a high A natural giving the word an added emphasis. This section of the scene is characterised by the paucity of orchestral accompaniment in general, suggesting the awkwardness Voss and Laura experience with one another. The impression is that although they recognise kindred spirits in each other, there are still too many habitual barriers in place and their conversation is essentially confrontational (the diegetic function of the orchestra recedes and an illusion of mimesis is created). It is also a moment where Laura asserts her equality with Voss which, in the novel, Callaghan (1987:28) suggests, implies "that she, like Voss, feels the need for a journey of self-exploration.... In addition, by admitting to the fascination Voss holds for her, she openly recognises his power, thus rendering him unable to use it as a weapon against her." It is Voss who breaks the mood in the opera by calling out her name, almost with a sense of anguish. The orchestra has stopped playing and there is a moment of stasis. The silence in the orchestra suggests a crucial moment in their relationship when they both decide to cross this 'gap' between them.

One feels at this point that real communication between them actually begins and it takes the form of a brief, and on the surface, rather conventional duet. (Callaghan (1987:28) claims that at the equivalent point in the novel this is the first time Voss "finds himself in a position where he is tempted by the prospect of 'authentic' communication without at the same time feeling threatened by it.") The change in discourse is sudden, with a lyrical outburst from both which is fully supported by the orchestra. Voss combines elements from their previous conversation, with the repetition of both verbal and musical phrases, when he sings of the fact that although she does not pray, her prayers will come to him in the desert like "snowflakes" to his lips, while Laura repeats the line, "like torn up bits of paper" (98-100). There is little in the actual words that specifically conveys the passion of the moment but these three pages of music suggest much of the passion which underlies the equivalent meeting in the novel and both scenes communicate a strong sense of emotional and physical arousal. In the novel Laura is described as gripping his wrist and by doing so she "held his bones" while "they stood with their legs apart inside their innocent clothes, the better to grip the reeling earth" (89). There is the sense of a form of spiritual consummation, which Graham-Smith (1982:23) argues is "imaged in sexual terms. After their encounter, Laura is described as experiencing "a clumsy contentment of the flesh" (91), and Voss yawns in physical exhaustion. It is as though their mutual verbal rape of self is followed by a spiritual detumescence that is manifested in physical terms."

Although it is Laura who now breaks the mood in the opera, remarking how cold it is, Voss observes: "People will come to look for us. We are lost here in this garden" (101). This echoes his observation in the novel: "We were unwise ... to flounder into each other's private beings" (90). However, this is belied by their mutual sense of contentment which has its aural counterpart in the opera, depicted in purely non-verbal terms by the elegiac orchestral postlude to this scene which is repeated at the end of this act and at the end of the opera:

(Ex. 9.)



In the opera, they have, in fact, not had any physical contact at all but the suggestion of strong sexual attraction is nevertheless apparent and is conveyed by the warmth of the music. (It is interesting to note that in the novel they return to the drawing room where Aunt Emmy sees them coming into the light "[a]lmost as if they had been sleepwalking" (92), which obviously alludes to the later sleepwalking occurrences but also suggests the strangeness of their encounter in the garden which is a similarly curious mixture of the spiritual and the physical.)

Mrs Bonner's line, "He is so thin and lost" (102), provides the link with the next segment, taking up Voss's idea of being lost in the garden, and then is repeated by Belle, which is the impetus for the brief scene between her and Tom. It is as if Tom, in suggesting she take his hand and "feel its sureness" (104), is countering with his physical presence the spiritual quality of the scene between Voss and Laura. It is hinted in the novel that there is a strong sexual attraction between Tom and Belle and some of this is suggested in the opera in this passage. However, their music lacks the depth and intensity of all of Voss's and Laura's exchanges. In this instance, it is the rapid tempo coupled with the 'awkward' changes in rhythm which conveys an unease or uncertainty, particularly on Tom's part. The end of their duet is conventional, with the voices in unison, and it is this deliberate conventionality which gives the impression of a superficiality and lack of substance to their relationship, similar to the discursive conventionality of the piano interludes.

3.3. Voss calls his followers.

Voss's party then present themselves to him. The first is Harry who is initially characterised by impetuous music which gradually changes into a lyrical evocation which looks forward to his music in the second act: "Some say there is a sea away there, miles away, deep in the centre and birds afloat upon it with white wings, and rivers pouring out of the hills" (111-112). The "white bird" that Harry sings of here occurs like a leitmotif throughout his scenes in the rest of the opera, and Harry's music, generally, has an intensity and lyricism which suggests as yet hidden spiritual depth to this apparently simple character. Mrs Bonner's repeated comment, "He is lost, lost already. His eyes cannot find their way" (114), is callously answered by Mr Bonner: "There will be others. Others will hack their way", indicative of the way that he, the Sydney merchant, reduces everything to its material value and which is therefore regarded as being expendable (while, incidentally, in the television production he carves a chicken!). The juxtaposition of Harry's mystical utterance with Bonner's blunt pragmatism here reflects something of the wider secular/spiritual structure of the novel where its bland social ceremonies are frequently contrasted with the highly charged religious rituals, a contrast which is foregrounded later in the opera.

Like Harry, Le Mesurier, the artist, has something approaching an 'entrance' aria preceded by several portentous statements, particularly his reply to Voss's inquiry whether he will

join the expedition: "I am not ready yet to cut my throat" (116), with its terrible irony. His line, "and this colony seems fatal to me" (117) suggests the settler's fear of the unknown. The first part of his aria comes from the scene in the novel where Palfreyman and Le Mesurier, as they are about to set out, discuss their reasons for joining the expedition. Le Mesurier's final wish is that he "might burst into life at last and bring forth beauty" (120). However, the second section of his aria is curious, with Voss providing a spiky counterpoint to Le Mesurier's more lyric vocal line: (Ex. 10.)

The musical score consists of two systems. Each system has two staves: the top staff is for Le Mesurier (M) and the bottom staff is for Voss (V). The lyrics are written below the staves. The first system shows Le Mesurier singing "gra-vel. O - ther" and Voss responding with "Ev-ery man has one, you know, if on-ly he could dis-cover it." The second system shows Le Mesurier singing "vo-ces would car-ry my song from me. The" and Voss responding with "Is your ge-ni-us here in the". The music includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Le Mesurier

O childhood of moonlight and monkey
puzzles and of solid statues.
Often the footsteps were not my own that
fell on the gravel.
Other voices would carry my song from
me.
The faces were not the faces I knew.
All were turning gravely in their dance,
only I was the prisoner of stone.
We meet only in distances.
And dreams are the distances that bring us
close. (121-124)

Voss

Your genius Frank. That is your genius.
Your genius.
Every man has one, you know, if only he
can discover it.
Is your genius here, in the mean streets of
this city?
Or is it out there in the infinite?
Oh I tell you Frank, you will be burnt up
in it.
You will have the flesh torn from your
bones.
You will cut your own throat.
But you will realise the genius of which
you are possessed. Possessed Frank.

Here one sees how Malouf has conflated two separate scenes in the novel: Voss's words come from his first meeting with Le Mesurier in Sussex Street while Le Mesurier's occur considerably later and are, in fact, part of his prose poem which is used extensively in the opera. One notices how appropriate both discourses are to the particular character. Le Mesurier's poems have been described as

the work of a man who has exposed himself to the reality of the material world that Voss's egoism has rejected, and who has been able to shed his sense of individuality in that exposure: a state in which he finds himself nearest to humility

and love. Le Mesurier looks to the complete disintegration of the self in death, with his spirit then distributed everywhere, as the ultimate fulfillment. (Wolfe 1983:113)

Significantly, just before Voss reads Le Mesurier's poem, he hesitates, "as if about to look in a mirror and discover the deformities he most feared" (294), and the poem seems to be a reflection of his most secret thoughts. This scene in the opera works well in that Le Mesurier's vocal line is lyric and contrasts with Voss's insidious and almost demonic intjections. Morley (1972:129) describes Voss's appearance in the novel as suggesting Mephistopheles and points out that Voss, in fact, combines in one figure both Faust and Mephistopheles (152). Certainly, the impression one has during this scene in the opera is of Voss, here as Mephistopheles, tempting Le Mesurier to his destruction - the allusion to Gounod's operatic version of *Faust* is strong and is further emphasised by the parallel vocal casting - the lyric tenor voice soaring above, yet enmeshed in that of the insidious bass.

One also sees at this point, a first example of the two operatic discourses beginning to merge. While Voss and Le Mesurier converse, the Bonner party are seated at a table and remain fixed in tableau. As the dialogue comes to an end, Laura appears to answer Voss's question to Le Mesurier: "But will you follow me?" (125), with the line "I will follow you with my prayers", which is both a melodic and verbal echo of an earlier line of hers, and although the two groups are physically separated, these, as yet, occasional convergences of discourse hint at the way in which Laura's and Voss's discourses will increasingly merge even as the distance between them grows. The physical separation between the two parts of the stage is frequently dissolved by the flexible staging using varying lighting patterns, as well as the increasing fusion of musical discourses. Also occurring for the first time is an example of how the Outback discourse begins to dominate. The conversation between Harry and Le Mesurier is interrupted by the intrusion of the stage piano playing a by now familiar melody. The sound of the piano had, up to this point, always appeared to 'silence' the orchestra. Now, however, soon after it commences, the orchestra starts to dominate and the piano begins to sound increasingly ineffectual. This occurs while Voss, Harry and Le Mesurier of the expedition are talking while, at the same time, Laura, Belle and Tom converse around the table. The piano is virtually inaudible, an aural metaphor for the actual 'intrusion' of the Outback into Sydney as the thoughts of those preparing for the expedition begin to dominate the party which loses much of its former gaiety. There is a brief clash between Harry and Le Mesurier who continues to express his reservations about Australia which are summed up by Voss in the lines: "I've scarcely met a man here who does not suspect he will be unmade by Australia. Instead of affirming that he can make of it what he will" (130-131). Harry expresses similar sentiments to Voss, already establishing a bond between them. Harry insists to Le Mesurier that Australia is now 'his' country - a sentiment with which Voss concurs. As Voss sings, "And mine, Harry. I will venture to make it mine" (135), the now familiar chord with its trill (Ex. 3.) is heard once again. The leitmotif is now established and this chord unambiguously signifies the Outback.

There is a brief interlude during which Topp, the flute player, is invited by Voss to play for them. Topp features quite prominently in the early part of the novel as the landlord of the house where Voss lodges. In the novel there is a discussion between Voss and Topp about music, part of which is incorporated into the opera:

'Mr Topp,' the German was saying, 'if I had mastered the art of music, I would set myself the task of creating a composition by which the various instruments would represent the moral characteristics of human beings in conflict with one another.'

'I would rather suggest the sublimity of perfection,' said the innocent music master, 'in great sweeps of pure sound.'

'But in order to understand it, you must first find perfection, and that you will never do. Besides, it would be monotonous, not to say monstrous, if you did.' (42)

(Voss's lines in the opera, taken from this passage, are, ironically, unaccompanied apart from Topp's flute.) In a reflexive gesture, Topp actually plays on stage but his music seems to fit neither discourse. It is not part of the idiom of the Sydney music, sounding unmelodic, nor does it have the same dissonant quality of much of the expedition discourse. Topp, at the end of the novel, is described as hearing "the stubborn music that was waiting for release. Of rock and scrub. Of winds curled invisibly in wombs of air. Of thin rivers struggling towards seas of eternity. All flowing and uniting. Over a bed of upturned faces" (446)). Voss in the novel is dismissive of Topp's musical philosophy, in fact he seems dismissive of everything that does not originate in himself. He sees Topp's music as "homage of a kind graciously acknowledging a phrase" (31). (Edgecombe (in Callaghan (1987:20) remarks: "hubris, followed to its logical conclusion, must issue in solipsism, the contempt of pride for everything that is not itself.") Callaghan (1987:20) maintains that Voss is "denying Topp's voice the right to be heard, and is also preventing himself from hearing any challenge to his own vision that it might contain." It is partly through the discovery of worth in others that Voss is able to understand and transcend himself.

As Topp once again takes up his flute in the opera, Belle sings of her fears and Tom comforts her. Now, Topp's flute is accompanied by the stage piano and all seems well as the familiar Sydney discourse once again seems dominant. This occurs as Tom remarks: "But Laura is not afraid, she is our Voss" (139-140). Laura replies that she has been afraid: "looking at the drumsticks" on the plate reminded her of bones she once saw "in a churchyard disturbed by a fox" (141-142). At the moment that Voss takes up his discussion: "But to sing of perfection - we must discover it" (143), the Outback discourse once again obliterates the piano and flute; as if the power of Voss's vision carries all before. Voss's line, "Besides, it would be so monotonous the eternal one-ness of God" (144), is the cue for the entrance of Palfreyman, the religious mystic who, in the novel, becomes associated with Christ as a symbol of humility. Palfreyman sings the lines: "God is with us also. He too has joined our party, Voss, whether you call him or not"

(145), lines which are ironic in terms of both the suffering that lies ahead and which culminates in his and Voss's Christ-like deaths. Voss is, as yet, scornful and flings Palfreyman's bag away with the mocking lines, "And your God, too, if he is there in that sack of yours" (146). Morley (1972:143) remarks that in the novel Palfreyman "represents not only an archetypal Christ-figure but also the necessity of each man's sharing in this death in order to acquire a share in a greater form of life." Palfreyman's music here is austere, with the words often intoned on one pitch which gives it an almost ritualistic quality, and prefigures his music in Act Two during the Christmas Day celebration (235-238). There is little of the melodic sweep that characterises the music of the other members of the expedition and his is a constant sobering presence.

3.4. The departure.

Voss is dismissive of Palfreyman's sentiments and calls on Topp to play them out of town. During all these exchanges, the preparations for the departure have been continuing (the advantage of having a fluid staging) and as the expedition members gather their belongings together, the party guests now become spectators watching the departure of the expedition. This obviously is the ideal moment for a large concerted number, indeed the only extended one in the opera. Here one can see the power of operatic convention: the end of the middle act in an opera traditionally includes a large choral piece. This chorus ensemble begins with only the piano as accompaniment but as Voss calls for other instruments, the orchestra joins in followed by all the soloists and chorus. Both Voss's and Laura's vocal lines, at times, soar above the others, and Laura is, at first, as much caught up in the jingoistic emotion of the moment as the others who sing:

We will cross this country, this Australia,
 from east to west, we'll find
 the inland sea, we'll open
 its great heart, day by day,
 as we march into its deserts, we will find
 its lakes, its green places,
 its gardens. Over that ridge, beyond that desert
 the sea, the inland sea, flashing gold
 in the sun, the place all rivers
 enter, the sea, the sea, another shore. (163D-163G)

This chorus and the actions of the members of the expedition capture much of the spirit of the colonial enterprise in their vigour and unquestioning belief in its justice. Bosman (1989:121-122) says of the equivalent dockside scene in the novel:

Its solidity, the solidity of 'Our Colony', is created for the purpose of demystifying it. The trappings of the imported ideology, 'God, and soil, and flag, and Our illustrious Queen'(113), are no more than 'appropriate words' declaimed as a sign of official importance, but the signal for the resumption of life is visceral: a horse 'dropped its fragrant dung, and life was resumed'.

Much the same 'demystification' occurs at the end of this choral scene although in not quite the same visceral detail! Rather than ending the act on a typically 'up beat' note, Meale reasserts the primary focus of the opera on Voss and Laura. Voss calls out, "Laura, Laura, are you there? Will you follow me?", and Laura replies: "I will follow, I will follow", with plaintive cries from Belle, "I am afraid, Tom. Take my hand" (164-165). There is an echo from the men, "Voss. Some sort of German", and the final sound is Laura's, "Always. Always" (166). The self-congratulatory tone of the preceding chorus has completely disappeared and similar chords to those that ended the 'garden scene' between Voss and Laura are now heard. This is an aural reminder of that scene and a musical metaphor for the strength of their relationship against which the shallow emotions of the farewell scene are contrasted and which pale into insignificance. The immensity of the brooding land 'out there' is powerfully suggested by the triads in the orchestra and in the men's vocal lines, and the pomp and ceremony preceding this is made to look, and sound, rather tawdry:

(Ex. 11.)

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system is for the Men's chorus, with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics "Voss. Some sort of German." The second system is for Laura's solo, also with a vocal line and piano accompaniment, featuring the lyrics "Al-ways. Al-ways." Both systems show complex harmonic structures with triads and sustained notes, reflecting the 'brooding' and 'pomp' mentioned in the text.

In their analysis of postcolonial fiction, Ashcroft et al (1989:152) remark how frequently the "surface 'historical reality' is of a destructive and continuing imperialism, but its exploration inevitably exposes an underlying imaginative imperative towards cross-culturality, Creolization, hybridization, and catalysis. Imperialism, the prevailing political reality of these works, is thus perpetually undermined by a persisting regenerative seed, masked perhaps as intuition or dream." The seemingly confident 'imperialistic' atmosphere in the opera is undercut by the muted act-ending which seems to question the colonial assumptions. The ending realigns the focus of the opera on the psychological investigation of the relationship between Voss and Laura.

4. Act Two: postcolonial opera and the transcendence of language.

Act Two shifts the location back and forth between Sydney and the Outback, and, most frequently, depicts both together. Now the medium of communication between Voss and Laura becomes supravocal - language is transcended. The opera reflects the quality that Walsh (1976:33) describes in the novel as the "freedom from realistically objective description" in which White allows himself "a degree of freedom from the logic of a straightforward representative method."

4.1. Voss finds Judd.

The stage directions indicate that Voss appears on his donkey and, once again, sings a song in German. This scene occurs in the novel as the expedition sets out from Jildra. However, the song is placed just prior to his first meeting with Mrs Judd in the opera. The reason for this transposition is found in the novel where Voss goes to Judd's house:

He was singing, too, in his own language, some shining song, of sunlight and of waterfalls. As the words of the song were few, or those with which he was familiar, they would recur, which stressed their shape, and emphasized their mystical errand in the silence of the grey bush.... Voss was jubilant as brass. Cymbals clapped drunkenly. Now he had forgotten the words, but sang his jubilation in a cracked bass, that would not have disgraced temples, because dedicated to God. (143-144)

Here White seems again to allude to the impotence of words which, in this passage, are superseded by purely musical vocalisation. The setting of the song in the opera, which again has more than a hint of Mahler (and here one is again aware of the novel's frequent allusions to music), is characterised by its heavy, dragging gait, and the words themselves seem to throw down a challenge to the world:

Eine blosse Seele ritt hinaus
Dem Blau' entgegen.
Sein Rock flog frei.
Sein Schimmel mit dem Wolken
Um die Ehre rann.
Nur die edle Rock zu schaden kam,
Die Fetzen fielen,
Den Himmel entlang.

(A simple soul rode out to confront the blue...his coat tails flying. His white horse challenged the clouds for the honour of it. But his noble coat-tails came to grief. The tattered rags tumbled along the skyline...)

This is Voss the Nietzschean figure, the Giovanni who challenges the 'stone guest'. The obvious difference between this song and the one in the first act is that Voss here is alone - the song is not performance as such. Its aggressive rhythm and heavy beat suggest a self-conscious attempt at romantic defiance.

Voss interrupts himself as he comes upon Mrs Judd beside the stream. As in the novel, Mrs Judd features very briefly in the opera, her function is mainly to impart information to the audience about Judd. Sung by a mezzo, the deeper, warmer voice gives the character something of an 'earth-mother' quality. Her limited imagination is revealed in her lines as well as by the small compass of her vocal line. An immediate tension is created when she informs Voss that "there is no man in all the world more suited to lead this expedition" (178-179), to which Voss reacts by remarking as Judd approaches: "And here, I do believe, is the leader himself" (180). Judd's music is heavy, suggesting someone practical and close to the earth, and Judd describes himself as an "Ex-convict, escapee, survivor" (181). His comments about himself to Voss are terse and to the point and the only moment of lyricism he allows himself is when he describes the finding of the spring, but this lyrical moment is brief. One has a sense here of Voss already goading Judd, asking him if he is prepared to leave all this "for the possibility of nothing" (188). Judd reveals a fundamental difference in attitude towards the country to Voss, replying that "It isn't mine. Anymore than that chain was. And when they took the cat to me this flesh wasn't mine, nor these bones. I have nothing. Nothing to lose" (188-189). He reveals little of Voss's desire to 'possess' the land, either physically or metaphorically, and, ironically, Voss's desire for possession ends in the land 'possessing' him.

The tension between the two becomes more noticeable when the matter of leadership is discussed, but Voss insists that the backers of the expedition feel that it needs a guide, not a leader. Jackie and Dugald are introduced by Judd (in the novel it is Boyle who performs this task) who remarks that they know the land, "because it is theirs" (191), a challenge to Voss whose dominating demeanour is very apparent. Judd describes their ability to communicate: "they are lizards, they speak with the lizard's tongue, the lands tongue. They know it because it is theirs" (193-194). It is with the appearance of the two Aboriginal characters that the opera explicitly addresses the notion of non-verbal communication. Voss, in the novel, shows that he is receptive to this: "Voss would have liked to talk to these creatures. Alone, he and the blacks would have communicated with one another by skin and silence, just as dust is not impenetrable and the message of sticks can be interpreted after hours of intimacy" (170). The opera has the advantage over the novel in that Jackie and Dugald now perform a dance, its visual 'meaning' is part of the whole choreographic structure of the opera which is made up of the various kinds of social dances of Sydney which are contrasted with the Aboriginal dances as well as with Le Mesurier's 'primitive' dance soon before his death. The choreographic structure is completed in the Sydney epilogue of the opera where the children dance round Judd singing 'blind-man's-buff' with its symbolic overtones. Voss, in the opera remarks: "Men can speak without the use of tongues. Eh

Dugald? By skin and silence. Wörter haben keine Bedeutung. Nonsense. Irrsinn." (In the novel this is said to Dugald as they ride along together, Voss having just sung his song (190).) This is one example of the many references in the novel to the unreliability and even inefficiency of language as a means of communication, which leads Wenzel (1988:42) to suggest that White

endeavours to represent spiritual and abstract issues in a concrete physical way so that silence becomes heavy and words become stones; legends become statues and a compass synonymous with the human will. By linking incongruities he stresses the very nature of human existence: the duality of spirit and flesh. Most of all, by relating and juxtaposing opposites he simultaneously emphasises the inadequacies of language and its flexibility in overcoming them. To accomplish the latter he relies on literary conventions and the complementary function of structure as modes of communication. This transcendence of language barriers is indicative of the spiritual transcendence of physical impediments.

Transcendence of ordinary speech acts is the essence of opera, and the words on their own in opera are probably the weakest link in this communication chain.

As the party move off Voss sings a section of the same song which began the scene and which frames and gives meaning to the scene as a whole. The fact that the song is in German and probably unintelligible to most of the audience emphasises Malouf's and Meale's similar concern with the limits of language: that the expedition members and the two aboriginals do not have a 'verbal' language in common does not limit their ability to communicate non-verbally. There is great irony in Voss addressing Dugald in German in that it is a language which is 'twice removed' from his comprehension. Translated, Voss says, "words have no meaning", they are "irrsinn" - 'madness'; this is a word that Voss utters frequently in the opera when under physical or psychological stress. His path to sanity is not through verbal communication but through his psychic exchanges with Laura.

4.2. Nightwatch.

Although the two discourses of the opera have occasionally overlapped, this now becomes even more pronounced. A double scene occurs which demands that the action in Sydney and the Outback happens simultaneously rather than alternatively as was the case during the first act. On the one side of the stage Laura and Rose converse while on the other Palfreyman is sketching a lily as Voss approaches. This is also the first occasion that true psychic communication between Voss and Laura takes place. Rose expresses her incomprehension of Voss, signalling immediately the impediment that language can be to communication: "I cannot understand that man, that Voss. It is his speech" (199), to which Laura replies with the comment: "I understand, if not with my reason. Even when I do not agree with him in my heart I understand" (200-201). The dialogue between Rose and Laura has its basis in chapter 7 of the novel where Laura increasingly draws closer to Rose. She prepares herself "to receive revelations" and, walking with Rose, "the two shadows were joined upon the ground" (160). Of course, the main reason for this empathy with

Rose is Rose's unborn child. In the opera Laura refers to the child as "our most precious message" (202), and it is as if she is already claiming possession of the child. This impression is reinforced by her singing a wordless lullaby as she embraces Rose. Edgecombe (1989:25-26) suggests that in the novel

Laura learns compassion much more graciously [than Voss], exorcising the cold sufficiency that has hitherto characterised her conduct in a ritual but nonetheless instinctual embrace of Rose.... Such reaching out on Laura's part in compassionate acknowledgement of otherness is partly what entitles her to the surrogate motherhood of Rose's child, for it is by this gesture that she takes on the redemption of Voss in the strange mystical marriage at the center of the novel.

Significantly, the vocal line of Laura's wordless lullaby leads into the first words of Palfreyman. During the departure of the expedition in the novel there had been an intense exchange between them. Even at this stage in the novel Laura's receptivity to non-verbal communication is apparent. In reply to his question whether their conversation has told them anything, she says: "Not ... not in words" (108). This moment in the opera alludes to this empathy as well as providing a seamless musical link between the two stage areas. Her vocal line assumes a more soothing quality which seems appropriate to a lullaby, while Palfreyman's vocal line, in turn, has a rapture contrasting with his generally more austere music. At this point Voss joins in with words taken from his dream in the novel after having received a letter from Laura. Palfreyman had been speaking of the lily he had found and this image now is incorporated into Voss's dream which takes on an overtly sexual meaning, the lily as a symbol of both virginity and love. Voss also appears to pursue his train of thought from the previous scene where the meaning or otherwise of words seemed to obsess him. He now makes the comparison: "Words are lilies, spirits afloat together, water, leaves and the pale flesh hovering above itself. Together, so close, their bodies joined, their mouths, in the same lovestream" (205-207). However, Voss is not yet ready to enter fully into the relationship with Laura and accept the surrender of power that it would entail, and he draws back in panic with the words, "oh nie, nie, niemals" (208), which are, significantly, spoken rather than sung and which function as a leitmotif during this act.

Laura urges Rose to sleep, pointedly speaking of "our child" (208), while Voss suggests to Palfreyman that they must sleep as their journey begins the next day, the dual reference to sleep providing a direct link between the two scenes. It is in sleep that Voss and Laura at first communicate with each other. Although the opera is not able explicitly to depict the frequent and important occurrence of dreams as in the novel, visions and dreams are strongly suggested. The novel makes explicit the importance of dreams through the comment of the narrator: "That which would have been reprehensible, nauseating, frightening in life, was permissible, even desirable, in sleep. And could solve, as well as dis-solve" (139).

In the music of this scene there is no distinction made between the two musical discourses. Both sets of characters now inhabit the same sonic space, an indication of the increasing fusion

between their respective worlds, and it is the often harshly dissonant Outback world which has prevailed. Voss seems threatened by Palfreyman's strength of faith and asks him whether it will "survive till we come to Paradise?" (210), but Palfreyman is unwavering and declares that "there is much to take on trust. In the end it will be proved" (210-211). Voss, whose thoughts are with Laura, remarks, "So my wife speaks" (211). Palfreyman's surprise at the news of a wife calls forth Voss's lame rejoinder, "No. I mean, so *would* she speak. I acquire a wife by the simple shifting of a tense" (211), an indication that Laura is constantly in his thoughts. (The reference to the operation of language once again is a reminder of the theme of the instability of language.) The irony in this remark lies in the fact that Voss will have to undergo much suffering before the 'consummation' of this 'marriage' with Laura. Voss's exchange with Palfreyman suggests much of the uneasy relationship that exists between them in the novel. Each recognises the other in themselves and are still uncomfortable at the prospect.

Voss's mention of a 'wife' seems to call forth another utterance from Laura; "sleep now" and Rose, Palfreyman and Voss gradually fall asleep. However, the moment of tranquillity is broken by Voss's shouted exclamation: "I do not accept the terms! Zusammen?" (212) This obviously refers back to his dream and it is the word, 'zusammen' - 'together', which has induced the feeling of panic in him and which was discussed by Laura in her letter which he has just 'received'. He is able to envisage his relationship with Laura theoretically, in terms of 'shifting a tense', but it is the physical manifestation of the relationship symbolised by the flesh of the lilies that he rejects. In the novel this is made plain: "In her kneeling position, she continued to bathe her hair in all flesh, whether of imperial lilies, or the black, putrefying, human kind" (187-188). (Ewans (1989:515) rightly notes that "Malouf's Voss struggles repeatedly, right to the end, against Laura's influence; his opposition is expressed in the verbal leitmotif 'I do not accept the terms', which is a diametric reversal of his words in the novel (188); and his struggle against Laura is paralleled by a total rejection of Christian humility.")

Laura, in the opera, now forces Voss to examine the demands a relationship between them would entail:

You are in no position to accept.
 No one before
 has dared to disturb my pride.
 Can we endure
 now to face each other
 in a glass? It is the woman
 who unmakes men, to make
 saints of them. Zusammen!
 And I shall worship you. (212-214)

The mirror motif occurs in the novel in the letter where Laura spells out for him the consequences of their relationship: "can two such faulty beings endure to face each other, almost as in a looking glass? Have you foreseen the possible outcome?" (185-186). The mirror motif is also frequently

used elsewhere in the novel (including Palfreyman's account of his relationship with his sister). Graham-Smith (1982:8) contends that White

continually mirrors the self, with its layers of self-centredness, in the looking-glass of ironic perspective which moderates and controls the illusory self presented to society. Particularly with regard to Laura ... one is presented with two images of each person - the socially constituted person (the unreal), and the real being without the distorting blur of social affectations. Voss himself is viewed both in terms of his illusion of self and in terms of the actuality of his personality, the real being constantly offset against the unreal.

The mirror also suggests the interchangeability of their personalities in that they share the same strengths and faults with each being a distorted reflection of the other.

Laura constantly forces Voss to face and attempt to answer increasingly difficult questions. In the novel she examines the word 'together', describing it as "filled with little cells" and it "cuts open with a knife" (187). The conclusion she draws from this is that "[a]ll human obligations are painful ... until they are learnt, variety by variety" (187). Voss is afraid of being 'unmade', and this is what Laura recognises when she taunts him with his own words. The music which accompanies her words leading up to her line, "It is the woman who unmakes men, to make saints of them. Zusammen!" (214) is hard and driving and this line is declaimed at the limits of her vocal range:

(Ex. 12.)

Handwritten musical score for a vocal line. The first system is marked "tenuato" and "à piece". The lyrics are "It is the wo-man who un-makes men, to make saints of them. Zu-". The second system is marked "Rit. (1/2)" and the lyrics are "men! And I shall worship you." The music is written on a grand staff with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo and dynamics change between systems.

There is a softening of vocal tone on the line, "And I shall worship you", but the orchestral chord is harsh, suggesting that their relationship still needs to be refined. Bosman (1989:132) suggests that in this dream in the novel Laura "is able to interpret the unorthodox structure of a native seed and to attach the word 'together' to it. She appears 'native' to the country, in possession of its

codes. The dream is not only intensely erotic; it also insists upon Laura as both in and of the place, the fertilisation of which she controls."

The music changes in mood and its softening leads into Voss's first letter to Laura, the operatic version being a paraphrase of the novel. This is the letter which Voss wrote under the balmy influence of Rhine Towers and in which he proposed marriage to Laura. Malouf blends and overlaps segments from different sections of the novel for the next series of exchanges between Laura and Voss; without any sense of dislocation he fuses sections from both of Voss's letters as well as several other passages from elsewhere in the narrative. In this act the Sydney discourse and that of the Outback merge to create a kind of meta-language capable of giving meaning to the relationship between Voss and Laura and, indirectly, to the 'new' country that must be created. This reflects a postcolonial desire, which Ashcroft et al (1989:135) describe as the need to establish 'indigeneity'.

The first part of their extended duet deals with Voss's letter to which Laura, here, is replying. Voss sees in his journey into the desert the opportunity for the operation of the purifying fire of love:

Voss

My dear Miss Trevelyan - Laura, do not pray for me. But I would ask you to join me in thought. The gifts of destiny cannot be returned. What I am intended to do must be fulfilled, must be fulfilled. I can write no more at this late hour. Tomorrow we start by lanternlight. Away to the west is all desert. Our shadows lead us deeper into ourselves, into the redness of fire, the inferno of love, into the sun. Our flesh falls from our bones, we are stripped of illusions out here, each man alone. I send you this with all speed and safely to your hands, Laura, my own. (215-221)

Laura

But I am with you already. Today I rode beside you. Now we sit together in the black night among thorns, among stones.

You scatter words like torn up bits of paper and they bow away in the vastness of you, among thorns, among stones.

Their duet is interrupted by Voss calling Dugald: "Dugald, hör wohl zu. Tomorrow you will leave for Jildra. Verstanden? I write paper. I give letter. Verstanden" (221). Interestingly, Voss persists in speaking to Dugald and Jackie in pidgin German, making verbal communication almost farcical in this situation. What now occurs, in a mime sequence, is stated in the stage directions: "During the following duet [Dugald] begins to dance as if in a trance. He casts off his frock coat, he opens the bag he carries and takes out the letters. Slowly he tears them up and scatters them" (222). It is through gesture that Jackie and Dugald communicate and their dances assume a ritualistic quality which can be seen in relation to the larger structural pattern of ceremonial movement. Dugald's dance is part of the metalanguage of the opera and can perhaps be interpreted in terms of the Aboriginal's "unique conception of textuality" wherein the "land itself is constituted as a text of the Dreaming" (Ashcroft et al 1989:144).

The final section of the duet between Voss and Laura contains some of the most overtly romantic music in the opera. In a sense this is the closest that they have been and approaches something akin to a sexual consummation, but in psychological terms. They both sing about "lilies afloat on a lovestream, together, their bodies joined."

Voss

I sit here alone - alone in this starless infinity. No house could have contained my love, but this greater one where greater longings are free to grow. Today my dearest we rode together over the plain. Now we sit together in the black night. I reach across and touch your cheek, and separation has brought us close. We speak over distances with one voice, our words are lilies afloat on a lovestream, together, their bodies joined, their mouths...
(222-232)

Laura

I reach across and touch your cheek, and separation has brought us close. We speak over distances with one voice, our words are lilies afloat on a lovestream, together, their bodies joined, their voices together, their voices. Today my dearest we rode together over the plain. Now we sit together in the black night. I am with you now. I am with you always, among thorns, among stones, though words like torn up bits of paper blow away in the vastness of you.

The content of much of this duet comes from Voss's second letter in the novel which is destroyed by Dugald. There is a fluid presentation of time here in the opera as though Voss were still writing the letter while the audience sees it being torn up by Dugald, emphasising the meaninglessness in this context of his act of writing. The supra-verbal communication is further emphasised by the fact that Laura paradoxically adopts Voss's words during the course of the duet; although the letter is lost it does not mean loss of communication between them - this is a psychological rather than a physical letter. It is significant, too, that they both refer to "speaking with one voice"; the musical structure of the duet, with the mingling of their vocal lines, joins their voices in one unified musical discourse, giving emphasis to the verbal phrase. Their mental empathy is so complete that it does away with the need for written words. This empathy has its counterpart in what seems to them a physical proximity: they both speak about reaching across and touching the other's cheek, the paradox being that separation has brought them closer.

4.3. Christmas Day.

The conflict between Judd and Voss in the opera, latent in their contact with each other thus far (and suggested by the mineral metaphor in the novel: "stone cannot come together with stone, except in conflict" (132)), becomes more overt during the Christmas Day celebration. It is Judd who has reminded Voss of the date, and urges him to allow some sort of celebration, almost as if he were assuming responsibility for their spiritual well-being. This episode in the novel is regarded by Colmer (1984:38-39) as precipitating the eventual split in the expedition. Judd's desire is dismissed by Voss "as a desecration of a holy shrine - the shrine made holy by himself Voss considers himself superior to Christ who typifies a contemptible humility in his eyes".

The structure of this scene in the opera is interesting; it is virtually an aria for Laura although the visual focus is primarily on the men of the expedition and the scene is charged with religious symbolism. The stage directions are explicit: "The eating to be established as a ritual meal presided over by Judd from which Voss is, by his own choice, excluded" (238). In the novel the lamb carcass hanging from a tree reminds one that this is a Christmas celebration dominated by death: ("For Judd seized the lamb, or stained wether, and plunged the knife into its throat" (198)). More appropriate to Easter, the slaughter of the lamb prefigures the eventual death of Voss. In the opera Palfreyman's reading of the lesson provides a musical refrain throughout the scene while Laura's voice soars above the others. Her words are taken from her second letter to Voss which, of course, he never reads. In her aria she describes the funeral of Rose, "opaque harelippped angel" on "a day of cloud and wind" (236). She further sings how she "stood there at the grave...nowhere. Everywhere". She feels "destroyed and yet living". Laura, in the novel, experiences a moment of epiphany during the funeral where for the first time she begins to understand herself and the whole concept of suffering. In the opera it is as if she has escaped the confines of her own body into a different dimension of heightened awareness where she begins to experience a feeling of oneness with the land as she sings: "At last I have begun to understand this country my love. Since the day we buried her, part of me has gone into this land" (239). Laura has identified so closely with Rose during the months of her pregnancy that a part of her seems to have died and become part of the land. She has acquired a new understanding that "it is suffering that makes a country ours" (230-240). Laura now assumes the role of motherhood completely and regards Rose's child, Mercy, as her own, and she expresses her sentiments in music of great warmth and simplicity while under her vocal line Palfreyman continues to intone the lesson with a vocal line that has strong and obvious liturgical echoes (with just a hint of parody of the Anglican liturgy).

There is a short break in Laura's aria and she resumes by 'telling' Voss about Mercy. (Their communication has reached a stage where any suggestion of distance between them has disappeared.) She speaks about the child as her "joy" and her "consolation": "I bear it as my own" (243). Laura now makes a gesture which does not come from the novel. She has the child in her arms and literally 'presents' the child to Voss as "a gift". As she gestures towards Voss, Judd has come across with a plate of meat (this is part of the pattern of meals throughout the novel) which Voss violently rejects with the words: "Nie, nie, niemals. I do not accept the terms" (244). His rejection includes both the child and the meat: the rejection of the child is Voss's rejection of 'Christ', whereas with the meat he rejects a shared moment of communion with the men. In the novel the celebration of Christmas is for Laura "an act of praise" (199), but Voss still cannot accept any form of humility, "even though this was amongst the conditions she had made in the letter that was now living in him" (Laura's first letter). The seemingly complete sense of transcendence achieved in their duet and the possibility of communion between Voss and the rest of the party is shattered. Voss still has to learn humility.

4.4. Voss sleepwalks.

Introduced by suitably ethereal music using high strings, the next segment of the opera depicts Voss sleepwalking. In the novel Palfreyman sees Voss sleepwalking at Jildra: "Voss did not move. Rather was he moved by a dream" (177), the suggestion being that some impulse outside of Voss provides the impetus, and Voss's refusal to acknowledge it seems to justify this view. Sleepwalking appears to be a liminal stage between the unconscious and the conscious and it epitomises Voss's inner tension and, as Wenzel (1988:65) observes, it is an action "which exemplifies [Voss's] state of tension and activates in the reader an awareness of the psycho-analytical, the level of subliminal awareness." (It is significant that Voss's communication with Laura, which had taken place in dream, now frequently becomes part of his waking hours.) During the sleepwalking scene in the novel, Palfreyman, in the light of a "magnetic moon" (176) imagines that Voss's head "became detached for a second", which can obviously be seen as foreshadowing his decapitation. Tacey (1988:70-71) argues that "in psychological terms Voss has already 'lost his head', he has lost his reason and mind to the destructive lunar forces of the inner world. In relation to his fellow explorers, Voss acts as the hypnotised hypnotist who draws other men into the nightmare in which he himself is ensnared."

In the novel a compass goes missing and is found in Judd's bag. The general suspicion is that Voss put it there during one of these sleepwalking episodes. (Ashcroft (1978:129) maintains that this act of Voss's is "an acknowledgement of the convict's ascendancy. Judd is the one who knows the way precisely because he knows the way in which simple objects point beyond themselves.") In the opera Judd, accompanied by Harry, observes Voss as he takes a bag of flour and slashes it with his knife, scattering the flour and destroying their means of sustenance. Harry shows a childlike concern for Voss, insisting that if they wake him while he is sleepwalking he will die. Judd attributes the disappearance of their sextant which "might have led us out of here" to Voss's sleepwalking and the brief interlude ends with Judd's irony-laden line: "We're in the hands of a sleepwalker" (251).

4.5 Delirium.

Whereas the previous scene ('Christmas Day') was virtually an aria for Laura, this scene begins with what is essentially an aria for Voss. This aria can, from one point of view, be considered as a bravura, performative number, yet one which grows completely organically out of the dramatic situation. Operatic convention does not have to be a constricting force but can suggest new approaches and solutions for the imaginative librettist and composer. The whole of this lengthy segment is described as 'delirium' in the libretto and it shows Voss approaching a moment of intense crisis. This section of the opera corresponds in part to the delirium depicted in the novel where, according to Walsh (1976:34), "Voss glides in and out of Laura's delirium just

as she does through his. In fact, not only do the borders between Voss and Laura, but those between different orders of existence are shown, under such intensities, to melt away."

The first section of this scene begins with Voss's now familiar, "Nie, nie, niemals! I do not accept the terms" (252), which, as has been seen, is his resistance to any sense of constriction, including the prospect of a relationship with Laura. Here one has the feeling that the unregenerate, defiant, and almost despairing Voss is uttering a final cry of protest against his realisation that any relationship with Laura will entail submission. The Promethean figure of Voss from this point will have to submit to the power of love, and this is his final moment of pride before the necessary assumption of humility. Knox-Shaw (1987:179-180) sees Voss as epitomising "two passions that are at war in every individual - the itch for self-exaltation and the thirst for self-transcendence. In place of of a stable resolution the novel offers the prospect only of perpetual struggle." Edgecombe's (1989:9) view is that pride is "a central concern of the book, since its exorcism is necessary for mercy, for the imaginative cognition of the humanity and self-hood of others."

The aria provides an important moment of self-revelation for Voss. Ostensibly Voss is addressing the other members of the expedition, but one has the overwhelming impression that Voss's thoughts are uttered almost as a credo or a form of exorcism to purge himself before he can enter into the final transcendent stage of his relationship with Laura. The aria is divided into several sections; the first is concerned with his sense of his uniqueness: "I am a desert that no man can enter" (254-255). There is a profound sense of nihilism at this point: "If I strike sparks from others, that's so much light in darkness", which elicits his own response, "Irrsinn". There is nothing to await but "damnation". This prompts him to ask "what can [love] matter, what can hatred matter to God, or to the man who would *be* God?" (258) He realises that true oneness with God can only be achieved through humility which he "despises". He utters a further cry of defiance: "I dare to stand alone, beyond pity or hatred, or love." Ewans (1989:516) sees this scene as part of Voss's hubris in which Voss's "arrogance becomes megalomania" and remarks that the text for this 'aria' "corresponds to nothing in the novel." He considers this aria as a "surprising" moment where Voss takes his place

among the great operatic villains, to whom the librettist gives a monologue - like Boito's Iago for Verdi, or John Claggart in ... Melville for Britten - in which his evil genius, enigmatically shrouded in the source text, can be displayed openly in music. Malouf risks a great deal for the explicitness necessary in a libretto, hoping presumably that Meale, by the involvement that invariably happens in opera, can create audience empathy with a Voss who is textually far less sympathetic than in the novel.

Here Ewans touches on an essential aspect of opera in that the music invariably does create empathy for a character. There are examples of operatic characters such as Pizarro in Beethoven's *Fidelio* who do not engender much audience sympathy, but this is achieved mainly through the

use of harsh, uningratiating music. However, Voss has many moments of lyricism and passion in the opera which surely do engage the audience's sympathy and it would be something of a simplification of the character in both novel and opera to see him in such two-dimensional terms. A character like Voss is shown to have moments of weakness which are generally uncharacteristic of most of the great operatic villains and the complexity of such a character lies precisely in the audience's dynamic relationship with him.

The psychological content of Voss's aria is immediately announced in the crashing chords which shatter the secretive mood of the previous sleepwalking scene. There are swirling motifs in the orchestra which convey something of Voss's agitation:

(Ex. 13)

The singer is instructed to sing this section "firmly" (253) and the orchestral part reflects the agitation of the character on stage. If anything, the scene builds in intensity as Voss's agitation mounts and one sees here how the vocal line and instrumental part are perfectly integrated - analogous to the way White combines the defiant voice of Voss with that of the narrator in the novel. Here the function of the orchestra-narrator is unusually conspicuous in total identification with the vocal line of the character. There is a prominent use of a triplet figure in this scene which here suggests strength and power:

(Ex. 14.)

In other scenes in the opera, a similar figure evoked lyricism and sensuousness, which indicates that these musical figures have no intrinsic meaning in themselves, but depend ultimately on the context in which they occur. Voss's outburst ends, as it began, with the same phrase, "I do not accept the terms" (261), now unaccompanied, almost as if he has silenced the orchestra.

Voss appears completely exhausted after this outburst and Judd offers him a drink of "good spring water", also as part of the 'sacrament' (reminiscent of the spring water earlier in the act), and urges him to sleep. Judd reveals here a softer, caring side to his nature - an aspect of his character which emerges very strongly in the novel. Voss resists Judd's assistance with the same phrase, this time sung rather than spoken, and conveying resignation rather than defiance, a moment of 'weakness'. Voss's comment, "It is like walking on the bottom of the sea", is once again a repetition of both the text and melody of the phrase which occurred in the beginning of the opera, and suggests that he has reached a physical and spiritual low point in his journey. Judd senses it is the correct moment to tell Voss that he is leaving, which he expresses in a low-lying vocal line which has both a confessional quality as well as a strong sense of purpose and which seems immediately to rouse Voss from his moment of lethargy. It is his turn to advise Judd to "sleep a little" (264), and he taunts him with cowardice, to which Judd responds defiantly, utilising 'Voss's' triplets from the previous section of the scene:

(Ex. 15).

The image displays a musical score for two systems. The first system features a vocal line for Voss with the lyrics "I am a plain man. I do not un-der-stand much be-yond that." and a piano accompaniment. The second system features a vocal line for Judd with the lyrics "I put trust in myself. I'm go-ing back," and a piano accompaniment. The score is written on staves with treble and bass clefs, and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and bar lines.

The climax of this section arrives with Judd's comment, "I'm going back, and will lead anyone who is of the same mind". One perceives here that the relationship between Voss and Judd has been leading to this crisis over the question of leadership. Voss's response is scornful, "You will lead! Have I taught you nothing then?". Judd's final despairing cry, "You have taught me to expect damnation" (266-267), brings a sudden intrusion of the Sydney discourse and is an intensely surrealistic moment in the opera. It is as if the smug colonials have come to mock Voss's quest.

Several figures from Act One, including Belle, Mrs Bonner, Mr Bonner and Tom, swirl across the stage in a ghostly dance leaving Le Mesurier in the centre, "ragged, half-naked, mad. He begins some sort of primitive dance, not European" (272), which is a synthesis of the Sydney dances and Dugald's dance. He sings lines from the first section of his prose poem of the novel:

Man is King. They hung a robe of blue sky upon him.
He rode into his kingdom of dust.
They painted his mysteries upon the rock.
He continued to eat up distance. To raise up the sun
in the morning, and the moon was his slave by night.
Fevers turned him from Man into God. (272-277)

His primitive dance is in direct contrast to the European dance of the Sydney dancers. Le Mesurier's empathy with the spiritual forces of the Outback is suggested by Taylor (1987:46) who maintains that Le Mesurier in the novel is a "type of ... modern artist ... willing to submit to foreign metaphysical influences. These factors combine to make him singularly open to Aboriginal spirit beings, and he undergoes a dramatic transformation in which, through dream, he resolves in himself the antagonistic forces of Europe and Aboriginal Australia." The significance of Le Mesurier's poem is seen by Ashcroft (1977:130) as lying in the fact that

it mirrors the world (anything further from mimetic art than Le Mesurier's poem would be hard to find), but because it represents the way in which the world is given to consciousness.... The structure of the poem is like the structure of the consciousness of the world, always directed to it, but always opening up horizons of appearance and meaning beyond the proximate and elemental.... Poetry itself is an exploratory journey which is never complete, in the sense that, like the consciousness itself, it never succeeds in completely embodying the world of its perception, nor does it need to. The nature of language is at the centre of this feature of poetry because the 'horizon of language' is a way of conceptually ordering those contexts which present themselves to us as contexts in which words might have use.

The "blue robe" of Le Mesurier's poem recalls the song that Voss sang as he rode away from Rhine Towers: "Eine blosse Seele ritt hinaus/Dem Blau' entgegen" (189), and the first verse of the poem presents an image of Voss in the early part of the journey. This verbal reminder is accented by a repetition of the musical phrase accompanying the first line of Voss's song. Le Mesurier's vocal line is incantatory and in some ways reflects Palfreyman's music in the previous scene where he read the Christmas lesson: poetry is Le Mesurier's religion. As Le Mesurier completes the first section, the dancers from the delirium scene once again sweep across the stage as the music reaches a frenzied crescendo and Voss bursts out with "Irsinn, Irsinn!" (278) which effects a sudden change in the musical dynamic. There is now no evidence of the Sydney discourse as the frenzy increases. Laura has taken Judd's place and she now nurses Voss, the music similar to their earlier duet with a suggestion of even more tenderness between them. Laura repeats Judd's gesture in offering Voss some "good spring water" (282).

The scene between Laura and Voss occupies centre stage while Judd attempts to convince Harry to leave with him, promising that he will be able to save them. The calm music that accompanied Laura and Voss continues and there seems to be an almost psychic link provided by the music between the two playing areas as characters take up thoughts expressed by others. The merging of the two discourses is complete: they now both inhabit the same sonic and psychological space. As Judd asks Harry, "will you follow me" (283), Laura takes up his thought with the ecstatic phrase. "I will follow you with my thoughts. I will be with you among thorns, among stones" (283-284). Her vocal line soars to a high B flat, indicating the strength of her commitment, while Harry, replying to Judd and using short, agitated phrases under hers, reveals a similar commitment to Voss: "I will stick closer than anyone. I will sit under the platform. I will learn the languages. I will die for him" (283-284). (In the novel, these lines of Harry's occur as Judd offers him some gum from a tree to chew, which takes the form of a symbolic eucharist. Judd insists that Harry's is "mad talk" and both are unsettled: "Both were uneasy over what had been said, because either it could have been the truth, or only half of it, and which was worse it was difficult to tell" (246).) Laura and Harry express similar sentiments accompanied by the same swelling music and it is only in their vocal lines that any distinction is made. It is in moments such as these that the operatic ensemble reveals its flexibility and special versatility, this complex musical layering enabling the composer simultaneously to express the states of mind of characters who are spatially separate but psychologically linked.

The music becomes more agitated as Judd continues to try to convince Harry to come with him. Harry resists, putting his hands over his ears and singing: "I saw a white bird fly out, out of the bones of death" (284-285). Judd insists that "he will not die for" Voss (285) but Harry, "quietly", sings, "we will all die" (285), with a sense of resignation. Laura has moved away from Voss, and the other members of the party now form a circle around Voss. The words Harry sings refer to the discovery in the novel of the platform in the trees where, as Jackie has explained, the bodies of the dead are left for their souls to transmigrate (243). The narrator comments that it "was easy in that landscape to encourage thoughts of death" (243), and a similar sense of death permeates the second act of the opera.

Le Mesurier continues with the second stanza of the poem:

I am looking at the map of my hand on which the rivers rise to the north east.
 I am looking at my heart which is the centre.
 My blood will water the earth and make it bloom.
 Winds will carry legends of smoke.
 Birds will have picked the eyes for visions.
 Trees will spring up to celebrate the godhead with their blue leaves.
 Now that I am nothing, I am.
 And love is the simplest of tongues. (287-291)

The implication here is that language can be transcended by love. The mirroring of Voss in the poem continues with the parallel here drawn to Voss's early vision in the novel of "his material

body swallowed by what it had named' (41), but Voss is not yet able to accept what Le Mesurier has: "Now that I am nothing, I am". As the aboriginals appear from the shadows, Judd raises his rifle to protect Palfreyman but is stopped by Voss: "I forbid you to fire. These are my people" (292). Palfreyman, who has moved towards them, turns with a spear in his side: "Ah Lord, if I had been stronger" (293), believing that he has failed. In the novel he is described as walking "slowly, but deliberately" towards the aboriginals, while the rest of the party all "remembered the face of Christ that they had seen at some point in their lives, either in churches or visions, before retreating from what they had not understood, the paradox of man in Christ, and Christ in man" (342). Callaghan (1987:50) maintains that Palfreyman's last moments suggest "that he had at least achieved the harmony between the human and the divine that for Voss is still a tormenting dream." The death affects all the members of the party: "Nor was there a single survivor who did not feel that part of him had died" (343). Morley (1972:143) suggests that Palfreyman "represents not only an archetypal Christ-figure but also the necessity of each man's sharing in this death in order to acquire a share in a greater form of life". In the novel, it is after Palfreyman's death that the expedition splits up, and they ride in different directions from his grave.

The music becomes more frenzied as Le Mesurier continues:

I am not God but Man. I am God with a spear in his side.
They chase this kangaroo. They cut its pride.
Where is his spirit? It has gone out. It has all gone out.(293-294)

As he sings these lines he cuts his own throat, his action reflecting Voss's view in the novel that to "make yourself, it is also necessary to destroy yourself" (34). His death is described in the novel as "his last attempt at poetry" (381), the death of the artist unable to come to terms with harsh reality. The deaths of Palfreyman and Le Mesurier are telescoped in the opera and it has the effect of increasing the horror. As these events occur there is a battle of wills between Voss and Judd for Harry. Judd, for the last time, tries unsuccessfully to convince Harry to come with him. Voss finally seems to achieve a measure of tranquillity with the words: "It is like walking on the bottom of the sea. The mystery of life is not solved by my success but by failure, by perpetual struggle, in becoming" (296). Voss utters these lines with great assurance, which is reflected in the rising vocal line:

(Ex. 16.)

The image shows a musical score for two voices, labeled 'V' and 'V'. The first system of music has the lyrics: "the mys-te-ry of life is not solved by my success but by". The second system has the lyrics: "fai-lure, by per-pe-tual strug-gle, in be-com-ing." The music is written on staves with various notes, rests, and dynamic markings. There are also some handwritten annotations like '3' and '2' on the first system.

These are, in fact, Le Mesurier's words taken from the scene in the novel where Voss nurses him and Le Mesurier discusses the difficulty of being an artist. This is a passage which Ashcroft (1978:131) maintains

is a microcosm of the book. The desire to accurately describe the appearances of objects, is a desire to enclose the truth as Voss desired to enclose the Whole of perfection by recovering it within himself.... But perfection, while it may show some of its aspects ... is never enclosable, and man's own being is witness to this. For Voss to be brought to nothing is to remove the last obstruction to the possibilities of becoming, again something that is realised in Laura, with whom Voss has been united in consciousness.... The negation of the self, then, rather than its deification, is what is achieved through suffering and humility and is central to Le Mesurier's Aristotelian vision.

There is a sense in the opera that a moment of crisis has passed, and this is heard in the music which achieves a new tranquillity. (Morley (1972:144) notes that from this point on in the novel "emotion tends to converge into a feeling of calm *acceptance*, corresponding to the catharsis of tragedy". She feels that these chapters "contain the burning core of the novel in an atmosphere of ritual, vision and dream.") As Harry sings, he and Voss move to a platform of the kind described in the novel where the aboriginals leave their dead while Jackie remains in the background. On another part of the stage Laura is seen in fever and being nursed by Belle and Mrs Bonner (it is her spiritual suffering which manifests itself in physical suffering just as she had 'suffered' through Rose's pregnancy and the birth of Mercy, and achieved a physical relief in the aftermath of the birth). Harry's aria is one of the most lyrical moments in the opera and reveals something of the metaphysical understanding he achieves as he witnesses the deaths of Palfreyman and Le Mesurier. This new understanding is described in the novel: "In the case of Harry Robarts, however, truth descended upon ignorance in a blinding light. He saw into the meaning of words, and watched the white bird depart out of the hole in Mr Palfreyman's side as they lowered the body into the ground" (344). Harry's aria combines elements from his vocal utterances earlier in the opera:

Morning stole upon the trees,
and sound vanished
in the pearly fog that lay over the earth.
The pale soles of my feet
were cold with dew.
And I saw at last,
I saw. The words came to my lips.
I saw a white bird fly out
of the bones of death, wings
opened like hands
and a white bird went sailing
out over the earth,
petals opened
white out of the seed.
I will stick closer than anyone.
I will sit under the platform.
I will learn the languages. (297-301)

His music has an almost visionary quality and utilises similar triadic chords that ended Act One and which will again occur at the end of the opera. His music with its vocal line consisting of wide arching phrases conveys a new kind of articulation. He has seen 'into the meaning of words' - he has learned the (non-verbal) 'languages'. Harry's mood transfers itself to Voss who cradles Harry in his arms. (In the novel, a strong bond is forged between Harry and Voss at this point: "As the two fell into sleep, or such a numb physical state as approximated to it, Voss believed that he loved this boy, and with him all men, even those he hated, which is the most difficult act of love to accomplish, because of one's own fault" (382).) While Harry is singing, Laura is seen in fever, and she finally cries out, "Ah dear Christ, now at last I understand your suffering" (302). Laura and Voss have completely overcome the distance between them and her line could refer to Christ or to Voss, or both. (In the novel, Laura's consciousness alternates between Sydney and the Outback and the house in Sydney becomes interchangeable with the desert.) Mrs Bonner and Belle entreat Laura to "return", with Mrs Bonner pleading: "Think of Mercy. You must live for the child's sake" (302). Their words are immediately followed by Harry's question to Voss, "Will they kill us then?" (305). Harry continues in this vein, recalling incidents from the past, with Voss gently telling him to get some sleep. The two scenes now become completely merged. Laura's line rises above those of Belle, Mrs Bonner, Harry and Voss:

The journey has three stages.
Of God into man. Man. And the return
to God. The return. (305-308)

Beston (1974:100) explains Laura's view in the novel as follows:

The First stage, 'God into man,' refers to the act of creation, whereby God breathes a spirit into man, and with it some of His own divinity. Further, it is a time of dependence, usually associated with childhood. The second stage, 'Man', describes the time when man rejects the notion of his dependence and feels strongest, in control of himself and the world around him. At the height of his pride, he assumes the role of God - an illusion he must renounce before he can achieve union with God. The third stage, 'Man returning into God,' involves the renunciation of man's belief that he stands alone and in control. In this third stage, the attainment of humility is crucial before man can be drawn back into God. Humility is reached through the embracing of suffering and the experience of failure. In its extreme form, the attainment of humility means a dissolution of the self.

In the opera Laura concludes this section with the lines:

Who will love him when I am gone? I pray
that God will. God will. (305-310)

Her final thought here suggests a resignation contained in the word's ambiguity: finally all is God's 'will' and this moment of epiphany suggests she has achieved a new understanding. This

corresponds to the end of the novel where she alludes to the fact that she believed that Voss had in his nature a little of Christ.

Voss, at this point, is engrossed in memories of his childhood, and seems oblivious of Harry who is in extremis and, in fact, dies as he utters the words: "and a white bird went sailing" (309-310), his vocal line abruptly ceasing. The concerted ensemble ends but Voss continues to articulate his memories. Belle and Mrs Bonner continue to plead with Laura to 'return' to them but Laura repeats her enigmatic statement: "The journey has three stages...". Finally, both Voss and Laura rise and cross the stage, meet, and embrace. In a sense this is the consummation of their relationship and, in a way for the first time in this act, they actually 'talk' directly to each other.

Voss

Ah, these lilies, Laura. Look. Look, there are fields of them, a paradise of lilies, a paradise of lilies. Your prayers, your words, these lilies. (315-317)

Laura

These are my prayers that I let fall on my journey out to your coronation. Now on the return their pale flesh will feed us. Let us eat together. This is our love feast,

The rapturous final duet between them in the opera captures something of their final, erotic 'meeting' in the novel where:

she came to him, and at once he was flooded with light and memory. As she lay beside him, his boyhood slipped from him in a rustling of water and a rough towel. A steady summer possessed them. Leaves were in her lips, that he bit off, and from her breasts the full, silky, milky buds. They were holding each other's heads and looking into them, as remorselessly as children looking at secrets, and seeing all too clearly. But, unlike children, they were confronted to recognize their own faults.

So they were growing together, and loving. No sore was so scrofulous on his body that she would not touch it with her kindness. He would kiss her wounds, even the deepest ones, that he had inflicted himself and left to suppurate. (383)

The novel emphasises the fact that they appear to have attained a child-like state and the opera extends this impression in that Voss, in his previous musical passage, had reverted to childhood memories. The 'zussamen' that Voss had so strenuously resisted has finally occurred. Voss acknowledges what the novel refers to as "their common flesh, which he had attempted so often to repudiate" (364). There is a feeling that during this last 'meeting' in the opera, Laura and Voss attain a true communion of souls. The mention of their 'love feast' reinforces the sense that this is their eucharist, and reminds one of the 'communion' that Voss experiences in the novel as he is given the wicketty grub by the old man in the hut (388), and which symbolises that he has finally admitted and accepted his weakness - he has reached the final stage of the process, 'Man into God'. Now, in the opera, instead of rejecting the lilies, the symbol of her love that she had earlier offered, Voss accepts them. In the novel during this last dream, they ride out together and dismount on a river bank to pick the lilies growing there: "She advised him to sample these nourishing blooms. So they stood there munching awhile. The lilies tasted floury, but

wholesome" (393). The operatic music repeats themes and phrases heard earlier, but with an added intensity and eroticism, and this duet of only three pages is a moment of ecstasy and bliss.

Now Voss is ready to face the final test - his death. The music, after the lushness and romanticism of the previous duet, assumes a strong rhythmic pulse with Belle and Mrs Bonner once again pleading with Laura to 'return'. "Suddenly Voss starts up. Jacky is there with a knife" (319) and Voss's comment, "Ah, Jackie. It was you", carries an allusion to Jesus' betrayal by Judas (as well, perhaps, to Caesar's by Brutus). The death of Voss is described graphically in the novel:

All moved quickly towards the twig shelter, an ominous humpy in that light. Jackie went in, crowded upon by several members of his adoptive tribe still doubtful of his honesty. But the spirits of the place were kind to Jackie: they held him up by the armpits as he knelt at the side of Mr Voss.

He could just see that the pale eyes of the white man were looking, whether at him or through him, he did not attempt to discover, but quickly stabbed with his knife and his breath between the windpipe and the muscular part of the throat.

His audience was hissing.

The boy was stabbing, and sawing, and cutting, and breaking, with all of his increasing, but confused manhood, above all, breaking. He must break the terrible magic that bound him remorselessly, endlessly, to the white men.

When Jackie had got the head off, he ran outside followed by the witnesses, and flung the thing at the feet of the elders, who had been clever enough to see to it that they should not do the deed themselves.

The boy stood for a moment beneath the morning star. The whole air was trembling on his skin. As for the head-thing, it knocked against a few stones, and lay like any melon. How much was left of the man it no longer represented? His dreams fled into the air, his blood ran out upon the dry earth, which drank it up immediately. Whether dreams breed, or the earth responds to a pint of blood, the instant of death does not tell. (394)

The death of Voss in the opera has a more ritualistic quality, reflecting Walsh's (1976:32-33) view that the series of deaths towards the end of the novel "are rehearsed with an increasingly religious language and reference, and the acts of destruction themselves are given a ritualistic function, something which, while it does not mitigate the horror, preserves it from being pointless and haphazard". While this is true of the deaths of Palfreyman and Le Mesurier, one could argue that the death of Harry has less of this quality, while that of Voss seems to have almost an element of bizarre comedy about it with the severed head being compared to a melon. One could perhaps regard this fusion of religious language and bizarre comedy as the discursive achievement of the novel: a resolution finally of the earlier disjunctive discourses. The Christian symbolism of Voss's death is strong - the 'betrayal' by Jackie after the 'communion' in the hut, the crying out in torment as "the spear seemed to enter his own hide" (392) and the sense that he has been 'betrayed' by his people, the aboriginals.

In the opera Jackie severs Voss's head with the knife that Voss had given him as they set out on the expedition. Voss calls out in German, "Oh Jesus, rette mich nur. Du lieber!" (320)

which seems to have some of the same quality as Christ's despairing cry from the cross. The text for this cry derives from a moment in the novel where Voss finally admits his terror to himself:

He himself, he realized, had always been most abominably frightened, even at the height of his divine power, a frail god upon a rickety throne....Now, at least, reduced to the bones of manhood, he could admit to all this and listen to his teeth rattling in the darkness.

'O Jesus,' he cried, '*rette mich nur! Du lieber!*'

Of this too, mortally frightened, of the arms, or sticks, reaching down from the eternal tree, and tears of blood, and candlewax. Of the great legend becoming truth. (390)

(Ewans (1989:515) remarks of the opera that although Voss does sing this "short prayer ... its full significance is lost in the urgency of the moment." This is part of his argument concerning the relationship between Laura and Voss in which he insists that "the spiritual dimension that was central to that relationship in the novel has been eroded in the opera." One could argue that this is too glib a comment; much of the spirituality of their relationship is apparent in the music if not in their words. This is the danger of approaching the libretto from a predominantly literary perspective.)

The ritualistic aspect of the opera is enhanced by Laura standing behind Jackie and Voss, and her words ring out:

When man learns that he is not God,
then he is truly nearest God.
And Man is God decapitated. (321-322)

In the video recording of the opera, as these words are uttered by Laura, and during the tremendous orchestral crash, the statue of Voss suddenly appears at the back of the stage - the link with *Don Giovanni* is unmistakable. Man has become colonial myth - "God". Laura's cry comes from earlier in the novel where she attempts to convince Voss of his shared humanity, the "common flesh" (364) that they all share. Its literal manifestation in Voss's decapitation is final proof of his humanity. It fulfills the statement that Laura makes during her fever: "When man is truly humbled, when he has learnt that he is not God, then he is nearest to becoming so. In the end he may ascend" (387). In the opera, it is almost as if Laura assists Jackie in the execution. The stylisation necessary in any stage representation of such an action has the effect of increasing the ceremonial aspect as well as perhaps minimising the horror of the deed as depicted in the novel.

Although the moment of Voss's death is dramatic, there is a strong feeling that it is not the climax of the opera and the music continues without subsiding in intensity as the scene changes. (Wolfe (1983:119) argues that Voss's death is not the finale of chapter 13, "let alone of the whole book. His spirit reawakens in Laura, who breaks her fever within moments of his

death.") In the opera one can, in a sense, recognise a model in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* where the death of Giovanni, although a dramatic crux and the theatrical climax, is followed by the reappearance of the other major characters in the opera where an attempt is made to give some meaning to the phenomenon that was Don Giovanni. In many ways, a similar situation exists in *Voss* where, in the final scene, the man has become myth and his statue dominates proceedings, and the ultimate 'meaning' of *Voss* in the larger context of Australia is examined.

5. Epilogue: an Australian opera?

The Epilogue focuses primarily on Laura who, as Brady (1975:17) suggests, can be seen as the heroine of the novel. Brady remarks that due emphasis must be given to Laura's position at the end of the novel: "to go on living in the city of man, honestly and true to one's personal values, is more heroic perhaps than to die, however splendidly, in the desert." This scene in the opera consists of a party set in the house of Belle and Tom Radclyffe in Sydney, twenty years later and takes place on the day of the unveiling of a statue of *Voss*. The opera omits chapters 14 and 15 of the novel in which Laura meets Colonel Hebden who had organised an expedition to discover what had happened to *Voss*'s expedition. The theatrical imagery which is used in the novel to describe Belle's party is compared by Bosman (1989:125-126) to "the 'transformation scene' from pantomime. It is in this sense a grand finale, bringing together all the disparate elements of Sydney society, and indicating the closure of the narrative. True to the transformation scene metaphor is the satirical undercurrent." Bosman points out White's perception of "the marginalisation of female experience as an analogue for the marginalisation of colonial experience generally", and further maintains that Belle's marginalisation is "only partial: she maintains the ability to step beyond social structure". Belle seems to be a transitional figure in the novel: she obviously does not live through the same transcendent experience as Laura, but she is treated with sympathy and respect which acknowledges a greater dimension to her (as well as Willy Pringle) than to the other members of Sydney society. Belle's integration into the land is seen by Kiernan (1980:61-62) as her

complete involvement in the present [and] her awareness of herself in time, [which] call forth the author's indulgence in a way that complicates any attempt to divide the characters schematically into an elect and the herd. The sense of Belle being held within the flux of time and the natural forces of regeneration and decay is expressed through one of the novel's most insistent images - that of flesh as vegetation, vegetation as flesh twenty years on, married and the mother of a large family, Belle has grown through love into a harmony with the natural world, and discovered a permanence in her life.

In the novel, Belle is described as moving among her guests and making a rather surprising speech:

'I have asked you all tonight because I value each of you for some particular quality. Is it not possible for each to discover, and appreciate, that same quality in his fellow-guests, so that we may be happy together in this lovely house?' (435)

The opera repeats this verbatim with the addition of a final line: "and in this country of ours?" (326). This has the effect of linking Belle's statement with the central postcolonial theme explored in the opera, the sense of belonging to the land - "the myths of identity and authenticity" (Ashcroft et al 1989:9). Belle's vocal line is unaffectedly simple and sincere and evolves organically out of the orchestral interlude, suggesting the influence of, and her connection with, what has gone before, and further emphasising the sympathy with which she is portrayed in the novel. The reader is informed in the first chapter of the novel that she will have "many descendants. For the creation of whom she had been purposely designed" (18), and Bosman (1989:124) suggests that White "has 'placed' Belle Bonner as a fecund possibility of the native-born, from whom might spring alternatives to the exploitative materialism of her father and the equally exploitative idealism of Voss."

In the opera, her husband Tom takes over her melody and with a rather self-satisfied air intimates that their houses "stand solid", the land is "ours" and that they "are at home here" (327). His music differs from Belle's in that the simplicity of her melody becomes a complacency in his, which also has a certain lack of conviction. He has a smug air about him, reminiscent of Mr Bonner in the first act. Belle and Tom are interrupted by a group of children playing 'blind man's buff' (the game is part of the ritual pattern of dances) and then the familiar stage piano is heard playing its recurring melody which evolves from the children's game. It is as if the intrusion once more of the 'Sydney' discourse suggests that nothing has really changed in this society, that its values are still the same. The vision of the future that Belle suggests is not yet a reality and will require a different relationship with the land; Tom's is the prevailing attitude. Echoing the children, this society is still 'blind' to the country in which they live - they have not yet awakened to its possibilities as Belle has, and remain huddled on the periphery - 'fringe-dwellers'. The music, which up to this point has been suitably bland, suddenly assumes a warmer and more 'substantial' quality with the appearance of Laura. In the novel she has been shown to lead a somewhat reclusive, yet on the whole, happy existence as a teacher and mother to Mercy.

She is joined by Belle to the accompaniment of a waltz from the piano as couples once more dance across the stage. The relationship between Belle and Laura remains strong: the novel describes the two women as "greedy for each other's love" (430) and as they meet they erect "an umbrella in the middle of the desert" (437). In reply to Belle's invitation to be 'shown' to people in the opera, Laura intimates that she would rather be alone: "I shall sit here. I have never learned the language" (332). The echo of Harry's words is unmistakable: Harry would have learned the metaphysical languages of the country, which Laura, through her suffering and her love, now has learned (there is the suggestion that Belle has similar qualities of receptiveness that were evident in Harry). Laura has, however, not bothered to learn the superficial language of

society which is epitomised by the humdrum rhythm and melody of the waltz as well as by the fact that Laura's words do not seem to fit comfortably into the 3/4 rhythms of the dancers: (Ex. 17.)

Handwritten musical score for Laura's song. The score is written on two systems of staves. The first system has a vocal line (labeled 'L' for Laura) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "No, little I shall sit". The second system also has a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "here. I have re-learned the lan-guage." The piano accompaniment consists of a simple waltz rhythm in 3/4 time, with chords and single notes.

That she is still considered an outsider, is further evidenced by the description of her as "a gaunt black figure, very incongruous among the others" (331). The opera, drawing on the novel (436-7), makes the general view of her obvious; in the first scene she was also describes as a 'crow' and a 'scarecrow'. Little has happened in this society during the interim period to dent their smugness. A strongly critical view of their attitude is indicated by a musical and verbal repetition which exploits a banal verbal rhyme and musical figure: "Voss. Lost for twenty years. Lost. Who?. Voss. Lost" (337).

The Sydney discourse now changes and a more serious element is introduced as Laura is approached by a reporter wishing to question her about Voss. Although the opera does not have the variety of characters who populate this final chapter in the novel, it does capture something of the quality that Colmer (1984:40) notes of the novel which is "a fine example of White's virtuosity in shifting the focus in the last phases of his fictions. Each of Belle's guests, figures from the past like herself, contributes something vital to the reassessment of the German explorer, especially those who come on from the unveiling ceremony." In reply to the statement of the reporter in the opera that "there are people out there who want to know the truth" (341), Laura replies: "All truths are particoloured, save the greatest truth of all. I know nothing" (341-342). Kiernan (1980:64) suggests that in the novel the "true nature of Voss's quest remains uncommunicated except to the few who know that the absolute is discoverable within the ordinary universe". In the opera Laura remarks that Voss "is safe now....He has been hung with garlands of newspaper prose" (343), which suggests the inadequacy of language to reveal truth. The opera intimates that perhaps truth is to be found beyond the verbal and is something which might be

communicated through music; music is anchored in the ordinary but is able to achieve a transcendence which goes far beyond purely verbal signification.

Laura remarks that Voss "has entered the history books. They will speak of his place in history. He is safe, now he is dead" (344). Kiernan (1980:63) suggests that Voss's death in the novel

encompasses both the heroic possibilities of legend and the anti-heroic recognition that Voss was no more, or less, Christ-like than other men; an ambiguity extended through the metaphor the novel is structured upon. In as much as the desert is actual, there is something decidedly heroic about the expedition, but in that the desert is also a symbol of the spiritual Voss's quest is absurd, as the explorer himself so often is. As an historical novel, *Voss* observes with scepticism the processes of establishing official versions of history. Judd's return with his account which confuses Voss's death with Palfreyman's and the erection of a bronze statue, hung with 'garlands of the rarest newspaper prose' to the explorer's memory cast ironic doubt on the apotheosising of the dead.

The stage direction in the opera states that "Judd and Laura face each other. 'The leaves of the trees are clapping'" (345). It is almost as if the mention of Voss's death recalls the actual expedition. Judd is described as a 'survivor' which echoes his own earlier description of himself and which he now repeats: "Ex-convict, escapee, survivor". That Judd is the only witness of what happened is ironic, first because he was not there, and, secondly, because he is confused. However, Judd speaks a form of 'truth', as is allowed madmen and poets:

He left his mark on the country.
He was cutting his initials on the trees.
He is still there in the heart of the country
and always will be. (346-347)

What he says is psychologically true if not strictly factual. This whole exchange with Judd has a melancholy yet elegiac quality. Laura's utterances are gentle and sympathetic. There is a sense of understanding between Laura and Judd which is conveyed musically rather than verbally (Laura, in the novel, senses that "she must stand on trial" (442) with Judd). As he sings the line, "he is still there in the heart of the country and always will be" (347), Laura gently echoes him, "Always? Always?" (which echoes her words from the elegiac ending of Act One) and Judd repeats this after his own observation, "If you suffer long enough in a place your spirit returns to it. Always. Always" (348). The musical appropriation and inversion of her questioning phrase suggests that he speaks from an experience which Laura can share. Their exchange is in sharp contrast to the almost parodic smugness with which Tom expressed his sense of belonging to or possessing the land.

However, Judd's confusion is indicated by his description of Voss's and Palfreyman's deaths: "I cried when I saw him dead. With a spear in his side. It was me who closed his eyes"

(348-349). Symbolically, as he utters these lines, he is surrounded by the children playing blind man's buff and he is touched by the blindfolded figure as he sings the line, "with a spear in his side". He is led off in confusion, still surrounded by the children, and the ironic line from the reporter, "So your saint is canonized" (349), elicits the comment from Laura, "I am content". Laura's comment may be explained by Bosman's (1989:135) suggestion that in the novel

Laura, who may know the exact details of Voss's decapitation, does not object to Judd's conflation of Voss with the Palfreyman figure, which in its turn was relentlessly conflated with the Christ figure. She may not wish to look at the 'work of irreproachable civic art', which now re-presents Voss to the people of Sydney, but can still be humanly comforted by his escape from experience into history.

In the opera, the reporter, not content, intimates that Judd is a madman, to which Laura replies that whatever he is she is convinced that "like Voss, and all men [he] has a little of Christ in him" (350), a restatement of her belief in the three stages of man.

Mercy, now a young woman, approaches Laura and suggests that they leave, "No one will miss us" (351). However, Laura remarks, "I am here. I will stay" (351), the short, simple rising phrases indicating her sense of belonging, phrases which are different and more 'real' than Tom's or of the other members of Sydney society. Belle joins her and Laura expresses her happiness and sense of solidarity with Belle. There is a persistent echo of the first scene of the opera where Belle insisted on her own happiness and now Laura is able to remark: "Belle, I am so happy at last, so happy" (352), which leads into the first section of her final 'aria':

I know I have seen little
and suffered little. I know
nothing of this land.
But knowledge is more than maps. (352)

Her metaphor alludes to Voss's statement in the first scene where, much to Mr Bonner's consternation, he declared that he would make his own map. Laura intimates that although she may know little physically of the land, she has entered its spirit far more than any of those who now surround her. As the intensity of her music increases, the guests at the party gather round her: "She speaks to them but then more generally to the audience as her vision opens out into the present and the crowd moves back into the shadows to leave her at the end, alone" (353). As indicated in the stage directions, Laura becomes more and more isolated from the other guests at the party. As she sings, the stage lighting separates her from her surroundings, symbolic, perhaps, of the fact that even though she might be superficially integrated into this society she remains essentially an outsider.

The next brief section of this final scene has sense of valediction about it. The orchestral accompaniment is warm, providing support to her low-lying vocal line which exploits the fullness

and warmth of the lyric soprano's lower register. Laura expresses the artistic challenge that Australia offers:

Some of us,
some of you, will express what you know
by living. Others
will make music of it.
We will inherit this country
at last. It will be ours. (353-354)

This seems to refer, as Kiernan (1980:64) maintains of the novel, to

[t]he 'invertebrate' Willie Pringle who has become a 'genius' as a painter, and Topp the music master, a grumpy little man considered a failure, [who] gather round Laura to discuss the future: the need for artistic exploration, imaginative awareness, the overcoming of 'our inherent mediocrity as a people', as Willie and Topp put it. But Willie is more optimistic. he does not see this mediocrity as a final and irrevocable state, but as a source of creative variety and subtlety: 'The blowfly on its bed of offal is but a variation of the rainbow. Common forms are continually breaking into brilliant shapes. If we will explore them.' (447)

Belle, at this point, enters with her characteristic high-lying phrase, "Ah, this country" (354). However, what earlier in the opera suggested unease and even fear about her 'place' in the country and the future, now expresses the prospect of unlimited possibilities that this untapped land offers. In a sense Belle, as shown by her 'speech' at the beginning of this scene, has undergone her own apotheosis and she represents in the opera what is epitomised by Willie Pringle in the novel. Tom, however, still finds Laura a disconcerting presence (in the novel he is described as "still hat[ing]" (435) Laura), and urges the assembly to "go back to your dancing". What Laura represents for him and, one suspects, for most of those gathered there, is something of that disturbing quality epitomised by Voss during his brief sojourn in Sydney which caused so much discomfort and foreboding.

The reporter, showing admirable persistence, remarks: "Ah, yes. A country with a future. But when does that future become the present?" (355). The answer to that question is found in Laura's final 'benediction' on the assembly. The strong sense of the inexorable march of time, prominent throughout the novel, is conspicuous in the final moments of the opera:

Now. Now. Every moment
that we live, and breathe, and love
and suffer. Now. Now.
(As the others have been moving back, the shadow of Voss's statue falls across the stage. Laura is alone with it.)
Voss. Johann, Ulrich
my love. You are there
still, there in the country
your legend will be written
in the air, in the sand,

in thorns, in stones
 by those who are troubled by it.
 And what we do not know
 the air will tell us,
 the air will tell us. (356-358)

The ending of the novel has evoked much comment and the opera, in its own way, is as enigmatic. Brady (1978:115) sees in the "kind of scepticism" that Laura expresses at the end of the novel "a readiness to live in doubts and uncertainties, and to let 'the air tell us' whatever the truth may be. Indeed, this truth depends upon the fact that human beings are limited and governed by necessities of all kinds, above all that of death, because it is the paradoxical truth, that man is not God but drawn irresistibly to the impossible prospect of knowing Him." What Voss was seeking and what Laura also seeks can be found in the present.

The ending of the opera provokes Ewans (1989:521) to insist that the librettist "makes an unequivocal bid to canonise the story of Voss as an emblematic legend of the conquest of Australia." However, his view must be regarded as a simplification as the ending is more equivocal than he supposes. While not denying an element of the celebration of the colonial experience in the verbal text one must note that it is not necessarily 'supported' by the music which somehow seems less 'secure' in its assumptions. - the orchestra-narrator, in fact, 'problematising' this ending.

Musically, the opera ends as the first act ended on the eve of the expedition, with what seem to be life-affirming triads in the orchestra:

(Ex. 18.)

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and an orchestral accompaniment. The vocal line is written for a soprano (L) and includes the lyrics: "know the air will tell us, the air will tell us." The tempo marking "meno mosso" is written above the first staff. The orchestral accompaniment is written for a piano (P) and features a series of triads in the right hand, which are described in the text as "life-affirming triads". The score is written in a key with one flat (B-flat) and a 4/4 time signature.

The ending, in conventional operatic terms, is 'low-key', in the sense that there is no great choral finale or any of the other traditional climactic operatic devices. One has the sense that this operatic ending resists closure, that the questions that have been raised have no pat answers, and

that it is left to the audience to construct their own 'meaning' from this text. The statue of Voss dominates this final tableau as he had dominated everyone while alive and this seems to realign the focus on Voss and Laura, but Laura's words direct the attention away from Voss towards Australia. The mythification of Voss in the novel is remarked on by Walsh (1976:38) who considers that

Voss has graduated from the present into history, and that, it is clear, will in time assume the form of myth. Voss, and a central truth about, or experience of, Australia itself have become one. Australia is almost another character in the novel, certainly an impressive and influential force, the complex presence of which affects the organisation and the feeling of the novel at many different points. Australia is the sole opponent worthy of Voss's will. The will to know Australia is the initiating impulse of the novel.

The ending of the opera points beyond the concerns of Laura and Voss and attempts to offer insights into what the term 'Australian' actually means. The main insight is perhaps that there is no single meaning, and that the term signifies hybridity.

Meale's opera exemplifies this hybridity. Much of the debate around the initial reception of the opera was concerned whether one could call Voss 'the' great Australian opera. Perhaps this is, ultimately futile as opera itself is, not essentially, Australian. Nor would the solution have lain in Meale's incorporating Aboriginal music into his opera. As Ewans (1989:525) maintains, Australians "cannot lay a cultural claim to this continent by simply appropriating the music of a vastly different culture. Precisely *because* [they] are fringe-dwellers - perhaps forever? - the Great Australian Opera cannot be written." The opera can be seen as a typical product of the postcolonial condition. It looks forward, in perhaps an idealised way, to a time when there could be a true artistic fusion between a European art form and the indigenous cosmology. Its refusal to appropriate elements of Aboriginal music (which has been seen by several critics as a major shortcoming) is perhaps a recognition that an artificially contrived combination of European and Aboriginal elements is not yet the solution. For the present, the actual achievement of Meale's and Malouf's opera is to have dramatised the tension between worlds and to have indicated a time when, in the words of Topp, at the end of the novel, perhaps one will be able to "hear the stubborn music ... waiting for release. Of rock and scrub. Of winds curled invisibly in wombs of air. Of thin river struggling towards seas of eternity. All flowing and uniting" (446).

Chapter 5: *The Aspern Papers*

Dominick Argento's opera, *The Aspern Papers*, based on Henry James's tale, was first performed in Dallas in 1988, and is, in many ways, paradigmatic of contemporary operatic trends. In a sense it is a meditation on the current state of opera and is a work that exploits many of the techniques and facilities of modern music theatre while anchoring itself firmly within traditional operatic convention. *The Aspern Papers* offers, in postmodernist terms, a self-reflexive analysis of the nature of the operatic art form itself as well as of its world of performance. It serves therefore as the most appropriate conclusion to this study of 'metaphrasis'.

(This chapter is an extension and further development of my examination of Argento's opera in my M.A. dissertation.)

Argento is one of the most successful and prolific of contemporary opera composers; his operas are frequently performed, often under almost ideal conditions with strong casts and supporting teams. His work can be seen as part of an emerging trend, particularly in the USA, of an operatic reaction against relentlessly experimental Continental models. His is a more accessible and less esoteric operatic style, in many ways comparable to that of such recent operatic successes as William Bolcom's *McTeague*, John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and Conrad Sousa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*. Sousa (1994:17) has described his own method in evoking the world of eighteenth-century opera as "a compositional process of historical retention and contemporary inflection - a stylization of music". This would aptly describe Argento's method in *The Aspern Papers* as well. There is a conscious orientation towards the singer in Argento's opera, both in the sense of a celebration of operatic performance itself, as well as in the whole-hearted embrace of melody and the opera's use of eminently singable vocal lines. *The Aspern Papers* is characterised by a constant intertextual 'dialogue' with nineteenth-century Italian operatic models but utilises a twentieth-century idiom in its consideration of the ontology of opera.

Whereas, according to McHale (1989:9) the dominant of modernism was "epistemological", he argues that in postmodernism it is "ontological":

postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like ... "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they to be constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on. (10)

The Aspern Papers is a work which has absorbed modernist elements such as atonality and narrative disjunction and transformed them into an opera which uses traditional operatic structures self-consciously and with an ever-present hint of parody.

* * * *

1. James's "The Aspern Papers.

1.1. Sources.

James's tale first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* from March to May 1888 and was revised for the New York Edition of his works. Although not a metafictional work in the contemporary sense of the word, "The Aspern Papers" is self-consciously concerned with the relation of art to life and with the boundaries between worlds. Its origins are documented in James's Preface to the revised version of the tale included in the New York Edition of his works. He remembers while on a visit to Florence first becoming aware of the existence of Jane Clairmont, "the half-sister of Mary Godwin, Shelley's second wife, and for a while the intimate friend of Byron and the mother of his daughter Allegra" (James 1971:viii). This fascinating link with the literary past was intensified by James's discovery of an American sea-captain who ingratiated himself with Jane Clairmont in the hope of obtaining material relevant to Shelley's life. On Jane Clairmont's death, the captain approached her niece "on the subject of his desires. Her answer was: 'I will give you all the letters if you marry me'" (James 1947:72). "The Aspern Papers" draws heavily on this incident, changing the locale from Florence to Venice (just as the opera changes the locale from Venice to Lake Como) and giving the plausible reason that the Jane Clairmont figure would have been able to conceal herself more easily in "a city of exhibition" (1971:8) - a typical Jamesean irony.

In the tale, Jane Clairmont becomes Juliana Bordereau, the mistress of a long dead American poet, Jeffrey Aspern. Besides the dramatic possibilities inherent in this situation, James indicates in the Preface (1971:x) another aspect which fascinated him:

I delight in a palpable imaginable visitable past - in the nearer distances and the clearer mysteries, the marks and signs of a world we may reach over to as by making a long arm we grasp an object at the other end of our own table. The table is the one; the common expanse, and where we lean, so stretching, we find it firm and continuous. That, to my imagination, is the past fragrant of all, or almost all, the poetry of the thing outlived and lost and gone, and yet in which the precious element of closeness, telling so of connections but tasting so of differences, remains appreciable.

Booth (1961:355) has commented that in the *Notebook* entries James's "primary interest is in the plotting 'of the Shelley fanatic' against these two romantic figures", whereas in the Preface the emphasis is mainly on this evocation of the past. Booth maintains that there are

two really distinct subjects. There is a plot, the narrator's unscrupulous quest for the papers and his ultimate frustration; it is a plot that requires an agent of a particularly insensitive kind. There is, secondly, a 'picture', an air or an atmosphere, a past to be visited and recorded with all the poetic artistry at James's command (335).

As a setting, Venice, with its historical and cultural resonances, features prominently in the story, but it is the acquisition of the papers with their ostensible importance for literary history which is the narrator's prime motivation, and it is his unfolding plan (couched in military terms) which dominates the tale.

1.2. James's narrative method.

1.2.1. The 'nouvelle' and the 'anecdote'.

The generic definition of "The Aspern Papers" perhaps needs some preliminary elucidation. James used the term 'anecdote' for much of his shorter fiction, defining it as a form that "consists, ever, of something that has oddly happened to someone whom it so distinguishes" (James 1934:181). He emphasised the importance of its limitation to the "single incident", thereby resisting his natural impulse for elaboration, and he insists that he must "try to make use, for the brief treatment, of nothing, absolutely nothing, that isn't *one*, as it were - that doesn't begin and end in its little self" (James 1947:212). James also frequently uses the French term *nouvelle* for the fiction which is longer than the anecdote but shorter than the novel. He discusses the difference between all these shorter forms in relation to the two important terms "story" and "subject".

Cowdery (1986:23) interprets James's conception of "story" as "the succession of events that comprises the plot or action of the fiction", and "subject" as "the source of human significance - that is, the moral dimension - and also the source of order - that is, the artistic merit". In his shorter fiction, James perceives a conflict between these two elements, with the *nouvelle* being dominated by the "subject" and the anecdote by the "story" element. Because the story element is dominant in the anecdote, the progression of events in the narrative occurs mostly in a linear fashion. In the anecdote, James says, the subject is followed "as much as possible from its outer edge in" (1934:233), while the subject element which is more developed in the *nouvelle*, is followed from its "centre outward", which is explained by Cowdery as "the expansion of one point into an ever-widening circle of meaning". Cowdery maintains that an anecdote, "receiving anecdotal treatment, would tell a story, while a *nouvelle*, with its emphasis

on development would sacrifice story to subject" (1986:26). A fiction such as "The Aspern Papers" would seem to encompass both these elements and the term 'tale' will be used for the sake of convenience.

1.2.2. The narrator.

James's tale is narrated by a homo-diegetic first-person narrator and it is in the accommodation of this narrator that some of the most interesting aspects of the operatic adaptation are to be found. Booth's (1961:361) essay raises the issue of the reliability of James's narrator, and he has identified three distinct registers within the narrative voice in the tale: "the narrator's self-betraysals ... his efforts at straightforward evocation of the past ... and the passages of mumbling, as it were, that lie between". He feels that James is unsuccessful in his attempt to integrate these three voices into a single narrator who is "used on the one hand to reveal his own deficiencies; with unconscious irony and on the other to praise praiseworthy things" (362). Booth considers that it would have been better if James had "preserved for a reliable voice the right to evoke the true visitable past and used the present narrator only on jobs for which he is qualified" (364). Graham (1975:59), however, has argued that the narrator "is not meant to bear continual judicial scrutiny from outside", but

[i]s at once reliable and unreliable, objective and subjective. We can stand outside him with one part of our minds, judging his selfishness and irresponsibility, aided by moments of obviously 'loaded' irony against him and also by moments where the narrator expressly judges himself. This allows us to resist full illusion and to see around the dangerous subjectivity of his narrative. It also helps us to read a meaning into his motives and his experience that goes far beyond his conscious understanding of them ... what we experience is a perpetually dual and moving thing: we are always moving into the narrator, and moving out of him (59).

In this sense, the unreliability of the narrator is an essential aspect of the method of the tale. The narrator is presented as perceptive in his understanding of the two women. His powers of observation are acute and his frankness concerning his own intentions lull the reader into an acceptance of his reliability. However, the ending of the tale finally reveals to the reader all the 'gaps' in his narration and achieves James's "apparent aim of a more complex reversal in the reception of this focaliser at the closure of the narrative" (De Reuck 1994:362). Although James's mode is realistic, there are striking elements within the tale which work against this surface realism and draw attention to the artifice of the work itself, elements which have obviously given impetus to the self-conscious concern of Argento's opera with its own status as a work of art.

Frequent critical reference to the grotesque nature of the narrator is summed up in Graham's description of him as "too obsessive to be 'natural', too feverish too mannered in his expression; too literary by half", yet he observes that the narrator "draws us straight into his fantasy-realm, where 'reality' unexpectedly seizes us in the form of powerful and almost

hallucinatory images, which lose nothing of seriousness for their comicality" (1975:60). Graham observes that many of James's characters are paradoxically "often not quite human, and yet are utterly full of life" (60), a factor which needs to be seen in relation to the overall melodramatic element in James. Graham's description of the element of exaggeration in James's characters has its counterpart in the *steigerungstendenz* in opera.

Although the narrator might appear to be the villain, the issues of goodness and evil in "The Aspern Papers" are by no means melodramatically simple. The narrator's ostensible victim, Juliana, displays as much cunning and ruthlessness as he does in her attempt to get the best she can for her niece, Tina, from whatever apparently noble motives. The possible importance of the papers themselves complicates the moral issues even further. Juliana's selfish concealment and Tina's ultimate destruction of the papers are wicked in the light of their great interest and obvious historical value. This dilemma contains within itself the conflict between the private life of the individual and his published, public existence. The morality of the unhindered investigation of the past profoundly concerned James who resented the invasion of his own personal privacy. How to reconcile such insistence on personal privacy with the acknowledged difficulty of fully understanding the spirit and atmosphere of the past without such access, is dramatised in "The Aspern Papers". Whether one can ever gain access to the essential 'truth' of the past is also cast into doubt by the events of the tale (one can argue that Argento's opera concretises just such an 'investigation' through the physical evocation of Aspern and his world). The narrator's quest is an extremely unsatisfactory one: the object of his desires is destroyed in his attempt, and he becomes aware of the far greater loss of his personal integrity (the extent of his moral awareness is problematised by the ambiguity of the last line of the tale where he refers to the portrait of Aspern he has retained: "When I look at it I can scarcely bear my loss - I mean of the precious papers" (143)).

One's attitude towards the narrator is further complicated by the undeniable existence of his conscience which becomes increasingly prominent as the events unfold. Holland (1964:148-149) maintains that his feelings of guilt

become pronounced and more nakedly revealed until, in crucial moments, they match in vivid intensity the grotesquely evil intentions he displays. His violations of Juliana's privacy and Tina's trust become increasingly outrageous, yet he becomes more candidly conscience stricken about them, welcoming the opportunity to divulge his aims and his identity to Tina while enlisting her as a cohort.

1.2.3. 'Scene' and 'picture'.

The structural form of James's narrative method already provides a framework for the dramatic adaptor. Ward (1967:7) remarks on the "proportionate arrangement of dialogue in relation to narration" in James's fiction, the arrangement "of the internal and external lives of the

characters; of characters, location and 'blocks' of material of all kinds." Ward here alludes to the concepts of 'scene' and 'picture' which are prominent in any discussion of James's narrative method. Wiesenfarth (1963:30) defines a scene as a

structural unit composed mostly of dialogue.... Through dialogue, gesture, and movement the scene comprehensively treats a portion of the novel severely limited by its brief duration in time. It serves either to make intelligible what has happened or to introduce some new element into the action. It develops through a logical movement what James described as start, turn and finish. As potentially objective discourse on a situation, it serves to provide one or more views of the meaning of events.

It is the 'scene' element in James's fiction which is probably most immediately useful to dramatic adaptors as it already possesses its own inherent dramatic qualities, particularly the presence of dialogue. James's experience in the theatre, although relatively unsuccessful, revealed to him what he called the "divine principle of the Scenario" (1947:188) which to him was the "key that ... fits the complicated chambers of both the dramatic and narrative lock". What James discovered here, according to Egan (1972:25), was

the possibility of the novel as play; of a narrative action built in scenic blocks. The divine principle of the scenario is the divine principle of scenic design: fiction conceived and executed in single-scene capsules and rendered, so far as possible, according to dramatic analogy with all the objectivity, economy and visibility of the theatre at maximum narrative stretch.

The concept of 'picture' in James is less easy to define. Wiesenfarth (1963:32) speaks of it as being "never so much a description of an action or a situation as it is a description to which a value is attached because of the relation of the description to, or its meaning for, a character in the tale". He goes on to state that James sees the term mainly in the sense of non-scenic structure: as a "rich, related, and summarized impression of an action or situation" in which the function is to "represent, to summarize, to provide for the personal sensibility, and to prepare for scene" (32). Frequently it is a

non-dialogue structural block in the novel.... It is usually related to a given value by the sensibility of a character. The picture can refer either to an interior state and event or to exterior ones in so far as they relate to a character's sensibility. The picture is used alternately with the scene, and in contrast with the scene, the picture is summarized and personal (32).

While the scenic aspect of James's fiction may make it amenable to operatic adaptation (the novelist has himself commenced the librettist's task in isolating dramatic moments), the "picture" element is, however, also a vital constituent as the unfolding interior psychological state provides the motivation for the exterior action of a character and for the events which constitute the story of the drama.

James perceives the 'scene' in the novel in fundamentally dramatic terms, and the frequently theatrical flavour of his fiction is achieved largely through an element of artificiality or self-consciousness which Perosa (1983:51) notices, occurs in James's increasing use of a "rarefied, artificial, and stereotyped form of dialogue". This artificial and often melodramatic dialogue finds its general equivalent in the inflated rhetoric of the operatic stage and underlying James's use of language is what O'Neill (1973:11-12) describes as a "language infused with the rhetoric of violence, its force contained but also intensified by a framework of decorous incidents. This very decorum often [conceals] violence, of which the typical form in James's fiction is betrayal". Levy (1957:56) maintains that James "domesticates melodrama to the settings of a reasonable and civilized milieu", and it is frequently this contrast between the genteel setting and the violent rhetoric which is the most striking feature of James's use of melodrama. Opera often provides a similar contrast in that the 'ordinary' is by the very nature of the art form exaggerated and extended.

2. Structure of tale and opera.

The structure of "The Aspern Papers" consists of progressive stages in the narrative, each corresponding to a point at which the narrator believes he is closer to his objective. The narrator, on first catching sight of the villa, remarks to himself that he "must work the garden" (1971:14) in order to gain entry to the villa. It is as if he is planning a siege and, indeed, much of the imagery is military: "I would batter the old woman with lilies - I would bombard their citadel with roses. Their door would have to yield to the pressure when a mound of fragrance should be heaped against it" (45). Graham (1975:63) has commented on this siege metaphor, remarking that the tale progresses

through stages of approach - some lingering and gradual, some directly aggressive - towards a dimly seen centre of alluring and menacing power. The stages are physical, room by room, box by box, as well as figurative. And repelling the approach, creating the pressure of the narrative, are the many obstacles: walls, veils, masks, locked doors, locked cabinets, tests and trials, a silent statue, a mocking picture.

The theatrical crux of the tale occurs at the end of Chapter Eight where the narrator flees in confusion having been 'caught' by Juliana (the mistress of the poet Jeffrey Aspern) as he is about to rifle the secretary in which he believes the papers are hidden. The effect of this powerful melodramatic moment has been achieved by a leisurely build-up of incident and tension through the preceding chapters as the narrator painstakingly approaches the object of his desires. The final chapter might appear to be an anti-climax as it is a series of scenes between the narrator and Tina (Juliana's 'old-maidish' niece), yet it is here where the major drama of the tale (and opera) are played out. The strength of the narrator's desire to gain possession of the papers is tested against his revulsion at the thought of having to pay the price of marriage to Tina. His mental conflict is

portrayed against the dramatic backdrop of Venice, and there is a persistent use of theatrical imagery which links his 'story' with the debate about art and life which is a central aspect of the tale.

The narrator's final interview with Tina is, in fact, the dramatic crux of the tale although it is not the theatrical 'coup' that the end of Chapter Eight is. His three scenes with Juliana provide strong theatrical material in themselves, consisting of confrontations made up of striking verbal exchanges. However, it is Tina's gradual development from the shy, timid creature at the beginning of the tale into the briefly transcendent figure in the final scene, seen in relation to the apparent erosion of the narrator's initial rapacity and ruthlessness by a sense of guilt and a sensitivity towards her, which provides most of the drama. Hartstock (1984:469) shows in this connection how James by using a centrally involved narrator eventually leads his reader to the perception that "the heart of the matter is not the papers but the tragedy of a woman." It is in the reflection of the narrator's growing insight and sensitivity that we witness this tragedy, and it is the opera's task to translate this aspect of the tale, as part of its larger thematic concern, effectively into the different medium. (Indeed, the opera seems to shift the focus even further away from the narrator's self-absorption in his own quest onto the 'transformation' that takes place in Tina.)

The following chart compares the structure of James's tale with Argento's operatic adaptation. The synopsis of the tale is based on James's chapter division, but reveals that Chapters 8 and 9 are divided into more than one scenic unit:

Tale	Opera
1. Plan to gain access to the papers. Information about the inhabitants of the villa. (gondola journey) Arrival at the villa and decision to use the garden as a cover for gaining entry.	Act One Prologue: <i>Quintet</i> (1895) (Early summer) Juliana as an old woman tells of events sixty years before.
2. (five minutes later) Narrator meets Tina and reveals his proposal. He leaves with Mrs Prest.	1. <i>The Lodger</i> (1895) The Lodger reveals that he wishes to rent rooms with access to a garden. Tina reveals Juliana's background and he explains his interest in Aspern.
3. (next morning) Narrator's first meeting with Juliana. The conditions of his stay are arranged.	2. <i>Quartet</i> (1835) (midsummer) Aspern is having his portrait painted, watched by Barelli with Juliana rehearsing a scene from Aspern's opera <i>Medea</i> .
4. (six weeks later) During this period he has no contact with the two women.	
5. (middle of July - evening) The narrator encounters Tina in the garden during which some of his interest in Aspern is revealed to her.	3. <i>The Portrait</i> (1895) Juliana suggests that the Lodger take Tina out. She reveals the portrait of Aspern. The Lodger requests Tina to get hold of the papers for him.
6. (two weeks later) Tina summons the narrator to meet Juliana who questions him and suggests he take Tina out in the gondola. During this journey he ascertains the existence of the	

papers.

7. (some days later)

Again the narrator is summoned to Juliana who reveals the portrait of Aspern.

8. (three hours later)

The narrator gains entry to Juliana's bedroom as Tina fears that Juliana is dying. The doctor arrives and the narrator leaves.

(an hour later)

The narrator returns to Juliana's room and meets Tina, while revealing his real name and purpose. Again the doctor returns and the narrator is forced to go for a long walk. (later - past midnight)

The narrator returns to Juliana's room. He is alone and the closest he has come to the papers. As he is about to force open the secretary he is confronted by Juliana which forces him to leave.

9. (twelve days later)

The narrator returns and learns of the death of Juliana. Tina offers the papers in return for marriage.

(the next morning)

He informs Tina that he cannot pay this price and she reveals that she has burnt the papers.

4. *Trio* (1835) (late summer)

Aspern is rehearsing Sonia while Juliana gives advice.

5. *The Music Room* (1895)

The Lodger and Tina enter. The maid summons Tina to Juliana's bedside and the Lodger, alone, moves towards the secretary in which he believes the papers are kept. He is confronted by Juliana.

Act Two

Prologue: *The Lost Medea* (1895)

The Lodger reads from Barelli's memoirs.

1. *Duo* (1835) (the end of summer)

Aspern has finished the opera. That night he swims across the lake and is drowned.

2. *The Proposal* (1895)

The Lodger learns of the death of Juliana. Tina reveals the existence of material which she will give him in exchange for marriage.

3. *Solo* (1835) (early fall)

Juliana tells Barelli that she wishes to retire.

4. *The Score* (1895)

The Lodger is tempted by his desire for the papers to agree, but Tina reveals that she has burnt them. After he leaves she does actually burn the manuscript.

2.1. Operatic transpositions.

Argento has shifted the locale of the tale from Venice to Lake Como. Tintner (1988:22), in the programme note to the first performance of the opera, tellingly justifies the transposition of locale:

readers have always felt the background of Venice was the very skin-and-bones of James's tale. However, James himself had visited Lake Como in 1872 and pronounced the place ideal for Argento's transposition: "I made", wrote James in *Transatlantic Sketches*, "an excursion to the lake of Como which, though brief, lasted long enough to suggest to me that I too was a hero of romance with leisure for a love affair..."; the area has been "the spot to which inflamed young gentlemen" of "immoral novels" invited "the wives of other gentlemen to fly with them".

The beauty of Lake Como made James ask where he had seen it all before. "Where, indeed but at the opera" with the singers grouped "awaiting the conductor's signal. It was better than being in a novel - this being, this fairly wallowing, in a libretto". And so from James's reaction to Lake Como, we see that a libretto about composers and singers would be totally appropriate in the eyes of "The Master", if Argento needed Henry James's posthumous approval. (22)

The change of locale from Venice to Lake Como is justified by the transformation of Aspern from poet to composer. Argento has taken the theme of literary composition from James and expanded it to include artistic and musical composition. He responds to James's tale which is so

self-consciously about the literary life with an opera itself so conscious of the operatic life: the life of the opera, the life *in* the opera, and the 'operatic' life around or outside the opera.

Argento has increased the number of characters in James's tale (Juliana, Tina and the narrator - the valet and maid are relatively unimportant) to eight. Aspern features as a major character in the opera and becomes a famous composer. The younger Juliana is a celebrated singer; Signor Barelli is an impresario and former lover of Juliana; Sonia is a singer and present mistress of Barelli, but in love with Aspern. There are two servants as in the tale, Pasquale and Olimpia, and a portrait painter. The narrator becomes "The Lodger, a critic and biographer", an introspective, yet pivotal character, whose operatic realisation illustrates some of the difficulties of translating a self-conscious character such as James's narrator into a viable operatic figure. Argento employs a different dramaturgical strategy from Joubert's opera, *Under Western Eyes*. Tina remains essentially the same in the opera, while James's unnamed narrator in the tale stays unnamed in the opera. The change from poet to composer facilitates the introduction of Sonia as a rival to Juliana. Sonia is to sing a role in the new opera by Aspern, which, in Argento's opera, is seen in the process of composition. The betrayal of Juliana by Aspern, which is implied in James's tale, becomes reality in the opera. The "papers" of the tale now become the lost manuscript of the opera *Medea* (with its relevant echoes of the betrayal of the mythical Medea by Jason which provides a telling subtext in the opera) which the Lodger, as critic and biographer, believes to be still in existence. The occasional mythical allusions in James's tale are amplified by the introduction and complete integration into the events of the opera of the Medea story which acts as a continuous commentary on the main events of the opera.

Probably the most important structural transposition is the division of the action into two time-frames. Half of the action occurs in the summer of 1835 and the other half in the summer of 1895. It is almost as if James's "palpable imaginable visitable" past, which is sought by the narrator in the tale, is recovered in the opera. In the tale we are given hints as to what transpired during the relationship between Aspern and Juliana but in Argento's opera these events are directly portrayed with the consequent loss of Jamesean ambiguity perhaps balancing the increased theatricality and plausibility which motivate the old Juliana's actions. The action in 1895 acts as a commentary on the events sixty years before and is seen to be directly influenced by these events. The figure of Juliana provides a tangible physical and thematic link between the two periods. She serves, in a sense, as the narrator and interpreter of the earlier events while participating fully in both parts of the story. The fluidity between the two time periods corresponds roughly to the step-by-step development of the narrative of the tale. In the opera each 1835 part of the narrative anticipates the subsequent 1895 scene. This structure parallels the leisurely buildup of tension, stage-by-stage, which is characteristic of the tale.

The emphasis in the opera falls equally on the triangular relationship between the Lodger, Juliana and Tina in the 1895 part, and on the triangular relationship between the young Juliana, Aspern and Sonia in the 1835 scenes (a typically operatic triangular configuration). There is a running operatic metaphor in the titles of the scenes from the 1835 part of the story: the first is "Quintet" followed by "Quartet" and so on, ending with "Solo" (which, as will be seen, ironically consists of two characters one of whom, however, remains mute). While the Aspern of the tale was based somewhat loosely on the figures of Shelley and Byron, the composer Aspern resembles the composer Bellini who had a villa at Lake Como, and who also possessed something of the romantic aura of these poets.

3. Act One: self-reflexivity.

3.1. Prologue: "Quintet".

The opera is in two acts, each preceded by a Prologue. In the first-act Prologue the two time periods of the opera are juxtaposed (which mirrors the method of the opera as a whole). The old Juliana is seen in a wheelchair attempting to remember the words of a song: "Snow and cypress;/Glacier and leaf" (Argento 1988:1). She interrupts the song when she is unable to remember the words and this causes her to journey back in her memory to the summer of 1835 (it later becomes apparent that the point at which Juliana forgets the song is significant in terms of her relationship with Aspern). In a sense Juliana acts as a frame narrator for these two periods and it is her memory which gives the audience access to the earlier period (as with Vere in *Billy Budd*, the events of 1835 are coloured by our knowledge of Juliana sixty years later). As she describes the events of sixty years earlier, it becomes apparent that the opera is not primarily concerned with *what* happened but with *why* it happened. (It has been argued throughout this dissertation that opera is not primarily concerned with events or action, but with emotional or psychological states.) Juliana, as narrator, conjures up the figures of the earlier period, giving 'life' to these characters. (The Lodger, later in the opera, seems to 'live' through the figure of Aspern.) As she recalls Barelli he appears on a terrace on the side of the stage and Juliana comments: "in one short season he made me *prima donna* of Naples, Vienna, Milan....and he made me his mistress as well. A better impresario than lover, but generous and not unkind" (2-4). Barelli begins to sing a barcarole: "No sounds of wheel or hoof-beat break/The silence of the summer night" (a paraphrased version of Longfellow's poem "Cadenaddia, Lake of Como"), but Juliana's vocal line soon imposes itself on his, dominating it, and she continues her narration: "This villa was his gift to me after he discovered a new protégée and busied himself launching her dual career. Sweet little Sonia: Barelli was discreet enough to set her up on the opposite side of the lake. Very pretty, of course, and quite a nice voice as I recall" (5-6). Immediately apparent in Juliana's comments are typical operatic rivalries and intrigues, and it will be seen that *The Aspern Papers* is full of 'inside' jokes or allusions which are very much part of the over-heated operatic

world, probably both that of 1835 and the present! It is this interest in the trivial as well as in the idea of 'high art' that might be seen as postmodernist about *The Aspern Papers*.

As with Barelli, as soon as Sonia's name is mentioned by Juliana she appears, and her vocal line joins Barelli's. Juliana imparts further information: "But without even knowing it, Barelli gave me a gift far greater than any villa: the gift of a god! The love of my life - Aspern! Today his bust adorns the foyer of La Scala, though at first his operas had failed" (7-9). Her vocal line dominates those of the other two in the characteristically layered discourse of the opera. As Juliana sings these lines the music takes on a warmer and more dramatic quality: (Ex. 1.)

(ASPERN enters, the epitome of the Romantic Artist, in his early thirties. He stands apart from

A tempo ma largamente

As-pern! To-day his bust adorns the foyer of La Sca-la, though at

(con bocca chiuso)

A tempo ma largamente

(con) (vivo) *mp sonoro* (fine)

first his operas had failed.

ASPERN: "Sweet vision! Do not fade from sight:

"Sweet vision! Do not fade from sight:

(7) *Tempo della barcarola*

Aspern appears and joins Barelli and Sonia, but their vocal lines are again interrupted by Juliana who provides a final bit of information:

It was Barelli who saw the genius beneath those early works, who encouraged him, guided him. But best of all, he promised Aspern that I would sing his next work. I, Juliana Bordereau, would be his inspiration. And so I was! And so I was! For with that opera, all doors opened to him - and none more so than my own! (10-12)

However, this time the voice of the younger Juliana (in the score it is indicated that this is the off-stage voice of the maid Olimpia) then joins in the song being sung by the other three. The link between the present and the past is made visual when 'Juliana' extends her arms to embrace

Aspern. With this 'frame-breaking' device, the audience is immediately made aware of the opera's thematisation of its own artifice. They all sing the lines: "Linger until upon my brain/Is stamped the image of the scene/Then fade into the air again/And be as if thou had'st not been" (13-14), and gradually the vision of the four fades and they disappear as their voices merge into those of an off-stage chorus. Juliana then completes her narration: "He came here to live with me that summer, to compose a new work for me. He came here to live with me that golden summer: and he also came here to die. Drowned in that calm lake. That beautiful lake which is nothing more than melted ice off those frozen mountains. Water that can kill a god and yet make anemones grow" (14-16) (the last line seems a deliberately 'poetical' intrusion). The scene returns to its opening tableau with Juliana again attempting to remember the words of the song that has just been sung: "Snow and cypress;/Glacier and leaf;/The Ice-age and...". Her final exasperated word "eternity" (17) ends the scene as the stage darkens completely.

It is as if Juliana's memory has conjured up the vision of these three characters (and her younger 'self') from the past. In a sense she has 're-created' them and a direct link between the events of 1835 and those of 1895 is established. The various relationships are introduced and some of the wit and cynicism of the old Juliana is revealed as well as her genuine passion for Aspern. In a scene lasting a few minutes the composer has skilfully imparted a great deal of background information using the device of Juliana as both narrator and character who functions as the physical link between both time sequences. Consequently, Juliana's narration takes place within the context of the dramatic action, both establishing her as a character as well as 'setting the scene'. In her Argento has continued both of James's narrative modes of picture and scene. Her narration is both 'noumenal' and 'phenomenal' in Abbate's (1991:17) formulation: noumenal in the sense that it provides information for the audience, and phenomenal in that it is a moment of self-reflexivity where the 'performance' is foregrounded - one is conscious of the four operatic characters both as performers and as characters.

The Prologue is self-contained, ending as it began with the song, and it points towards many of the themes to be dealt with later in the opera. Juliana, echoing the narrator in the tale, refers to Aspern as a 'god'. James's narrator frequently describes Aspern as such, often with ironic reference to the present age as lacking in 'god-like' figures. In the opera, however, the word 'god' has an added significance in that the opera is much concerned with the juxtaposition of 'real' characters with the 'operatic' ones they impersonate. The characters in the 'real' story become confused with the roles they play in the opera *Medea*, characters of greater dimension and of heroic and 'god-like' stature. Yet the vision of the four characters in the Prologue also seems to be a comment on their own insubstantiality, they are "sweet visions" which will ultimately fade. As will later be seen, Argento is introducing the idea of the nature of the artistic impulse, its belief in its own immortality, and the possibility of its own destruction.

The Prologue also sees the introduction of a literal song as opposed to the convention of the operatic song which is the normal discourse of opera. The frequent use of song in *The Aspern Papers* contributes to its particular qualities of operatic self-consciousness which, in turn, reflect its postmodernist flavour. This particular song is in the form of a barcarole, a distinctive musical form in 6/8 time, which highlights the deliberately reflexive intentions of the composer in alerting the audience to its status as song. In a musical discourse which is characterised by what could be called a rhythmically flexible and melodic recitative, the singularity of a strict and insistent rhythm such as this has the effect of drawing attention to itself as a discrete formal element in the discourse. There is an echo of the famous barcarole from *The Tales of Hoffmann* by Offenbach, and the evocation of older musical styles in a contemporary work results, as Lindenberger (1984:29) says of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* (another self-consciously 'modern' work), in the "the self-conscious listener" being "as much concerned with identifying these styles as with following the dramatic situations taking place on the stage." Abbate (1991:138) remarks that narrative song in opera frequently produces an "exaggerated musical simplicity" which is not a musical failure but "a musical gesture whose meaning must extend beyond the notes of the song itself to the song as performance (heard by the operatic characters) and narration." She cites many examples of songs recomposing "(in an alternative way) the plot of the opera that it inhabits." This nostalgic song in *The Aspern Papers* suggests the intensity and reality of Juliana's passion of sixty years earlier, while at the same time it parallels her present situation where she is a 'vision' of her former self. The song evokes a sense of tranquillity and romance (one later learns that Juliana and Sonia are able to hear each other singing across the lake - this is echoed in Aspern's "siren singing to siren"), but the song ends with the words, "Then fade into the air again/And be as if thou had'st not been", a comment on the transitory nature of happiness (and art). The contrast between the romantic scene on the terrace (and the characters' beautiful melodic vocal lines) and the wizened figure in the wheelchair (with her 'prosaic', matter-of-fact musical phrases which, however, dominate the more extended melodic line, suggesting that her present 'reality' is stronger than their romantic past) is theatrically effective. The scene from the past is a dream, the reality is the old and faded Juliana. However, the opera will show that our assumptions about life and art are not as secure as they seem.

An important theme in the opera is the passage of time and the transitoriness of human life and happiness and the attempt to 'create' enduring life through art - a reflection of James's stated desire to capture something of the "palpable, imaginable, visitable past" and to recreate the "poetry of the thing outlived, and lost and gone" (James 1971:x). There is a complex layering of narrative in operation in this scene as Juliana is the ostensible narrator who, seemingly unproblematically, describes events and characters of sixty years before. However, as she describes these events, the characters and Juliana 'appear' - she has called them into 'life', and Juliana is 'present' both in her young self and her older persona. In a sense the two time frames of the opera occur simultaneously in this opening scene, and then separate only to join once more at the end, but there less overtly.

3.2. "The Lodger"

There is no break in the music during the transition into Scene One: "The Lodger". This scene telescopes material from the first three chapters of the tale, incorporating passages of narratorial comment as well as dialogue. The Lodger and Tina appear out of the darkness in front of a gate leading from the landing on the lake. The reason for the Lodger's visit to the villa is gradually introduced, and the conversation between Tina and him starts *in medias res*: "...looking at furnished rooms. It seems impossible to find any with a garden attached" (18). In the tale, the reason for the narrator's desire to rent a room at the villa is the thematic basis of Chapter One. Apart from his motivations, the narrator also often unwittingly reveals much about himself: "Hypocrisy, duplicity are my only chance. I'm sorry for it, but there's no baseness I wouldn't commit for Jeffrey Aspern's sake" (51). In the tale, the narrator's confidante, Mrs Prest, describes the situation of the two women in the villa, but in the opera we meet both The Lodger and Tina without any previous background information, and it is the composer's task to clarify the situation as quickly as possible without the audience having the advantage of knowing the narrator's motivations.

In the tale the narrator first meets Tina in Chapter Two, which is largely taken up with this encounter during which the narrator broaches the subject of his renting some rooms in the villa. He overcomes her initial reluctance and he leaves with her promise to intercede with her aunt. The opera very quickly makes clear the Lodger's apparent intention of hiring a room and the assumption is made that the reasons for his visit have already been communicated, and their conversation picks up at the point where his desire for a garden is expressed. The audience does not know, however, that this is part of his strategy (couched in military terms in the tale) to gain entrance. Something of the expansive (and grotesque) nature of The Lodger (which is a striking characteristic of the narrator in the tale) is revealed in his comment to Tina: "My tastes and habits are of the simplest; I live on flowers!" (21), the second time in the scene, in fact, that he has mentioned flowers and his extravagant utterance is underscored by a brief, yet somehow rather excessive, orchestral flourish, also repeated for the second time. This exaggerated orchestral gesture indicates, however briefly and indirectly, something of the obsessive nature of the Lodger (obviously revealed more clearly through his own rhetoric in the tale). At this moment Juliana appears almost as if in response to the Lodger's grandiose expression:

(Ex. 2.)

(JULIANA, her wheelchair pushed by OLIMPIA, appears)

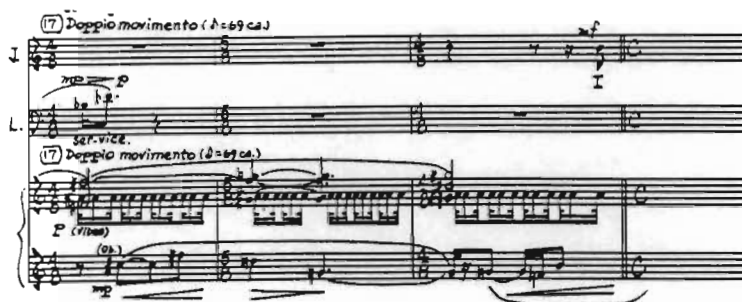
the rooms are ver-y bare. I don't know how you would... My tastes and naa-its are of the simp-lest; I live on the terrace.) a tempo JULIANA: f If you are so fond of a gar-den why don't you go in-land where there are flowers!...

A prominent feature in the tale is the skillful building up of tension to this first meeting with Juliana. The narrator's thoughts and emotions have been focused solely on this moment and his first sight of her is theatrically effective. He is left alone with Juliana and this almost induces a sense of panic in him:

...it almost exceeded my courage - much as I had longed for the event - to be left alone with so terrible a relic as the aunt. She was too strange, too literally resurgent. Then came a check from the perception that we weren't really face to face, inasmuch as she had over her eyes a horrible green shade which served for her almost as a mask. I believed for the instant that she had put it on expressly, so that from underneath it she might take me all in without my getting at herself. At the same time it created a presumption of some ghastly death's head lurking behind it. The divine Juliana as a grinning skull - the vision hung there until it passed (60).

This passage, with its rhetorically heightened language, reveals much about the narrator himself: we see his view of the meeting as a confrontation, as a stage in his campaign. There is also the sense of his unease with what he is doing, an unease that grows during the course of the tale into an intense psychological wrestling with his conscience (his idealised view of the 'divine Juliana' is contrasted with the reality of the 'grinning skull'). In the opera his expansive and eloquent utterance is immediately undercut by Juliana's virtually unaccompanied comment: "If you are so fond of a garden why don't you go inland where there are many far better than this?" (21) This has the effect of deflating the Lodger and his subsequent accompaniment in the orchestra is muted, suggesting the chastening effect that Juliana's words have had on him. Although his reply is neutral: "Oh, it's the idea of a garden in the middle of the sea!", the accompaniment suggests his growing realization that Juliana is perhaps able to see through him, something which his words on their own suggest less effectively than the music does (the accompaniment conveying

the contrast between the heightened rhetoric of the Lodger and the avaricious pragmatism of Juliana). The scene continues in this manner, with his attempts at charm and bluster being undercut by Juliana's matter-of-factness, the drama being played out orchestrally as well as verbally. Her comment, "it's not the middle of the sea. Merely the edge of a lake" (21-22), again mocks his expansiveness and patent insincerity. Her disparaging tone is emphasised by her vocal line which repeats his phrase, the musical repetition functioning ironically in this instance. The battle of wills between the Lodger and Juliana is directly reflected in the orchestral accompaniment, the orchestra-narrator providing an equivalent of some of the thoughts and emotions experienced by The Lodger which are not conveyed by his words. This is illustrated in the midpoint of the scene where the stage direction indicates that: "Face to face with the old lady's strangeness, the Lodger is momentarily at a loss for words. Finally, he takes out a calling card and offers it to her" (22). The musical accompaniment makes up for the absence of verbal signification: a rapid repeated figure in the accompaniment conveys his hesitation and confusion: (Ex. 3.)



Juliana "waves it away" and continues unperturbed, calmly accompanied by sustained chords in the orchestra.

This scene follows the dialogue of Chapter Three closely, with Juliana's final line: "Whom should I be afraid of if I am not afraid of you?" (25) exactly echoing the tale. The vocal line rises gradually, ending on a *pianissimo* high G, which has the effect of leaving her question hanging in the air far longer than it would in spoken drama, reinforcing the unspoken implication that it is naturally the Lodger who poses the greatest threat to her. Tina and the Lodger continue the conversation with Tina proving more forthcoming in the opera than in the tale in providing information about Juliana. Tina's 'aria' emerges organically out of her narration of their 'story'. It is information essential for the audience's understanding of the situation of the two women, but it is also the first of two large-scale expressive arias for Tina which provide information yet create the opportunity for 'performance' (a central tension in opera), and which give the operatic figure an enhanced stature and an aura which is rather at odds with the dowdy appearance and retiring nature of James's character (as perceived by the narrator).

Tina tells the Lodger about her earliest experiences with Juliana, informing him how Juliana would play the music of Donizetti, Rossini, and Bellini on the piano. She then sings a melody that will come to be associated with Aspern:

(Ex. 4.)

The musical score for Ex. 4 consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line with the lyrics "soft-ly. Ah!" and a piano accompaniment. The piano part includes markings such as "più", "con sentimento", and "red. sim.". The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "She told the most a-mus-ing stor-ies a-bout the great sing-ers, com-pos-ers, and" and the piano accompaniment. This system includes markings like "sub. con spirito", "accel. più mosso", and "rit.". The score is written in a standard musical notation with treble and bass staves.

The use of leitmotif is extensive in the opera, but it is the use of songs, which can be seen as an expansion of this technique, that is more prominent and, of course, greatly increases the self-awareness of the opera.

The final part of this scene is taken from Chapter Five of the tale, again using the dialogue virtually verbatim. During Tina's reminiscences, the full accompaniment of the orchestra has ceased and there is only a solo piano (an obvious recreation of Juliana accompanying herself which will occur again very powerfully in the final scene in the opera - this time with Tina at the piano). It is as if Tina's recollections have 'created' the sound of the piano (or vice versa). Cone (1988:136) argues that if it is accepted that operatic characters are the 'composers' of their own songs, then "like all other composers, they are constantly *thinking* music." Sometimes the character's "imagination will tend to transform the noise of his actual surroundings into music." (Cone's view sparked off an inconclusive debate in the pages of the *Cambridge Opera Journal* during 1991/2.) I would argue that a different process takes place in opera (as I have done throughout this study): that it is not the character that composes his own song but the character that is 'composed' by the orchestra-narrator. It has been part of my thesis that, just as in fiction where characters appear to have an independent existence but are ultimately controlled by the narrative in which they exist, so too are operatic characters part of a narrative process in which there is only the illusion of free action. The characters in opera are as much an element of the 'text' (the musical narration) in which they exist as are their counterparts in fiction.

Tina enigmatically informs the Lodger that "the piano was taken back to the music room and never used again" (32) after Juliana had started to cry uncontrollably one night. At this point the Lodger introduces the name of Aspern for the first time and immediately there is a tentative

rising semitone figure played by the piano which complements his hesitant questioning. As his probing becomes more insistent and he finally plucks up courage to ask her directly whether there is any Aspern material, this musical figure increases in tempo and dynamic until Tina can stand it no longer:

(Ex. 5.)

The musical score for Ex. 5 consists of three systems. The first system shows a vocal line (T.) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "You said you are a writer. Do you write a-bout him? do you pry in-to his life?" The piano part has a semitone figure. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "Do you, please? LODGER: Yes I have writ-ten a-bout him and I am look-ing for more ma-ter-i-al. In hea-ven's" and piano accompaniment. The third system shows a vocal line (T.) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "name have you got a-n-y?" and piano accompaniment. The score includes various performance instructions such as *p*, *molto ed agitato*, *mp*, *sfz*, *pp*, *molto più f*, *con urgenza*, *acc. e cresc. ad libitum*, and *Allegro (♩=92 ca.)*.

As in the tale, Tina exclaims "*Santo Dio*", and hurries off followed by the Lodger. On the same high G as Tina, the voice of Juliana is heard and the scene modulates into the 1835 period of the opera, again without any break.

3.3. "Quartet"

Juliana's sustained high note effects this transition into the next scene which is remarkable for its fusion of different levels of operatic discourse (the operatic equivalent of a Bakhtinian 'polyphony'). The lights reveal the exterior of the music room of 1835 and Juliana is heard rehearsing an aria from Aspern's new opera. Aspern is seated in the garden, having his portrait painted with Barelli looking on (the same portrait which occurs later in the 1895 part of the opera and which provides an effective iconic link between both parts). This scene is an example of operatic *mise-en-abyme*, with the contents of Juliana's 'aria' reflecting the events of the opera as a

whole - the larger opera 'framing' the 'smaller' opera within itself which, in turn, mirrors the larger work. This is a complex scene, with three stylistically different musical discourses occurring simultaneously: the nineteenth century romantic 'high style' of Juliana's aria, a conversation between Barelli and Aspern, and the painter's perceptive interjections. (This scene is 'grotesque' in a sense similar to that identified by Graham in James's tale. A feeling of exaggeration and distortion is evoked by the deliberate contrasting of the three different levels of discourse. The ultimate reality is (as one later learns) the exaggerated and apparently artificial one of *Medea*, although the comments of Aspern, Barelli and the painter appear, on the surface, more 'real'. There is also a temporal telescoping in operation here from the 'present' 1895 back to 1835, to the origins of opera, and further back to a mythical prehistory.)

JULIANA (within)

"O! wretched fate!
how harsh upon mine ears
doth grate.
That wedding song! And still
I cannot comprehend
The vast extent of woe that
has befallen me.
But shall I tamely view the
wedding torches' glare?
And shall this day go
uneventful by?
So hardly won, so
grudgingly bestowed? Nay,
nay,
It shall not be! While
seasons run their endless
round
And sands unnumbered lie;
white days, and nights, and
sun,
And stars in due procession
pass; must go down with
me!.....

BARELLI and ASPERN

BARELLI Not bad, maestro.
Not bad at all.
ASPERN You like it? Good.
Medea's vengeance aria, act
two.
BARELLI I like it very
much. Of course I've heard
it before
ASPERN (stunned, he turns
to him) You've heard it
before?
BOTH You've (I've) heard
it before!
BARELLI (laughs) No, no. I
only mean that from our side
of the lake we can hear
Juliana practice it. Even
across a mile of water,
there's no mistaking that
voice; and as I've always
said:
BOTH "No one else sings
Aspern so well!"
(they both laugh).....

THE PAINTER
(aside)

Thank God he's
moved! Blinding me
with that foul smoke!
(concentrating
Lips must be just as
little bit fuller...very
revealing, those lips:
arrogance...
conceit...most of all -
sensuality...
(Aloud, to ASPERN)
Per favore, signore!
How can I work like
this? You must
remain still.
(Satisfied, he
resumes).....

The discourse of the previous scene had been characterized by a melodic recitative and the introduction of the new mode (Juliana's aria) results in a contrast between the new form of discourse and the existing one. As Lindenberger (1984:88) reminds us: "No form of discourse, whether direct speech, 'Sprechgesang', or formal aria, is intrinsically more 'intense' or 'expressive' than any other; rather we experience its intensity or expressiveness in relation to the other forms surrounding it." The painter's comments (another, and contrastingly lower level of discourse couched in short, *staccato* musical phrases) indicate exasperation with Barelli and Aspern, yet his remarks also contain accurate character insights: "very revealing, those lips...arrogance...conceit...most of all - sensuality....Eyes...must let us see into the soul...show the true character...hint at a touch of cruelty, of calculation" (37-53). There is an elaborate

layering process occurring here. Life is being captured by art on two levels: through the portrait as well as on the broader thematic level of the opera itself, with three different musical styles simultaneously finding expression.

While the duet between Barelli and Aspern is conversational and 'low key' (apart from a fragment of quoted song "Siren singing to siren/Each from the opposite shore,/Unaware of the swimmer/Ensnared in between, who sinks to the sea-bed'd floor", which ironically reflects Aspern's present situation and foretells his subsequent death by drowning when he attempts to swim across the lake to Sonia), Juliana's aria is emotionally charged as it is part of a dramatic scene from *Medea* during which Medea prepares to kill her children. The *Medea* story is used as a constant paradigm of the relationship between Aspern, Juliana and Sonia. In fact, both Aspern's song and Juliana's aria simultaneously and ironically 'predict' future events. Lindenberger (1984:80) argues that the juxtaposition of diverse forms of operatic discourse enables "the composer to reflect ironically on the particular notions that these forms are meant to embody", and in this connection it is significant that Juliana's discourse is appropriate to the operatic 'high style'. There is a complex use of parody in this opera, frequently embodied in the excerpts from the fictive opera, *Medea*, with its deployment of older musical styles and conventions. Lindenberger notes that parody stresses the "continuity of a tradition at the same time that it deflates earlier works within that tradition" (102)). (Said (1991:46-47), writing about late romanticism and modernism in music, remarks that "parody and critique propose themselves as the only true novelty in so ripe and exhausted a period.") Juliana's vocal line as well as the orchestral accompaniment explicitly parody the early nineteenth century romantic style of Bellini, Donizetti and early Verdi:

(Ex. 6.)

Allegro moderato
(♩ = 120 ca.)

J. *con slancio*
One day a - - lone was

PUNTER: (aside) *mp*
What a dif-fi-cult sub - ject he is! But all the same, it

Allegro moderato
(♩ = 120 ca.)

J. *sempre stacc. e legg.*
to bid my... babes fare -

A. *sempre stacc. e legg.*
Ba - rel-li, I'm think-ing of ex-pand-ing Son-ia's part: you

P. *sempre stacc. e legg.*
could be ex - trin-din-a-ry. Eyes... will be the

The myth of Medea is used as an ironic reflection of the events that take place during the summer of 1835 and Argento also ironically highlights the 'foreignness' of the older romantic musical idiom by using it in his contemporary work. (In the depictions of both Juliana and Sonia there is a conscious examination and criticism of operatic 'performance' - the myth of the opera *diva* is constantly present!) These parodic elements also play an important part in the portrayal of the relationships in the opera. There are three different and mutually reflective conflicts being portrayed. Juliana is being betrayed for Sonia; Barelli is being betrayed for Aspern; Medea was betrayed for Creusa. There is also an examination of the concept of 'authorship' as Aspern ponders aloud the possibility of expanding Sonia's part - his relationship with Sonia is seen to be a vital influence on the final shape of the work of art. Thus, this work of art is determined by a variety of factors, not necessarily all of them artistic; Argento's opera deconstructs the idea of the integrity and autonomy of the work of art.

By juxtaposing the reality of Juliana's situation with that of the mythical Medea, Argento further alerts the audience to the artifice of the 'performance' (a performance which can, however, reveal authentic emotional 'truth' more effectively than 'realistic' presentation). In the same way that the tale is about the nature of literature and its relationship to life, and about the literary life, the opera, while presenting a 'story' on stage, offers a simultaneous commentary on the nature of opera and the operatic life. A precedent for such artistic self-scrutiny is what Peter Conrad (1977:135) sees in the operatic works of Strauss and his librettist Hoffmannsthal, which are "engaged in a shame-faced debate on the possibility of their own existence. They have that self-interrogatory anxiety which has increasingly overtaken modern works of art, making them ask whether they can live down their internal divisions or whether they dare claim to be art at all." There appears to be a persistently self-conscious debate within *The Aspern Papers* on the nature and function of contemporary opera. The deliberate use at times of a strongly anachronistic musical idiom, is an implied criticism of the esoteric nature and inaccessibility of much contemporary opera; the evocation of Bellini, among others, illustrates the point that opera has ceased to be the popular art form it was in the nineteenth century. Adorno (1994:40), writing about what was perceived as the 'crisis' of opera in the 1930s, remarks that opera "has been in a precarious situation since the moment when the high bourgeois society which supported it in its fully developed form ceased to exist". He insists that this 'rupture' in the development of opera has to do with the importance and recognition of convention. Opera, he claims, was

founded on so many conventions that it resounds into a large emptiness as soon as these conventions are no longer vouchsafed to the audience through tradition. The newcomer - at once barbaric and precocious - one who did not already as a child learn to be bowled over by opera and to respect its outrageous impositions, will feel contempt for it, while the intellectually advanced public is almost no longer capable of responding immediately or spontaneously to a limited store of works, which have long since sunk into the living-room treasure-chest of the petite bourgeoisie.

This would seem to posit the view that there can be no such thing as postmodernist opera if by postmodernism one means the overturning of convention and audience expectation. Adorno's seemingly pessimistic view appears to imply that melody and singable vocal lines are essential to the nature of opera, yet are part of an outdated convention. Argento, on the other hand, perhaps implies in his opera that these elements in opera must be seen as more than mere conventions, and as fundamental, formal elements which determine the very nature and existence of the art form. One can perhaps regard his view not necessarily as reactionary, but as a pragmatic recognition of the essential nature of the art form. If *The Aspern Papers* cannot be considered postmodernist, it does, however, exhibit certain characteristics which are typical of postmodernism.

3.4. "The Portrait"

Following the pattern of the rest of the opera, there is no break between scenes as the action moves forward once again to 1895. The Lodger is seen seated and alone on stage. Using the phrase "phantoms and dust" from Chapter 1 of the tale, he muses on the fact that he is, at last, approaching the source of his quest. The opening section of his utterance is 'pure' narration; he is imparting information directly to the audience, paralleling the narrator in the tale. There is a certain irony in his opening words: "All these years I have had to deal with phantoms and dust, the mere echo of echoes, while the one living source of information has lingered on here, unheeded, unsuspected" (58-59). Juliana is now not much more than a phantom; she is a source of little concrete information to him and his contact with her leads indirectly to the destruction of the papers, the one potentially productive source of information and the focus of his quest. Both Juliana and the manuscript become dust and the last direct link with Aspern disappears. In the tale, Mrs Prest, a wealthy expatriate American, is the narrator's confidante and source of information, while in the opera Argento dispenses with this relatively minor character and has the Lodger use the conventional operatic device of writing a letter to her to provide the audience with information. He reveals the reasons for his visit and the extent of his progress (famous examples of the tradition of letter scenes in nineteenth-century opera occur in operas such as *Eugene Onegin*, *La Traviata*, and *Werther*, a tradition continued in both versions of *Wuthering Heights* and particularly *Voss*, where, as we have seen, the letters performed a metaphysical function). The use of the convention of the letter is another conscious formal 'quotation' which alerts the audience (almost parodically) to the conventions of the discourse.

The portrait that was being painted in the previous scene is used effectively here as a link between the two time periods. Several scenes from the tale are again telescoped into one continuous scene which concludes with Juliana showing the portrait to the Lodger and his pretending not to recognise it as Aspern. Musically, this scene takes the form of an extended trio which is constantly interrupted by interjections from Juliana and the Lodger. A great deal of musical characterisation occurs in the Lodger's conversation with Juliana. His attempts to ingratiate himself with her are mirrored in the music which has an 'oily' insincerity at times:

(Ex. 7.)

Ex. 7 is a musical score for a scene. It features three staves: a vocal line for Tenor (T.), a vocal line for Lodger (L.), and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics for the Tenor are: "night!", "in-to the garden your self and pick them;", "come as of-ten as you like;", and "come ev-ry". The lyrics for the Lodger are: "day. They are all for you. — I can't im-agine why she does-n't come." The piano accompaniment includes performance instructions such as "decresc.", "mf", "mp", and "Tempo I Recit. (più mosso)".

The musical accompaniment rhythmically reflects the conversation as the discussion turns to the possibility of the Lodger taking Tina out on the lake, with the music evolving into a lilting 3/4 rhythm which immediately conjures up the movement of water:

(Ex. 8.)

Ex. 8 is a musical score for a scene. It features three staves: a vocal line for Juliana (J.), a vocal line for Tina (T.), and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics for Juliana are: "boat? Why don't you take that girl out in it and show her the place?". The lyrics for Tina are: "Tina: mf", "Aunt!", and "Oh, dear". The piano accompaniment includes performance instructions such as "mf", "mp", "leggeriss.", "Allegro assai e grazioso (♩ = 170 ca.)", and "ped. s.m.". The tempo is marked as "Allegro assai e grazioso (♩ = 170 ca.)".

Juliana offers the portrait to the Lodger with the line: "Do you know much about curiosities? What would an amateur give for that? I would part with it only for a very good price" (73-74). The link with Aspern is made musically rather than verbally as the distinctive semitone figure, first heard when the Lodger mentioned Aspern to Tina in the first scene, again is sounded. Here the musical shorthand functions efficiently, obviating the need for a long verbal explanation. The Lodger's duplicity becomes more apparent as he feigns ignorance, each repetition of the 'Aspern' figure seemingly emphasising his dishonesty. As Juliana leaves she hums 'her' melody from the previous scene thus providing a strong musical link between the two time periods which complements the iconic link between them.

After Juliana has left, the Lodger attempts to question Tina more closely about the extent of the material dealing with Aspern, and their dialogue consists of words intoned at an indeterminate pitch only reverting to melodic phrases at the end of each character's section of

dialogue. This gives the singer a certain amount of freedom as to emphasis and inflection (approaching the 'freedom' of spoken drama), and the contrast in discourse level gives their exchanges an air of 'naturalness' and spontaneity as well as conveying the Lodger's tension and Tina's reluctance to betray her aunt. The only really lyrical moment occurs at the end of the exchange when Tina exclaims that Juliana loves the mementos from the past and her rising phrase on "Oh, she loves them" (81) is taken up directly by Aspern and Sonia in the next scene, the cadence resolving into the beginning of the duet in Scene Four. This quasi-recitative is particularly characteristic of the exchanges between Tina and the Lodger in the opera:

(Ex. 9.)

69 Recit.

T. *Allegro*

L. *Allegro*

TINA: I have told her nothing; she only wanted to see you

LODGER: Have you not passed to her what I told you about Aspern?

69 Recit. *Allegro*

(Tempo) *Allegro*

T. *Allegro*

L. *Allegro*

T. because she is afraid you will go. She wants you to stay.

L. On account of the rent, I dare say. But I have my

T. *Allegro*

L. *Allegro*

T. I can't do that without being

L. own reasons for staying and I wish you could help me to make them good.

3.5. "Trio"

The structural device of commencing each new scene towards the end of the previous one emphasises the link between the two stories (and gives the impression of a unique insight into the earlier events as well as the perception of events of sixty years ago now reaching completion), and in this scene one again enters *in medias res* as a rehearsal involving Juliana, Aspern and Sonia is in progress (a similar situation to the opening of Scene 2). They are rehearsing the new opera, *Medea*, and the vocal lines of Sonia and Aspern are reminiscent of early nineteenth century Italian opera, while Juliana interjects in short, sharp phrases, giving critical comments on

Sonia's vocal technique. This scene further resembles the second scene in its juxtaposition of different discursive levels: the operatic excerpt is contrasted with Juliana's more prosaic comments which place it in an ironic context. Her hints on vocal technique parallel the painter's comments on his own artistic efforts in scene 2, not only emphasizing the art that conceals the art, but the deliberate intrusion of criticism of artistic performance together with the 'actual' performance by Argento serving to draw attention, in a meta-operatic exercise, to the status of his own work as performance. There is the added irony of Juliana's watching the enactment of the love between Jason and the Princess which, unknown to Juliana, mimics the 'real' passion which exists between Aspern and Sonia. The operatic (artificial/mythical) situation reflects, in fact, the 'real' situation while what the audience (and Juliana) sees, which appears to be the 'real' situation, is false, as both Aspern and Sonia are concealing their true feelings.

The figure of Aspern functions on several levels in the opera: as 'character' in Argento's opera; as a character within the opera *Medea* within Argento's opera; as 'performer' in a duet with Sonia; as 'composer' of the music he and Sonia are performing; and as 'musician' playing the piano which accompanies their duet. The exaggerated world of opera performance, both in its heightened theatricality and its banality, is also strongly evoked in this scene in the juxtaposition of these two discourses, a postmodernist blurring of distinctions between the theatre and 'reality'. There is an element of 'performance art' in the opera, it becomes "a vehicle for investigating the lives of its performers" (Sayre 1988:79). As well as constituting one discursive level, Juliana's comments on vocal technique contain an undercurrent of ambiguity which permeates all she says to Sonia. For example, her line: "You *have* made excellent progress. I hope I don't live to regret it" (91-92) is ironic, and perhaps indicates that she suspects that a relationship has developed between Aspern and Sonia, a suspicion which is about to be confirmed. It more directly refers to the competition between Juliana and Sonia on a professional level - rivalries between prima donnas are the stuff of operatic legend! A line such as Juliana's enquiry: "shall we have some coffee before the maestro ferries you home?" (92), encapsulates much of opera's curious mixture of the sublime and the banal. After the intensity and power of the *Medea* duet this line is prosaic in the extreme. (It is reminiscent of the oft-quoted line from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*: "Milk-punch, or whisky?" which punctuates the higher discourse of the exchanges between Pinkerton and Sharpless.) This line highlights the effect of this discursive juxtaposition and reminds the audience of the artificiality of what they are watching.

As soon as Juliana leaves the room, Aspern passionately embraces Sonia - again the intrusion of 'life' into 'art' - and the true extent of his feelings are revealed with his vocal line rising as his ardour grows (rising musical intensity perhaps representing emotional truth), culminating in a sustained high B flat (again fully within the operatic convention). Although one must accept that Aspern's feelings are 'real' within the context of the operatic performance, the heightened lyricsm of his vocal line carries within itself a hint of parody: the stereotypical tenor lover declaring his passion. Opera's intertextuality is ever-present and, indeed, Aspern's line,

"You are the real Eurydice" (96-97) deliberately problematises the distinction between 'reality' and myth. One has here the traditional nineteenth-century operatic love triangle: tenor, soprano, mezzo (Radames, Aida, Amneris; Pollione, Norma, Adalgisa; Don Carlos, Elisabetta, Eboli; Juliana is sung by a soprano but her vocal line lies lower than Sonia's). Aspern reveals a rather calculating side to his nature when Sonia, uncomfortable about betraying Juliana in her own home, resists his advances. Aspern's reply is practical, if rather cold-blooded: "...if she knew, she would never sing *Medea*; Barelli would never produce *Medea*; after the premiere we will tell the whole world the truth" (98), an ironic comment on the exigencies of operatic production and the brutally pragmatic world in which 'high' art is created. (This calculating side to Aspern's nature also alerts the audience to the parallel to be drawn between him and the Lodger.)

Juliana gradually becomes aware of what is happening and moves out onto the terrace. Sonia, embarrassed, pushes Aspern away which provokes him into declaring that he will row across the lake to her that night after Juliana is asleep, an assignation overheard by Juliana. As Juliana summons them for coffee on the terrace a bell is heard striking twelve and the scene once again reverts to 1895. The bell is used mainly to denote the hour of midnight at which time the following scene takes place, but also functions proleptically as its funereal association foreshadows Aspern's imminent death.

During Aspern's declaration of love to Sonia he remarks that he felt like "Orpheus among the Maenads" before her met her (96), a phrase used by the narrator in James's tale to describe his reaction when reading Aspern's correspondence. The reference is particularly apt in the opera as Aspern, like Orpheus, is both composer and singer of his own song, and the figure of Orpheus is operatically significant, particularly in this opera which is so self-consciously concerned with the art form. (Monteverdi's *Orfeo* is regarded as the first great opera and the Orpheus myth has been a fruitful source for subsequent composers.) However, unlike the mythical Euridice, Aspern's Eurydice/Sonia is the cause of his destruction. Adorno (1994:33) emphasises the importance of the Orpheus myth, noting that "Gluckian reform went back to Orpheus as the archetype of opera", and he goes on to claim that "all opera is Orpheus." The mythical Orpheus tried, in Conrad's (1987:19) words, to "wheedle death into releasing Eurydice by employing his musical charms he couldn't attain true felicity because he wouldn't consummate love in death, and he lost his Eurydice all over again." However, there is also the sense that the destruction of Orpheus, in this opera, symbolizes the decline, and even death, of opera today. As Conrad (1987:26) asks about the development of opera in our time: "What fate remains for a modern Orpheus but, in shame and remorse, to lose his voice?" In a sense Conrad's comment encapsulates many of the postmodernist ontological questions *The Aspern Papers* asks about opera itself.

3.6. "The Music Room"

Tina and the Lodger enter in evening clothes, "On the stroke of midnight" (101), obviously returning from a trip to the village, the scene again commencing *in medias res* (its parallel is the gondola ride in the tale). This scene consists largely of two monologues, one from Tina and one from the Lodger. Again the narrative mode is complex as Tina sings, in an 'aria' which is not immediately recognisable as such, about her experiences that evening with the Lodger:

On the stroke of midnight! I could not have wished the elements more auspicious for my return to society. I had forgotten how splendid the lake looked on a clear, hot summer night; and how the sense of floating by the pastel villas and reflected light disposes the mind to sympathetic talk. And the piazza - the sight of the bright shop-windows: how patient you were while I lingered and stopped, admiring or disapproving of their contents, theorizing about prices, like...like a tourist just arrived! And the crowded circle at the cafe: it seemed as if all the world was out-of-doors! (She smells the roses, laughs, covers her face to conceal her blush.) That little flower-vendor who thought I was your wife! It was extravagant of you to buy me roses when we already have more here than we could ever wish. Thank you: I have enjoyed every moment of this night. For in truth I had forgotten what an attractive thing the world is. (101-108)

She recounts what has occurred during their excursion, obviously for the benefit of the audience but also self-consciously aware of the presence of the Lodger. (The Lodger/Orpheus, seems to be leading Tina/Euridice, back to the realms of the living from her living death in the 'underworld' of her aunt's "darkened rooms" 113). One has the impression, however, that Tina's narration, rather than being only for the audience or the Lodger, is more for herself as she cannot quite grasp the 'reality' of the excursion, reinforcing the audience's perception of her previous cloistered existence. Her account has a strong sense of self-affirmation and her soaring vocal line is accompanied with great warmth by the orchestra. Tina is both recounting and reliving the experience: the orchestra-narrator in a sense 'presenting' Tina through the expressive musical accompaniment and letting her 'speak' herself - the operatic equivalent of free indirect discourse.

Tina then enigmatically assures the Lodger, "I will do what I can to help you", but they are interrupted by the entrance of the maid Olimpia who whispers in Tina's ear causing her to run off in agitation. The Lodger appears slightly puzzled by Tina, and sings: "She seemed to know that all this had been a bribe - yet strangely enough, she had not the least air of resenting my want of consideration" (110). A certain sensitivity and perceptiveness is revealed by the Lodger in his brief monologue which incorporates text (in the form of internal monologue) from the tale:

The whole thing was an immense liberation. And still, as she looked over the charming scene, her face had, in spite of its smile, the flush of wounded surprise as if she were thinking with a secret sadness of opportunities, forever lost, which ought to have been easy; that somehow for the best years of her life, she had been cheated, celebrating mystic rites of ennui in her aunt's darkened rooms. (111-113)

This monologue shows the Lodger trying to interpret Tina's actions and his vocal line initially has a meandering quality as he meditates on her possible motives. However, as he grows in confidence that his 'interpretation' of the situation is correct the music gains in intensity. A certain sensitivity is revealed in his perception of her "wounded surprise", the music taking on a suitably 'softer' quality. The musical climax of his 'aria' occurs on the Jamesean lines: "celebrating mystic rites of ennui on her aunt's darkened rooms":

(Ex. 10.)

she sees that the secretary's dust-cover has been disturbed; placing the candle on the piano, she
rall. . . (90) Espansivo quasi maestoso (♩ = 72 ca.)

some-how for the best years of her life, she had been cheat-ed of the

rall. . . (90) Espansivo quasi maestoso (♩ = 72 ca.)

re-adjusts the cover, then pauses a moment before the secretary as if trying to decide something.
sempre cresc. f f decresc.

world, cel-eb- rating mys-tic rites of en- nui

mf f

She goes to the garden-door, unlocks it and flings open the shutters.)
mp f poch. decresc. A tempo poco cresc. (h.2)

here in her aunt's dark-ened rooms.

rall. . . a tempo (h.2)

The words of this aria reveal the skill with which Argento has integrated text from the tale into his libretto. An expression such as the rhetorically inflated "celebrating the mystic rites of ennui" from the tale is suited to the 'high style' of the opera and Argento clothes it with suitably 'rhetorical' music. The Lodger is frequently used as a narrator in the opera - the direct equivalent of the narrator in the tale - and his role is characterized by these moments of introspection which correspond with the narrator's descriptions of his thoughts and emotions in the tale.

Tina re-enters with the news of the parlous state of her aunt's health and an uneasy dialogue ensues between them. It is interesting musically because it has no orchestral accompaniment but strict yet flexible vocal lines which are to be performed as described in the

musical instruction "at what would normally be conversation tempo in these circumstances" (116):
(Ex. 11.)

T. It is-n't des-ant. How much you must want them!
 L. No, it is-n't des-ent. Oh, I do, I do.
 T. You must wait - you must wait!
 L. do. Pas-sion-ate-ly! I will teach my-self to wait! I have your
 promise to help me. Natur-ally. But if you could
 T. Yes, but if she has de-stroyed them, that's no use.
 L. I thought you said you would wait. For what
 on-ly find out! Oh, you mean wait a - ven for that?
 T. else? I did-n't prom-ise to de-ceive, did I? I don't think I did.
 L. Oh, no-thing. It does-n't much

This exchange is a direct musical reminder of an earlier conversation in Scene 3 between Tina and the Lodger when he offered to take her out. Even though it now occurs in a different scene the musical echo functions as a form of leitmotif which contrasts the present situation with the earlier one so that the Lodger's 'progress' can be assessed. The wide-ranging vocal inflection of this passage militates against achieving the effect of 'normal' conversation, but typical conversational interruptions are actually written into the music. The scene thus has a feeling of heightened intensity while retaining something fairly close to the rhythms of ordinary speech, but is different from *sprechgesang*. The Lodger has reached a point in his quest where the presence of the papers is tantalizingly close, while for Tina this is perhaps the moment when she realizes the extent of the power she potentially has over him. For both of them it is a crucial moment and the self-conscious and abrupt disjunction in the musical discourse emphasizes this. It is a typical moment of reflexivity of the kind which Abbate (1991:29) identifies.

Left alone, with Tina's last words to him, "Do as you please" (118) ringing in his ears, the Lodger is tormented by the idea of her apparent willingness to help him. His indecision is

depicted musically rather than verbally as the four-note phrase to which Tina utters her parting line is taken up in the orchestra in a complex set of variations which musically illustrate the Lodger's state of mind. This is a fairly common contemporary operatic device (used to great effect by Britten, for example, in *The Turn of the Screw*). The Lodger's repetition of "Do as you please" (120) then grows organically out of the orchestral interlude. It is as if the orchestra-narrator, in an operatic equivalent of James's fictional 'picture' element, has been describing the Lodger's thoughts and then allows him to articulate his own thoughts. His tortured mental processes are mirrored in a vocal line which depicts his awareness of the moral ambiguity of his actions in conflict with his overwhelming desire to possess the papers. This is reflected in variations of the four-note motif, now appropriated by his vocal line, the orchestra-narrator letting his character 'speak' rather than 'speaking' for him. This culminates in the final repetition and the ecstatic outburst, "Oh, generous creature" (121) at the extreme limits of the baritone range.

The remaining section of this scene condenses several separate incidents in Chapter 8 of the tale. Having finally convinced himself that it is Tina's intention to help him, the Lodger enters the room. The music accompanying his thoughts rises in pitch and intensity, amplifying his excited anticipation. As he enters, an off-stage chorus continuously intones the name "Aspern" (122); however the musical instruction is to give "a very indistinct impression of the name". One could perhaps interpret this as a reflection of his psychological state, where the name of Aspern is uppermost, blotting out all other thoughts regarding the ethical aspect of what he is doing, and the 'indistinct' impression created by the chorus is the equivalent of his hesitancy. The chorus music grows in intensity and urgency until the Lodger is discovered in front of the secretary by Juliana. She hisses, ("passionately, furiously") "You publishing scoundrel!" and collapses into the arms of Tina. Against 'normal' expectations, Juliana's words are spoken, not sung, an intrusion into the dominant musical discourse and thus adding to their unexpectedness and effect. The final part of this scene has used many conventional operatic devices to good effect. The reflection of the Lodger's mental state is conveyed in his rising vocal line as well as in the surging orchestral accompaniment, while the off-stage chorus is a more subtle, semi-verbalized evocation of his state of mind. In a sense, this confrontation at the end of Chapter Eight is the dramatic crux of the tale and its most obviously theatrical moment, and it is used to conclude the first act of the opera with what appears to be the death of Juliana - a suitably theatrical 'curtain'.

4. Act Two: meta-opera.

Act Two suggests that 'art' is the ultimate reality - truth can be approached through art. There seems to be a reversion back to myth; opera returns to its roots in *Medea* and *Orpheus*. This act also sees the culmination of the relentless self-reflexivity of *The Aspern Papers* in the 'performance' of the opera-within-an-opera, *Medea*, which frames this act, thereby foregrounding

the opera's meta-operatic elements. *The Aspern Papers* extends the epistemological self-regarding of works such as Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Capriccio* into an ontological investigation of the nature of contemporary opera.

4.1. Prologue II: "The Lost Medea"

This act commences with a Prologue entitled "The Lost Medea" which has a physical setting similar to the Act One Prologue with two tableaux visible simultaneously. Before the Lodger emerges from the darkness, his voice is heard recounting the events that followed his flight from the villa. When he appears, he seems to have just returned from a journey, a further instance of the continuing structural metaphor at the heart of the opera. Reading from a copy of Barelli's memoirs, he outlines the story of the *Medea* while the figures of Aspern, Juliana, Sonia and Barelli appear on the terrace as they did in Act One; 'dead' figures effectively brought to life through art. They then don the costumes of Jason, Medea, the Princess and Creon. The self-reflexivity of the scene is immediately apparent in the estranging effect of having the theatrical characters actually dress in full view of the audience. Here *The Aspern Papers* casts a glance backwards at Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* which similarly fuses myth with the 'everyday' as well as the juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic. The shattering of the theatrical illusion is emphasised by 'exposing' the backstage and normally hidden aspects of operatic representation.

The first part of the Lodger's monologue is 'pure' narration; he explains for the audience's benefit what has transpired since his flight from the villa. The 'story' of the opera is enacted while it is being read by the Lodger who introduces it with the remark that Barelli "gives a synopsis in his memoirs" (130). The musical discourse immediately takes on a more ceremonial quality with an increased use of timpani while an expressive melody played by high strings, in effect, narrates the events. In fact, this is the only 'performance' there will ever be of the opera - a 'meta-operatic' performance - however, it is an appropriately mute one ("The characters appear to be singing as the 'opera' is performed but no sounds issue from their mouths" (129)). The 'narration' takes place on several levels: the verbal text of the Lodger, the unverbilised choral element, and the orchestra-narrator, all combining to produce a 'dramatic' and vivid, yet paradoxically, 'silent' version of the opera, symbolizing not only its actual physical fate but perhaps also the symbolic fate of Orpheus who has lost his voice. The Lodger describes it as an "opera that has never been seen or heard" (144) and, again paradoxically, the audience experiences it both visually and aurally in this complex narrative mode: the Lodger describing the events that are being presented visually by the operatic 'characters' and aurally by the orchestra-narrator:

(Ex. 12.)

bundle at his feet; (2) Poco allegro (♩=80) (reads: mp)

L. ret-to him-self - gives a syn-op-sis in his mem-oirs: "Ab - an-doned by her"

S. (mp) fpp

A. (mp) fpp

T. (mp) fpp

B. (mp) fpp

(2) Poco allegro (♩=80) (Vns., Vla., P)

(Cm., Cl., Fgts.)

L. hus-band Jas-on, - who plans to mar-ry the King's daugh-ter, Me - de-a's lam-ent-a-tions turn in-to

The final extract from Barelli's memoirs is a mixture of the Lodger's own thoughts as well as the words of Barelli who writes: "I returned at the end of the summer expecting to hold in my hands the score of Aspern's *Medea*; instead I held only the ashes of my poor beloved friend" (145-146) - a symbolic premonition of the eventual fate of the score of Aspern's *Medea* (an echo also of the death and cremation of Shelley, one of the models for James's Aspern). Symbolically, when the Lodger turns from Barelli's words to his own thoughts the orchestral discourse changes to the more prosaic sound of the piano. The ceremonial quality of the music has had a distancing effect, and his thoughts about the existence of the opera, rather than 'recovering' the opera the way in which Barelli's memoirs had (the 'full' opera with full orchestral accompaniment), go back to the actual composition of the opera itself which, in the audience's mind's ear, is inextricably linked to the sound of the piano. However, as he probes deeper into the events of the summer of 1835, the orchestra once again covers the sound of the piano and the 'world' of *Medea* comes briefly alive once more with recognisable 'Medea' motifs in the orchestra. The Lodger expresses his belief that Juliana has suppressed the opera from motives of revenge similar to those of Medea and the actions of Juliana begin increasingly to resemble those of the mythical Medea. The scene from Aspern's *Medea* 'enacted' on the terrace earlier, is now actually occurring in 'reality' in the lives of the protagonists in Argento's opera. The distinctions between reality and myth, and reality and performance, are blurred as life both imitates and is imitated by art.

4.2. "Duo"

The device of effecting smooth transitions from one scene to another is used throughout the opera but it is extended and refined in the movement from Prologue II into the first scene of Act Two. Appropriately, as the Lodger speculates on Juliana's motives, "What possible motive could Juliana have had to do such a thing?....Perhaps the same motive Medea herself had" (150), his thoughts are interrupted by Aspern calling Juliana. Obviously his speculations have brought the earlier 'story' to life but even more than this is the indication that the 'motives' he alludes to will now be investigated. Aspern, during this scene, is obviously excited at having finished the opera while Juliana's mood throughout is an ambivalent mixture of happiness and pain. In reply to Aspern's question whether she is unhappy she answers: "Nothing is wrong; I'm not unhappy. Only happy and sad - the way I always feel when a performance is over" (153). She could be referring to the fact that Aspern has succeeded in completing his opera, or else indicating that her 'performance' in concealing her knowledge of Aspern's infidelity and her own unhappiness is nearly over. Since their relationship parallels that of Jason and Medea, their 'story' - also the subject of his opera *Medea* - is similarly almost finished. Her utterance is rather obviously doubled by a flute in the orchestra, and there is a further sense of the intertextuality of *The Aspern Papers* as this flute which so transparently imitates the voice calls to mind many similar moments of soprano 'stress' in operas of a similar 'period' as this one. It also particularly hints at the soprano mad scene which frequently exploits this device, and suggests that Juliana is approaching a situation which could drive her into madness. Perhaps her action which shortly follows has a touch of 'madness' in it.

Then in a moment of heightened intensity both Aspern and Juliana place their hands on the score and sing an invocation to their love. Again the intertextuality is apparent as the voices follow one another in canon, suggestive of the musical formality of many soprano/tenor duets of this kind in nineteenth-century Italian opera. There is also the unmistakable awareness of various levels of irony throughout this scene. Both are aware of the falsity of this invocation. Juliana has been betrayed by Aspern and both recognise that the reality of their love is a theatrical one, as real only as the mythical love between Aspern's Jason and Medea, and existing only in 'performance'. The music that they sing is in the same style as the earlier excerpts from Aspern's opera, its formal, ceremonial quality indicating perhaps that their 'reality' as individuals has been superseded by that of the world of art - the ultimate 'reality'. (The irony is compounded in that it is the love they sing of that will be resurrected by the Lodger in his attempts to recover the manuscript so as to have the opera performed by a "troupe of singers upon a lighted stage [who] will enact/An ancient legend, full of woe" 156.) The two time frames of the opera are linked directly by Aspern's and Juliana's belief that a "curious scholar will explore these crumbling pages" (158), the "curious scholar", of course, being the Lodger (again the link between the Lodger and Aspern is strengthened). But even as persistent and single-minded a scholar as he is will be finally thwarted.

This invocation is then transformed into the song "Snow and cypress/Glacier and leaf" (160) which was the song Juliana sang to herself in the Act One Prologue and which she then was unable to complete. Again the irony is compounded: their love has not endured; it is not "impervious to change" (an echo from Keats's "Ode to a Grecian Urn" with similar elements of both poetic and iconic art), just as music is not "immutable" and exists only in the moment of performance. Tina will finally render that performance impossible with her destruction of the manuscript. The musical phrases lengthen and rise, ending in the final unison line: "Immutable music, forever flow to celebrate our eternal love!" (163-164) The stage directions state that "Juliana, momentarily forgetting the situation, has been carried away. She seems immensely happy and reassured" (164). It is as if the power of the music has overcome the duplicity which underlies the situation. There seems no question of the music, at this point, undercutting the sentiments expressed by the two characters, but the audience is constantly aware of the irony of the 'truth' being presented. A further musical irony occurs in the orchestra as the postlude to the song is heard. One becomes aware, perhaps for the first time, that the musical phrase accompanying the words, "glacier and leaf" is the same phrase used by Tina and the Lodger, "do as you will", the ironic link between the two 'stories' is strengthened.

However, the mood is soon broken, and Aspern states that he still needs time to attend to some revisions in the score to which Juliana agrees, with the intensely ironic line, "it would be best if I left you to your muse" (166), the audience being aware of Aspern's assignation later that night with Sonia. Juliana, alone, repeats the opening phrases of the song but breaks off at exactly the same place as did the aged Juliana in the Prologue, indicating perhaps that this is the moment of her emotional 'death': death for her as a singer is silence, and we do not hear her sing again as 'Juliana'. Once again a pivotal moment in the opera occurs in song as well as in silence, rather than in 'normal' operatic discourse.

The scene comes to a close with Aspern going down to the lake intending to row across to Sonia (he is obviously unaware that Juliana has untied the boat and allowed it to drift away). He undresses and lowers himself into the water and is reminded of the song "Siren singing to siren", first heard in Act One. Here the song acts proleptically as it reminds the audience of the legend of Hero and Leander in which Leander, swimming across the Hellespont to Hero, is drowned. Aspern's death has also been specifically mentioned in Barelli's memoirs and therefore the song also functions on a more practical level to signal to the audience Aspern's imminent death. (Once again, the potency and structural importance of song in this opera is apparent.) Aspern 'becomes' the mythical character, Leander/Orpheus, which is a reflection of his being referred to by Juliana in the tale as a 'god'.

4.3. "The Proposal"

The journey metaphor which operates throughout the opera is made more explicit in the next scene as the Lodger is seen arriving at the landing, having obviously returned from a journey. It is significant that he appears at the same spot from which Aspern disappeared a few moments before (sixty years in 'reality') - he only 'lives' through the dead Aspern who is the motivation for his existence. It is as if the death of Aspern has conjured up his presence; the only 'reality' for him is found in art. This can be seen as the operatic response to the tale where the narrator's identification with Aspern - illustrated in his invocation of the dead poet as a 'companion' in his quest - is frequent. The Lodger's impatience to ascertain the fate of the papers is apparent. Tina informs him that there is a great deal of material and reveals that she has kept the papers for him but will not let him see them. Instead, she offers him the portrait which is a highly symbolic gesture in the light of the theme of art and life in the opera, for the closest he will ever come to the true Aspern is through this iconic representation. The portrait provides a direct link between the Lodger and Aspern and is also used to strengthen the thematic link between them; the audience is meant to see the parallel between Aspern's exploitative treatment of Juliana and the Lodger's similar relationship with Tina.

Tina's music is calm and self-possessed, differing from her earlier musical characterization which was frequently uneasy or agitated in effect, apart from the expansive, lyrical moments in the arias. She sings about her love of flowers, "especially the roses at the end of summer" (177), and there is a strong sense of the profound changes that have taken place within her since her aunt's death. This is conveyed more by the musical accompaniment than the actual words she sings.

The Lodger tries to precipitate a climax: "Is this a bribe to make me give up the rest? Well so it is, and it can't be helped. I must renounce. Naturally you will understand I give up my rooms. I will leave immediately" (183-184). Tina is stung into a reaction and hints that marriage would obviously mean access to the papers. Her acute embarrassment is indicated by her vocal line where the 'plan' she proposes is uttered rapidly on one pitch - the resistance to melody indicative of her awkwardness (the musical instruction is that it should be sung as "in a rush, as though memorized" (186). This is the third extended exchange between Tina and the Lodger and again Argento uses a similarly flexible recitative-like delivery; but on this occasion, as opposed to the first two, there is a more prominent orchestral presence: the orchestra-narrator makes its mediating presence increasingly apparent here. The Lodger offers to sell the portrait for her, implicitly rejecting her proposal, and she is overcome with embarrassment. The irony that was prominent in the first scene in this act is still strongly present now. The Lodger speculates that Juliana might have wanted her papers buried with her, to which Tina replies: "She had an idea that when people want something badly enough - they are capable..." (188-189), a comment which reflects her own position as well as that of the Lodger. She finally is able to articulate what she desires, if only obliquely: "You *could* see them - you *could* use them" (192-193), referring to the papers. This is expressed at the extreme range of the mezzo-soprano voice against the full

orchestral sonority, suggesting her anguish: "I don't know what to do; I'm too tormented. I'm too ashamed" (193).

The opera follows the tale closely at this point, with the tale taking the form of the narrator's recollection of his meeting with Tina, while the opera dramatizes this meeting using the full expressive range of the orchestra:

Tale

I stood there dumb, watching her while her sobs resounded in the great empty hall. In a moment she was up at me again with her streaming eyes. "I'd give you everything, and she'd understand, where she is - she'd forgive me!"

Ah Miss Tina - ah Miss Tina," I stammered for all reply. I didn't know what to do, as I say, but at a venture I made a wild vague movement in consequence of which I found myself at the door. I remember standing there and saying, "It wouldn't do, it wouldn't do" - saying it pensively, awkwardly, grotesquely, while I looked away to the opposite end of the sala as at something very interesting. The next thing I remember is that I was downstairs and out of the house. My gondola was there and my gondolier, reclining on the cushions, sprang up as soon as he saw me. I jumped in and to his usual "Dove commanda?" replied, in a tone that made him stare! "Anywhere, anywhere; out into the lagoon!" (135)

Opera

TINA

I don't know what to do! I'm too tormented. I'm too ashamed! (She turns away, buries her face in her hands and bursts into a flood of tears. Then she faces him again, with streaming eyes) I would give you everything - and she would understand, where she is - she would forgive me!

LODGER (stammering)

Ah, Miss Tina - ah, Miss Tina.

(Awkwardly, grotesquely, he turns away from her and looks at the distant view) It wouldn't do - it wouldn't do!

(Sobbing, Tina runs up the ramp, almost knocking over the gardener as he returns to his work. He looks around at her retreating figure, and then at the Lodger's back. Shrugging his shoulders, he picks up the rake and resumes gathering up the dead leaves)

LODGER (without turning away from the view)

Pack all my things; I am leaving tomorrow at dawn!

GARDENER (mystified, but it is none of his business)

Va bene, signore.

(The gardener goes back indoors; the Lodger walks off among the cypresses and out of sight) (193-197)

The opera's response to the first-person narrative method of the tale is to incorporate the thoughts and emotions of the narrator in the tale into stage directions. The narrator's recollection of the dialogue between himself and Tina as well as his own reactions are used verbatim in the opera.

As opposed to earlier moments of great intensity in the opera, the Lodger's refusal of Tina's offer is accompanied by the full orchestra and the voices at the extreme upper limits of their ranges. In a sense this is the emotional climax of the opera (whereas the theatrical climax occurs at the end of Act One), the moment when Tina has completely revealed her feelings and hopes to the Lodger, only to have them rejected. The full resources of the orchestra are required to emphasise the strength of her feelings, unlike in the final scene where she is much more in control and the orchestra is more sparingly employed. (The presence of narratorial comment

death have left her mute. (Her muteness provides a link with the opening scene where Juliana vainly attempts to remember the words of the song they had sung together. She has found expression through him, and his death has left her silent.) The sombre nature of the occasion is emphasised by the funereal rhythm in the timpani which accompanies Barelli's final few comments. As the approaching storm becomes more apparent he remarks that he should be getting across the lake as "it may be too dangerous crossing the..." (204). His embarrassment forces him to utter a final "Addio". Although this word arises perfectly naturally out of the action it is a deliberately (again almost parodically) self-reflexive moment as it calls to mind countless scenes of parting in opera which end with the word "Addio" - this one much 'lower-key' than most!

As soon as Barelli is gone, Juliana removes a thick sheaf of manuscript paper from the secretary, kisses it, then closes the secretary which she funereally drapes in holland. The relationship of Juliana to Aspern's score is made explicit in the stage direction: "She picks up the score and holding it to her breast - as if it were a child - she blows out the candles and exits into the adjoining room" (205-207), almost as if she is extinguishing her own life. In answer to Barelli's final question: "Maybe it is fitting that this room on this lake should be his mausoleum; but why must *you* bury yourself alive?" (203), there is, significantly, only silence.

4.5. "The Score"

The major structural linking device between the previous scene and this one is the sound of a piano. The connecting music is dominated by the melody that accompanied Aspern and Juliana's solemn invocation, "To celebrate our love", but it is now given ironic point in the light of what has subsequently occurred. It functions as leitmotif here in that it recalls the earlier situation but from a new and ironic perspective. As the light fades on the previous scene with the final focus on the portrait of Juliana, the piano is heard in the darkness and it is a prominent presence during this last scene. As in two of the other operas examined in this study (Herrmann's *Wuthering Heights* and Meale's *Voss* in particular), the piano signifies an everyday, prosaic 'reality'. However, in *The Aspern Papers*, as in *Voss*, it has an additional range of symbolic meanings which have become apparent during the opera. Tina is seen playing (almost as if she has discovered her 'voice' through her relationship with the Lodger) as the Lodger approaches. In James's tale, the narrator had spent the time after his meeting with Tina in an agony of confusion and guilt:

I am far from remembering clearly the succession of events and feelings during this long day of confusion, which I spent entirely in wandering about, without going home, until late at night: it only comes back to me that there were moments when I pacified my conscience and others when I lashed it into pain (138)

During the course of the tale, the narrator is increasingly portrayed in a more sympathetic manner. His sense of guilt is strong as he wanders aimlessly through the streets of Venice (which functions as a theatrical backdrop to his little drama. The use of theatrical imagery prominent in the tale has been incorporated and expanded in the opera into the blurring of the distinctions between 'reality' and the theatrical.) The final confrontation between the Lodger and Tina parallels James's concluding dramatic confrontation between the narrator and Tina.

The increasing sense of guilt and the pangs of conscience exhibited by the narrator in the tale are suggested in the opera by the series of rhetorical questions that the Lodger poses:

So that is the price? To marry a ridiculous, pathetic, provincial old maid....What a strange revulsion grips me! Like a man suddenly awakened by the thought that he had left the house-door ajar or a candle burning under a shelf. Am I still in time to save my goods? Am I still in time? The manuscript seems now more precious than ever; it is absurd to renounce it so easily. But am I ready to pay the price? (208-213)

The Lodger's first line, "So that is the price" uses the same musical motif as "Do as you please", and the link with his previous crisis of conscience is made plain. The title of this scene, "The Score", has something of the typical Jamesean ambiguity with its connotations of success or victory in games-playing, as well as its more direct meaning denoting the manuscript of Aspern's opera. (The Lodger's readiness to pay the "price" reflects the theme of financial reward which is an important theme in the tale.) During these reflections of the Lodger the voice of Tina is heard as she accompanies herself in the song, "No sounds of wheel or hoof-beat", which was first heard in the Prologue to Act One. The Lodger recognizes it as having been composed by Aspern. It is a barcarolle and there is a musical conflict between Tina's insistent 6/8 rhythm and the Lodger's rapidly moving vocal line, her relentless rhythm gradually gaining the ascendancy. In his final meeting with Tina in James's tale, the narrator was struck by a change in her. He had left her in a state of acute embarrassment after the failure of her proposal, but now he perceives "a rare alteration in her" which has a startling effect upon him.

This transformation of the appearance of Tina is a projection onto Tina of the narrator's own intense desire to acquire the papers; it is as if through his dedication to art he has brought her, however briefly, fully to 'life', which adds an element of moral ambiguity to his actions. In theatrical terms this is difficult to render although the opera is able to portray some of this vision of the narrator's in that, while Tina sings her song, the Lodger reveals to the audience the effect her appearance has on him. (Tina's vocal line merges with those of the other four 'characters' and the back-stage chorus, but her soaring phrases are more prominent as their vocal utterances are wordless, and the lush orchestral accompaniment is able to suggest something of her radiance.) It is at a moment such as this that the powerfully enhancing effect that music possesses can convey this brief transcendence for Tina. (One of the 'problems' of the operatic adaptation is that the beauty of Tina's music tends to give the impression of a far more dynamic and alluring character

than exists in James's tale.) Here one also sees exemplified the strengths of the operatic ensemble where, what is ostensibly a duet between the Lodger and Tina, becomes a far more complex musical structure with four separate textures, each character or group remaining distinct and separate, yet contributing to the overall meaning. However, this scene takes the form of a duet (the scene is focalised through Tina and the Lodger and the voices of Juliana, Sonia, Aspern and Barelli are heard, all singing in this same 6/8 rhythm). The Lodger's words again closely echo the tale:

Tale

She stood in the middle of the room with a face of mildness bent on me, and her look of forgiveness, of absolution, made her angelic. It beautified her; she was younger; she was not a ridiculous old woman. This trick of her expression, this magic of her spirit, transfigured her, and while I still noted it I heard a whisper somewhere in the depths of my conscience: 'Why not, after all - why not? It seemed to me I *could* pay the price. (141)

Opera

How could she look at me with such mildness after what I have done? A look of forgiveness, of absolution, that makes her angelic. Is it merely a trick of candlelight, her expression, or has her sense of failure transfigured her? Whatever it is, a fantastic brightness shines about her, a magic of the spirit that beautifies her: she is no longer a ridiculous old maid. Why not, after all - why not? It seems I am ready to pay the price? Why not? why...(216-223)

As we have seen, the dramatic core of the opera is to be found in the songs, particularly in this one. As they sing, the four figures become visible in the cypress grove, wearing their *Medea* costumes; 'life' is being regenerated through art:

(Ex. 14.)

The musical score for Example 14 is a complex ensemble piece. It features five vocal staves at the top, each with a character's name: JULIANA, SONIA, ASPERN, BARELLI, and T. (Tina). Below these are two instrumental staves: Pno. (Piano) and Orch. (Orchestra). The vocal parts are written in 6/8 time. The lyrics for Tina and the Lodger are as follows:

Tina: Lia-ger un-till my heart... shall take in-to it-self This Sum-mer night, This

Lodger: How could she look at me like that, with such mild-ness, af-ter

The score includes various musical markings such as *pp* (pianissimo), *mp* (mezzo-piano), *sub. pp* (sub-pianissimo), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *allarg.* (allargando), and *a tempo*. The Piano part features a prominent melody with a *grace* note. The Orchestra part provides a harmonic and rhythmic foundation.

This song, which the four watching figures sang in the Prologue to Act One, functions as a frame. The events of sixty years before have reached their culmination in the present scene in the music room and the words of the song are prophetic of the final event of the opera which is the burning of the manuscript. The destruction of this last link with the past will sever the connection with that "palpable imaginable visitable past" of which James speaks in his Preface to the tale. The relationship between Juliana and Aspern will become nothing more than the subject of anecdote, a footnote in Barelli's memoirs, of less substance than the myth of Jason and Medea. The love between Jason and Medea has at least been immortalized in myth but the work that was to have immortalized the love between Juliana and Aspern will be nothing more than ashes, less substantial than the "crumbling pages" they sing of in their song.

Tina's final phrase: "And be as if thou hadst not been. Then fade", signals the end of the ensemble, and her next phrase "Good-bye. I hope you will be very happy" (224) ends the ensemble in mid-phrase, with the Lodger showing surprise: "I beg your pardon: what did you say?" (225) The narrator in the tale describes his words, "good-bye - Good -bye?" (141) as being uttered "with an inflexion interrogative and probably foolish", which is well captured in the equivalent vocal line of the Lodger:

(Ex. 15.)

The musical score for Example 15 consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows Tina (T.) and Lodger (L.) with piano accompaniment. Tina's line begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a half note, and then a triplet of eighth notes. Her lyrics are: "Are you going to-day? But it does not matter, for whenever you go I—". The Lodger's line begins with a half note, followed by a half note, and then a half note. His lyrics are: "bye—good-bye?". The piano accompaniment features a rising semitone motif. The second system continues the conversation. Tina's line begins with a half note, followed by a half note, and then a half note. Her lyrics are: "—shall not see you again. I don't want to." The Lodger's line begins with a half note, followed by a half note, and then a half note. His lyrics are: "What shall you do—where shall you go?". The piano accompaniment continues with the rising semitone motif. The score is marked with various dynamics and articulations, including *parlante*, *cantabile*, *pp*, *f*, and *mf*.

As one can see, a musical motif, this time the rising semitone that is directly linked to Aspern, again accompanies this final conversation which, like their previous exchanges, takes the form of a flexible recitative. While Tina tells the Lodger that she has burned the manuscript, the 'Medea' leitmotif is heard in the orchestra. The final moments between the Lodger and Tina before the burning of the score have closely followed the tale and the narrator's observations in the tale become stage directions in the libretto. The opera differs from the tale in that the Lodger wishes to verify the truth of Tina's statement that she has burnt the papers. He

(involuntarily moves towards the secretary; checks himself) Oh, you may look if you don't believe me; it isn't locked. (He doesn't move but continues to stare at the panels, unable to decide.) You once told me that I couldn't deceive, but perhaps you've changed your mind. (For a moment, neither one moves; then suddenly the transformation is over - Tina is again a plain, dingy, older person.) (227-228)

This final transformation of Tina is accomplished in musical rather than visual terms. The rising semitone phrase which accompanies all this exchange suddenly stops and Tina's line, "I can't stay with you any longer" (228), is sung over complete silence in the orchestra - the sudden 'gap' indicating the visual change in her as well as the 'silence' that now exists between them.

Lawrence Holland (1964:154) describes the narrator in the tale as being left alone in a "strangely twisted version of Orpheus' separation from Euridice, [who] turns her back on him, but she pauses to look back once, giving him the 'one look' that marks their separation but grips his memory." The narrator, in the tale, keeps the portrait, commenting: "When I look at it I can scarcely bear my loss - I mean of the precious papers" (143). (It is interesting to note how James altered his first version which was: "When I look at it my chagrin at the loss of the letters becomes almost intolerable." The ambiguity in the second version is increased in the hint that the loss is greater than merely that of the papers.) Booth (1961:359) maintains that "we are left permanently in doubt as to whether he has any suspicion of suffering a more serious loss, whether we think of that loss as of his honor or as of Tina herself. What we do know is ... the schemer has shown himself as the chief victim of his own elaborate scheme." But the narrator surely gains some of our sympathy in the process. He has lost the opportunity to live, to consummate the processes of life offered to him by Tina.

Tina's final action in the opera is to retrieve the manuscript from within the secretary. The four figures reappear among the cypresses and there comes the sound of an "indistinct murmuring" from the off-stage chorus as well as a distinctive 'Medea' theme in the violins which makes the connection explicit. She takes one page of the manuscript and sets fire to it with the candle. As she does so, the voice of Barelli is heard: "Ordered into exile, she is granted a single day's delay to bid farewell to her children." As Tina lights the next page Sonia appears singing a line from *Medea* and Barelli disappears. Then Aspern appears singing "Siren singing to siren", and Sonia disappears. As a page of the manuscript is burned one of the figures disappears, and after they have all gone Tina continues burning the manuscript page by page. As the 'text' in which each character lives disappears, so each of the characters is erased.

The last of the figures (in the cypress grove) to disappear is Juliana/Medea. The tragic myth has been fulfilled - her 'child' (the score) is dead. She sings the lines: "A hundred years from now, upon a lighted stage, A troupe of singers will enact The ancient legend of our love"

(233-235). These are the final words of the opera and perhaps signify the transcendence of time by art. The destruction of the manuscript has severed the final link with the past. The story of the young Juliana and Aspern, Sonia and Barelli had, as it were, been conjured up in the memory of the old Juliana at the beginning of the opera and now it is Tina who lays the 'ghosts' to rest. The opera ends on a note of silence (as do several of the other operas examined in this study) - the room darkens and then the blazing pages cause the room to grow "brighter and quieter" (236), which is Argento's final meta-operatic statement of the artifice that the audience has experienced on stage.

Lawrence Holland (1964:152-153) sees the burning of the papers in James's tale as an image

of the betrayals and wastage which recur in the story - but also an image of the intense passion which produced the "shreds and relics" of Aspern's affair with Juliana, and produced the dream of love which is consecrated by Tina's pathetic sacrifice and commemorated by the Historian. Tina has done not simply the right thing (too long delayed) nor the wrong thing but, as she puts it, the "great thing": the only gesture - ruinously, regrettably destructive, intensely expressive, faithful to the passion the papers symbolize ... the only act which is now adequate to the tragic experience which has ensued.

The depiction of the destruction of the score is, of course, a telling theatrical gesture though it is interesting to note a review of the premiere of the opera in *The New York Times* (Nov. 20, 1988) by Bernard Holland in which he objects to this obvious theatricality. The review is worth quoting at some length as it makes some debatable points about the difficulties in adapting fiction (and particularly the work of James) for the musical theatre:

That James's characters are more interesting than Mr Argento's is hardly the composer's fault. Opera is a reductive medium - a purveyor of strong themes and vivid gestures. In Jamesian style, detail creates weight, characters watch other characters and themselves, drawing minute inferences from the turn of a head, a twitching eyebrow, a twinge of conscience or memory, a stress upon a single word in a conversation.

Opera's powers of inference and allusion are more limited. It thrives on the concrete, the palpable. In the novella, for example, the decisive events are not witnessed by the reader; in James's hands, the unseen becomes that much more ominous.... James teases us as to the nature of Aspern's papers. Opera, on the other hand, needs something we can see, so it creates a manuscript and waves it in the audience's face.... As the novella ends, the Lodger is chilled to hear that the manuscripts have been destroyed the night before. Mr Argento, however, sends him away and then leaves Tina to burn them before our eyes. It is the bold, striking scene James would have abhorred, but the kind that gives opera its visceral - and quite unliterary - appeal.

This view seems too reductive; the opera remains remarkably faithful to the spirit of James's tale and it is debatable whether James 'abhorred' the bold gesture when necessary! Perhaps one could object to Tina's action by arguing that it is inconsistent with the way she is presented in both the tale and the opera. The narrator remarks on a number of occasions that she is so transparently

honest and is incapable of deceit that her lying to him now is perhaps psychologically inconsistent with what has gone before if judged purely in terms of psychological realism. However, she has learned the art of 'performance' and deception from two excellent teachers in both Juliana and the Lodger himself. Whereas both Lawrence Holland's and Bernard Holland's interpretation explains the burning of the papers within the thematic context of the respective tale and the opera, it is important to bear in mind that the burning of the operatic manuscript at the end of the opera needs to be seen in its larger meta-operatic context. This could be seen as Argento's dramatisation of the problem of the 'death' of opera which receives prominence in his opera.

It can be argued that the operatic version of "The Aspern Papers" constitutes a particularly faithful translation of the tale, retaining and developing many of its themes and concerns as well as much of its spirit. It exploits the full resources of contemporary opera to create a work that is peculiarly true to James, in spite of the considerable structural differences. There is a constant awareness of the artificiality of the 'performance': of opera drawing attention to itself. Melodramatic elements from the tale are exploited as a means to a broader examination of the self-reflexive nature of the art form. As in James's fiction, the melodrama tends more towards that of the consciousness itself; in the words of Brooks (1976:178) the "surface tokens" direct the attention towards the "tenor they ... convey." As in much of James's later fiction, the melodrama finds expression more and more in language rather than in action.

Argento's opera *The Aspern Papers* has responded precisely to those elements of fictional self-reflexivity in James's work - his preoccupation with the 'life in literature' in "The Aspern Papers" - in an opera which is concerned with the art form itself on the meta-discursive level, and which exploits traditional operatic devices in a virtual meta-operatic manner which, to adapt Waugh's (1984:2) definition: "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between [opera] and reality." The opera also exploits many of the narratorial devices available to the contemporary composer and offers a paradigm for the way in which narrative can be translated from one medium into another.

Conclusion

This dissertation has demonstrated how fruitful the novel has been as a source for contemporary operatic adaptation. The operas examined in this study exemplify several current trends in operatic composition and have responded with varying degrees of sophistication to their fictional origins. The two operatic versions of Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* revealed the most conventional approach to contemporary operatic adaptation, while Joubert's *Under Western Eyes* is a relatively unsophisticated response to Conrad's novel. Britten's adaptation of *Billy Budd*, however, is an undoubted masterpiece and is a sensitive and imaginative reworking of Melville's novel. Meale's *Voss* has received both praise and opprobrium but, as was indicated in chapter 4, it must be seen as a provisional statement on what could be termed postcolonial opera. The hybrid nature of the postcolonial experience as portrayed in White's novel was seen to be particularly amenable to the hybridity of opera. Paradoxically, Argento's opera, *The Aspern Papers*, while employing a conservative idiom, is perhaps the most innovative recent response to a fictional work. As has been suggested, it signals a change of focus in contemporary opera: a new direction which might prove to be stimulating and productive. Its foregrounding of meta-operatic elements was seen to be an essential aspect of the art form itself. The aphorism that metafiction is as old as fiction itself holds true of opera as well. From the time of Monteverdi's creation of opera's quintessential figure, Orpheus, in the early seventeenth century, the self-awareness of the art form has been apparent. The parallel between Argento's *The Aspern Papers* and Strauss's *Capriccio* also springs immediately to mind. Strauss's work occurred at a critical point in operatic history where opera itself appeared to be exhausted; similarly, *The Aspern Papers* seems to represent a culminating moment in operatic development where the relentless experimentation of the postwar years has apparently ended in stalemate and the more 'popular' idiom of this opera can be seen as mapping out a new direction for opera.

Whether one can talk about postmodernist opera as such, however, is debatable; Lindenberger (1988:41) insists that if "such a style has developed at all" it should "threaten the very foundation upon which opera as an institution has rested during the last century and more." He further remarks that "[i]f there is indeed such a style as 'postmodern opera', it may well remain a compromise between the two antithetical terms encompassed by the phrase" (46). However, he admits that postmodernist tendencies do exist in performance style and interpretation, as well as in certain new and innovative forms. One can view some of the 'operas' of Philip Glass in this light as well as John Adams's highly successful, *Nixon in China*. It must be said that both Glass and Adams are moving further into the operatic mainstream in their exploitation of many of the conventions of the art form, and one can consider *Nixon in China* as 'traditional' in the sense that it uses what have become almost 'mythical' figures. Adams himself notes that "[i]t seemed to me the subconscious of our culture is really more profoundly affected by myths of the great world figures, and in Nixon and in Mao I was able to identify very strong

archetypes" (in Lindenberger 1988:48). Lindenberger notes that though Adams's "heroes are drawn from a more recent past than those of earlier operas, they also belong to a long line of historical figures" (48) in opera.

The study of the operatic adaptation of the novel is an area where further interesting work needs to be undertaken. This study has shown the many equivalences between fictional and operatic discourse and it has demonstrated parallels and differences between the operation of fictional and operatic narrative. The proposition that the function of the fictional narrator is, to a large extent, appropriated by the orchestra, has proved valid in all the operas examined in this dissertation and it has been argued throughout that opera is a diegetic rather than a mimetic art form. Thus far there have been relatively few operatic adaptations of contemporary fiction (operatic versions of Doris Lessing's science-fiction novels: *The Marriages between Zones, Three, Four, and Five*, and *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* are the exceptions), but as this situation changes, the study of metaphrasis could become an area of great interest. Considerable critical attention has been deployed on the translation of plays into operas as well as on the adaptation of novels into nineteenth-century opera, but as opera-makers turn more frequently to contemporary fiction with its postmodernist concerns, the self-conscious character of the the operatic art form itself will further facilitate the adaptation of such fiction. The increasing popularity of opera is testimony to the inherent viability and vitality of the art form.

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