“Never Mind the Singing”: Gender, Voice, and Power in Benjamin Britten’s Operatic Adaptation of Herman Melville’s Novella Billy Budd

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Notes on the text

In this thesis three different references to *Billy Budd* are used on multiple occasions: Herman Melville's novella as the primary text, the operatic libretto, and the operatic vocal score. To avoid confusion and repetitive references, the following abbreviations are used:

Novella: BB + page number

Libretto: LIB + page number

Vocal score: SC + page number + musical number + added number of bars

As an illustration of the latter, hereby the notation of Claggart's first vocal line: "Your honour, I am at your disposal" (SC31, [19]+13). This can be found on page 31 of the vocal score, which is bar 13 of musical number 19.

In addition, on some occasions a reference is made to specific stage direction. These are in cursive and followed by the libretto's corresponding page number. For example: *Billy climbs down the rigging to the main deck* (LIB43)

Introduction

CLAGGART

Next man forward. [*He calls to Billy*] Now you. Come here! Your name?

[*Billy Budd comes forward*]

BILLY

Billy Budd, sir.

CLAGGART

Your age?

BILLY

Don't know, sir.

CLAGGART

"Don't know?" Your trade?

BILLY

Able seaman.

CLAGGART

Can you read?

BILLY

No – but I can sing!

CLAGGART

Never mind the singing.

(LIB15)

This is the first interaction between the titular character and the antagonist of Benjamin Britten's operatic adaptation of Herman Melville's novella *Billy Budd*. This dialogue is from the scene in which Billy Budd has just boarded he British warship the *Indomitable*, after being impressed from the merchantman *Rights o' Man*. The *Indomitable*'s Master-at-arms, John Claggart, is ordered to question Billy and help determine which naval position would suit him best. The last three lines are of particular interest here, especially when considering they are from the libretto of an opera: one operatic character is ordering another not to sing. Since singing is the main form of verbal communication in an opera, one can conclude that Claggart is basically silencing Billy.

Not only is this interaction very telling of the opera's plot, it can also be regarded as an example of foreshadowing. Claggart develops an irrational hatred for the young sailor, and he comes up with a scheme to incriminate him by unjustly accusing him of mutiny. After over two-and-a-half hours of opera, and by getting himself killed in the process, Claggart manages to silence Billy for good: he is executed. Having a voice and being silenced can therefore be regarded as an integral theme of *Billy Budd*'s plot, even more so when considering the story is being told through the medium of opera, of which the human voice is of course of vital significance.

When discussing the topic of voice in the *Billy Budd*, one cannot ignore the opera's most striking characteristic: there are no female voices in it at all. In fact, *Billy Budd* is one of the very few operas with an all-male cast. The singers are either men or boys and all have 'masculine' voice types: the vocal lines of the boys are such that they do not sing in their treble voice range, there are no countertenors in the cast, and the single time one of the characters sings in an obvious falsetto, he does so for comedic effect and to make a statement. The complete absence of female characters and voices makes one wonder how gender is shaped in such a masculine setting and whether there is any femininity present in the opera.

This thesis explores how the topics mentioned above expressed in the opera *Billy Budd.* Since the opera is based on Melville's novella, adaptation theory is the starting point of the analysis. Firstly, this thesis aims to find out how themes of voice, gender, and silencing are literalised through the possibilities and necessities of the operatic form. Quintessential of the operatic form is the fact two interrelated discourses, the music from the score and the text from the libretto, are presented simultaneously. Therefore, the second question this thesis aims to answer, is how the interactive process and libretto gives new meaning to the original text, particularly in relation to the themes mentioned above. What are the mechanisms used to make music and text work together to add or shape to the original story? Is the depiction of the operatic characters similar to those in the novella, or does Britten's music add a new layer of meaning through which the character's persona is significantly altered?

The first section of the literary review discusses the operatic form, with emphasis on musical narration and the voices of an opera. This is followed by a brief discussion of adaptation theory and the adaptation process of transforming Melville's novella into an opera, and lastly an analysis on two theories of masculinity. Chapter 1 focuses on the literalisation of the theme of gender. Topics that are discussed included gendered space and labour, power dynamics on board the *Indomitable*, Billy's character as a personification of the Melvillian concept of the Handsome Sailor, Claggart's closeted homosexuality, and how the notion of

masculinity in crisis is represented in the opera. Chapter 2 discusses the voices of the opera, distinguishing between voices that are heard by the characters on stage and the ones that are not heard. Furthermore, these voices can be verbal and orchestral. It is demonstrated that some voices are more powerful than others. The discussion returns to the overall topic of discussion as mentioned above.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 About Opera: musical narration and voices

Opera as an art form originated in Italy late sixteenth century, at the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque (Halliwell 19). Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607) is regarded as the first opera of which the libretto and the music have been preserved[1]. The opera is about the legendary Thracian musician Orpheus and his descent into the Hades to bring back his beloved Euridice to the world of the living. From its origin at the end of the Renaissance, the opera as an art form has evolved extensively, not only in its form, but also in its subject matter, conventions, and use of vocal and orchestral music. A full account of the evolution of the opera is not relevant here[2], however, some developments and defining characteristics that are significant in relation with Britten's *Billy Budd*, especially the topic of musical narration, shall be discussed in the following section.

As an art form, the opera is bound to several specific and formalised conventions, which varied according to the historical period (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 310). In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the so-called 'number' opera was the standard compositional form. A 'number' opera consists of a set of arias and ensembles (duets, trios etcetera) which were interspersed with recitatives. In the recitatives the events unfold, and the characters interact (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 310), whereas the arias and ensemble 'numbers' are emotional soliloquys in which the psychology of the character is explored (Halliwell 26). In other words, the narrative progresses in the recitatives whereas interiority is represented in the in the arias and ensembles (Hutcheon 60). The ensembles and especially the arias are musically more complex compositions and are often an opportunity for the singers to demonstrate their musical and vocal skills. The short pause between the end of the aria and the next 'number' can be utilised by the audience to applaud the performance. Interesting to note here is the fact that recitatives and arias not only differ in content and musical

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[1] Both Halliwell (20), and Donald J. Grout and Claude V. Palisca (339) mention the operas *Daphne* (1598) and *Euridice* (1600) by Jacopo Peri, both to texts by Ottavio Rinuccini, as the first successful experimentations with the operatic genre. Unfortunately, the manuscripts of these works have been lost over time.

[2] For a detailed overview of a history of this musical art form in relation to the topic of operatic adaptation, one is referred to Linda and Michael Hutcheon's article *Adaptation and Opera*, and chapter 1 from Halliwell's *Opera and the Novel: The Case of Henry James*.

complexity, but also in narrative time, allowing the number opera to operate in two different time scales. As explained by Halliwell (28) the recitatives follow a 'naturalistic' time scale in which the events unfold in 'real' time, whereas the aria and ensemble follow a 'psychological' time, in which narrative time is slowed down and a character's state of mind or emotion is investigated.

In her book on opera and musical narrative, very aptly titled *Unsung Voices*, Carolyn Abbate explores the voices projected by music, both vocal and orchestral, and their ability to convey meaning. She claims that "certain gestures experienced in music constitute a narrating *voice*" (19). However, musical narrative does not merely mimic the "course of events and emotional convolutions" (23), and therefore must not be regarded as some sort of extension of linguistic narration: "Music makes distinctive sounds when it is speaking (singing) *in a narrative mode*, but we do not know *what* it narrates" (27). In other words, there is not a direct one-to-one linguistic equivalent of a specific musical utterance. Instead, musical narration provides a new layer of meaning over the course of the dramatic events.

The possibilities of musical narration were expanded by Richard Wagner and his musical innovation. Firstly, he introduced his audience to operas which were not constructed from separate musical 'numbers' but were one continuous composition. With his 'through composed' music dramas, Wagner revolutionised the form and content of the opera in several ways. Firstly, as a continuous composition, in which recitative and aria are totally integrated (Halliwell 26), the narrative of the opera is allowed to operate in a single time scale. What is more, the exploration of a character's psychology is no longer dependant on the arias; the musical continuity allowed for a continuous character development, like that in a novel (Halliwell 26). Secondly, Wagner's musical innovations, like the introduction of musical leitmotivs, expanded the possibilities of the narrative function of operatic music. According to Abbate, his use of leitmotivs and thematic chords pushed the possible complications of musical narrations to their limits (19). Narrative tools like foreshadowing and unreliable narrators, which previously were mostly associated with literature, could now also be used in musical dramas. The intricate workings of thematic chords as a narrative tool (which are also used by Britten in *Billy Budd*), will be explained in the following paragraphs. To illustrate this device, one of Wagner's grand operas will be used: *Tristan und Isolde*.

When discussing thematic chords in opera, the very first one that springs to mind to probably every opera fanatic is the so called "Tristan chord": a half-diminished seventh chord which is resolved like an augmented sixth chord in the opening bars of Wagner's 1859 opera *Tristan und Isolde* (Martin 24). What makes this chord so significant, without going into too

much musicological detail, is the fact that it progresses to an incomplete and rather unsatisfactory resolution. The opera's Prelude opens with a harmonic progression, but it does not result in the usual tonal climax. In fact, this irresolution and harmonic suspension, which creates a "tension of promised but evaded fulfillment" (Millington 301), is characteristic of the musical language of *Tristan und Isolde*; throughout the opera, filled with unsatisfactorily resolved chords and uncompleted cadences, Wagner leaves his audience yearning for a tonal resolution. Of course, all these devices are employed for expressive effect: the tonal ambiguity symbolizes the impossible love between Tristan and Isolde that is doomed to end in tragedy, which is the very essence of the musical drama (Grout and Palisca 707). The audience's anticipation for a musical resolution mimics the titular characters' yearning for each other. Alas, in life the lovers cannot be together (not even with the help of a love potion). In the final act, it becomes clear that their love can only exist in death. The unresolved chord should therefore only be able to resolve through death as well. And indeed, at the moment of Isolde's passing ("Isoldes Liebestot"), in the final minutes of the opera, after four-and-a-half hours of irresolution, the half-diminished seventh chord from the very first three bars of the opera finally resolves. Even though harmonic suspension was not new to opera, Wagner was one of the first to employ this device over the course of an entire work. By doing so, he added a new layer of meaning to the theme of unattainable love to the narrative of *Tristan und Isolde*, in a way that verbal language alone never could have achieved. Halliwell describes this effect as one of music's unique powers: the ability to "express emotion to the extent that language cannot" (79).

Another musical device famously employed as a narrative tool by Wagner is the operatic leitmotiv: a musical theme or motive which corresponds to a specific character, object or idea in the drama (Grout and Palisca 705-707). The association is accomplished by sounding the theme when the accompanying character, object of idea appears on the scene or is mentioned for the first time. One could regard the leitmotiv as a musical label, however, it is much more than that: each time the leitmotiv is heard again in a new context, a new meaning is added to the music. The motives can change and develop throughout the musical drama, and by doing so, it gains (new) meaning and relevance (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 314). Wagner used leitmotivs as musical building blocks of his work, weaving them throughout the entire operatic composition (Grout and Palisca 707). The opera most famous for its use of leitmotivs is probably his sixteen-hour, four-part epic *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

The previous paragraphs have illustrated how the orchestra can be employed in the narration of a musical drama. In addition to its manifest affective and mimetic power, the

music of an opera "is arguably as important a narrating component as are the words" (Hutcheon 41). Several authors speak of the narrative voice of the orchestra (Rupprecht 110), and that it can be regarded as the operatic equivalent of the narrator's voice in fiction (Rochlitz 141). In fact, Halliwell even goes so far as saying that in opera "the 'voice' of the orchestra narrator can be seen as exerting a final dominant control in all expression" (80). Even though the concepts narrative and voice are borrowed from language and literature (Abbate 12), is important to keep in mind that musical narration, as discussed above, is very dissimilar from narration using spoken or sung language.

Among opera scholars, there has been an ongoing debate for centuries about the following: what is more important in an opera, *Wort oder Ton*? The words or the music? The libretto or the score? There are even operas discussing this very topic, for example Antonio Salieri's *Prima la Musica, dopo le Parole* ('First the music, then the words', 1786) and Richard Strauss's *Capriccio* from 1942 (the subtitle of which is *Wort oder Ton*). Even though the jury is still out in this debate, in the process of operatic composition, the libretto is usually written first, and then the music is added[3]. In the earlier operas this often meant that the music was superimposed on the text. Wagner (yet again) was opposed to this idea and constructed his own librettos. He regarded opera as a *Wort-Ton-Drama*, in which words and music expressed the dramatic emphasis simultaneously (Halliwell 26).

Importantly, the text of the libretto and music of the score should not be regarded as separate discourses but interrelate and work as one to generate a new layer of meaning. In fact, many authors agree that in opera, especially post-Wagner, this interrelation between text and music (*Wort und Ton* if you will) is at the heart of the art form. In other words, even though it is generally accepted that the verbal text of the libretto is "the starting point for the musical development", the added layer of music "extends, changes, even subverts, whatever inherent 'meaning' that text be thought to possess" (Halliwell 10).

Voice as a (literary) concept and its use in a fully staged and live opera, is even more complicated because in this context voice can be defined in multiple ways. The voice of the orchestra, whether or not it is also regarded as the narrative voice, has already been mentioned. Then there are the "voice-characters" of the opera (soprano, mezzo, alto, castrato, countertenor, tenor, baritone, bass), or "the characters as they exist in music" (Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker 17-18). One could regard these voices as instruments as well,

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[3] There are many composers who returned to the same librettists for their operas, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's collaborations with Lorenzo da Ponte probably being one the most well-known examples.

similar to the ones in the orchestra pit, since their voices also constitute individual parts of the operatic composition. The fictional character the singer embodies (Wotan, Carmen, Queen of the Night) is yet another voice. Abbate and Parker call these the "plot-characters" of the opera, or "the characters as they exist in words" (17-18). Interesting to point out here, is the fact that these are the only voices that use verbal language, the language equivalent to the written form used in literature. All the other voices use the language of music, and convey meaning through intricate combinations of harmonies, melodies, dissonances, timbre, rhythm, and so on.

One of opera's conventions is that the characters on stage do not necessarily hear the music they are singing or are accompanied by (except when the character on stage performs what is called a "phenomenal song", like lullabies, toasts, or the sailors' sea shanties in *Billy Budd* [Hutcheon 60]). Typically, the characters are oblivious to the music and only the audience has access to its meaning (Abbate 119). By making the orchestra play a specific leitmotiv, the music can give information to the audience the characters themselves are not necessarily aware of. For example, in the first act of *Die Walküre* (the second instalment of Wagner's tetralogy), Siegmund tells Sieglinde (his long lost twin sister, now married to the heinous Hunding [alliterative pun intended]) how he lost his father Wölfe. Exactly at that moment, the orchestra plays the Walhalla leitmotiv (Julius Burghold 90). The text on its own states that Siegmund has not been able to find his father again ("den Vater fand ich nicht"), whereas the leitmotiv on its own merely references the realm of the Gods. However, by them being put together, the audience now knows Wölfe's true identity to be Wotan, chief of the gods, and that he is not lost but has returned to his home in Walhalla. The "plot-character" Siegmund, is oblivious to the music interacting with his words, and remains unaware of his father's whereabouts and true identity.

1.1.2 About Adaptation Theory: *Billy Budd*'s voyage from page to stage

Linda Hutcheon summarises the adaptation process in the following phrase: "Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication" (7). When discussing operatic adaptation, or any type of adaptation for that matter, it is important to keep this phrase in mind. The adaptive process of the novella *Billy Budd* into the opera *Billy Budd* was not simply a matter of replication, or copy and paste. Even though most of the plot and the characters are similar to that of Melville's primary text, all have been transported to a different medium; from literary text to musical drama. What is more, this change in medium also requires a change in story presentation, since each medium "involves a different mode of

engagement on the part of both the audience and adapter" (Hutcheon 12). In Melville's novella Billy's tragic story is told in written form, whereas in Britten's opera it is shown in real time, which means that multiple interrelated discourses – visual, verbal, musical – are presented simultaneously (Rochlitz 35). When a story is transported from telling to showing mode, "a performance adaptation must dramatize: description, narration, and represented thoughts must be transcoded into speech, actions, sounds, and visual images" (Hutcheon 40). To accommodate for all these factors, including the operatic conventions mentioned above, the most significant one being of course the music (vocal and orchestral), the source material must be reviewed and reinterpreted. The process of adaption is therefore a combination of storytelling, rereading and rerelating: "Despite being temporally second, it is both an interpretive and a creative act" (Hutcheon 111).

Especially in the process of adapting a novel into opera, compression and simplification of the plot and the characters appear to be a necessity (Halliwell 34). After all, it takes a lot longer to sing a line of text than to speak it, let alone read it (Hutcheon 38). Therefore, texts that are set to music often lack the speed, density, and dexterity of literary language (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 311). However, this does not mean that in operatic adaptation the "interpretive richness" of the written text is lost (Scholes 1976, 285, quoted in Hutcheon 70). Even though operatic adaptation has been "singled out as particularly guilty on both the loss of quality and quantity counts" (Hutcheon 38), it will be demonstrated in this thesis that this is most certainly not the case with Britten's *Billy Budd*[4].

When moving from telling to showing mode, some sacrifices must be made, especially in the number of words that are used. However, there is much to be gained as well, which provides new opportunities for interpretation. Furthermore, the use of operatic ensembles "permits a simultaneity of character perspectives only possible in an opera libretto and its score" (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 311). The music, despite being a "retarding agent" as it slows down narrative time (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 309), is arguably the most significant addition. As is demonstrated in a previous section, on top of music's affective and mimetic power, music also offers rich possibilities to be employed as a narrative agent. The musical discourse, together with the visual (the staging) and verbal (the text of the libretto) discourses, are all used "to create multivalent narrative structures offering rich possibilities

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[4] This view is shared by Hutcheon, as she describes the opera as being "considerably more subtle in terms of psychology and style than is Ustinov's film [the 1962 movie adaptation]—and, some would even say, Melville's novella" (38).

for interpretation" (Rochlitz 35). In this thesis, the visual discourse of the opera is not taken into account, as will be explained in more detail in section 1.2. Focus will be on the text of Forster and Crozier's libretto, and the music of Britten's score.

Even though Benjamin Britten and E.M. Forster had already toyed with the idea of adapting Melville's novella into an opera, the actual writing of the libretto started in March 1949 (Rochlitz 474). Forster already had an established reputation as a novelist, however, he had not much experience in dramatic writing. For this reason, Eric Crozier, an experienced librettist and stage director Britten had worked with before, was asked to join the project. The opera, originally in four acts, premiered at the Royal Opera House in London in 1951, with Britten's partner, the tenor Peter Pears, singing the role of Captain Vere. Britten revised the opera into a two-act version, which had its theatre premiere in 1964.

As discussed in the previous section, when adapting the novella for the operatic stage, various modifications had to be made. Some of the modifications were for the sake of technical simplification, for example the scenes on board the *Rights of Man.* As Rochlitz points out, had the librettists chosen to include these scenes, it would have required "additional set changes as well as more singing roles" (85). Some changes were made because of the restrictions of the operatic form, the loss of the Melvillian narrator arguably being the most significant one. As discussed in the previous section, some of the narrator's function can be ascribed to the orchestra. Added to the narrative function of the orchestra is the opera's framing device of the Prologue and Epilogue. This would suggest that Old Vere is the narrator of the story of Billy Budd, and that we revisit the past based on his memories of the events[5]. Rochlitz gives an overview of all the adaptation alterations of the novella's story. Four of these changes are discussed in the next paragraph, as they are relevant for this thesis.

Firstly, the *Indomitable*'s crew is represented by the opera chorus. As Rochlitz points out, this provided Britten "with the obvious opportunity for incorporating a large chorus, a staple of grand opera, into their conception of work" (87). Furthermore, it allowed for in insight into naval, and of social and hierarchical interactions, which are discussed in more

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[5] However, as Rochlitz pointed out, there are several scenes in the opera in which Vere is not present (like the deck scrubbing in the opening of scene 1.1 or Claggart's monologue in which he vows to destroy Billy in scene 1.3) and could therefore not be part of Vere's memories of the events (105). The general view that is held, is that the narrative is generated by a "single controlling consciousness", in which Vere is merely another character (106).

detail in Chapter 2. Secondly, the deck-scrubbing in the opening of scene 1.1, which "introduces the sailors' hard life and illustrates the harshness and brutality of martial discipline, thus introducing the topics of oppression and resistance" (87). Thirdly, in the opera Claggart is shown to falsely incriminate Billy by forcing the Novice to betray his shipmate. The novella merely suggests that Claggart was involved in falsely accusing him of mutiny (88). Finally, the librettists changed the roles Vere and his officers play during the trial scene, which altered the character of Vere significantly (89). This is topic of discussion in section 3.2.2.

1.1.3 About gender: theories of masculinities and operatic gender identities

The aim of this section is to review a selection of academic writings on masculinities. It does not strive to give a clearcut definition of masculinity, or of gender in general. Rather, it discusses some theories on the construction of masculine identities that are relevant to the topic of this thesis, most of which are revisited in later chapters. First, Pierre Bourdieu's idea of masculinity being a relational notion, and the concept of hegemonic masculinity is discussed. This is followed a brief detour to queer theory, and how this topic is addressed in this thesis. Finally, the gendered elements in music in general and in opera in particular are discussed.

In his book *Masculine Domination* ('01), Bourdieu discusses the topics of gender, sexuality and power, and argues the possibility of change in the sexual order. He speaks of a "socially constructed division between the sexes" which is apprehended as "natural, self-evident, and as such contains a full recognition of legitimacy" (9). That "socially constructed division" is expressed as masculine domination. Furthermore, he argues that masculine domination is present everywhere, as it is maintained in social and cognitive structures: "it is present both – in the objectified state – in things (in the house, for example, every part of which is 'sexed'), in the whole social world, and – in the embodied state – in the habitus of agents, functioning as systems of schemes of perception, thought and action" (8). The division of the sexes is perpetuated in societal agencies such as "the church, the educational system or the state, and in their strictly political actions, whether overt or hidden, official or unofficial" (116). This social order can be compared to a "symbolic machine" which is tending to maintain this masculine domination (11), making sure there is a gendered division in nearly all aspects of life. As examples of these, Bourdieu speaks of the division of labour, the structure of space, and even the structure of the cycle of life "with its male moments of rupture and the long female periods of gestation" (11). Interestingly, he regards masculinity

as a social construct: “Manliness, it can be seen, is an eminently *relational* notion, constructed in front and for other men” (52-53). In other words, not only does Bourdieu regard masculinity or manliness as notion that is felt before other men, it also needs to be validated by them. Furthermore, he states that this validated manliness is “against femininity, in a kind of *fear* of the firstly in oneself” (53).

Related to Bourdieu’s ideas on masculine domination, as it is also based on a gender hierarchy, is the concept of hegemonic masculinity, proposed in 1982 by R.W. Connel et.al. (Connel and Messerschmidt 830). When it was introduced, the concept was understood as “the pattern of practice … that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” and it “embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, [requiring] all other men to position themselves in relation to it” (832). At that time, hegemonic masculinity was a “conceptual model with a fairly narrow empirical base”, however, since then is has transformed into a “widely used framework for research and debate about men and masculinities” (835). In their article, Connel and Messerschmidt reviewed research on hegemonic masculinity, to examine and, when necessary, reformulate certain features of the concept. Four of these shall be discussed here, as they are of significance to the topic of this thesis.

Firstly, as part of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the authors state that “certain masculinities are more socially central, or more associated with authority and social power, than others” (846). Furthermore, the hegemonic pattern of masculinity “presumes the subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities” (846). In other words, there is a plurality and a hierarchy of masculinities, with the hegemonic pattern in charge. Secondly, socially dominant masculinities maintain their hierarchical position through social structures and cognitive structures or schemes of thought. This corresponds to Bourdieu’s notion of masculine domination being present “in the objectified state” and “in the embodied state” (8). Furthermore, the authors emphasise that “the hierarchy of masculinities is a pattern of hegemony, not a pattern of simple domination based on force” (846). In other words, it is perceived as “the natural order of things”, therefore, the dominant position does not have to be maintained through violence. Thirdly, the dominant pattern of masculinity is open to challenge: “gender hierarchies [are] subject to change” (832), therefore there is “possibility in change of gender relations (846). A shift in gender relations could result in a crisis of masculinity. Finally, the authors recognise “the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of dominant groups” (848). In other words, subordinated and marginalized groups are not powerless or subjected to the power of the dominant pattern of masculinity.

To finish this section, *Billy Budd* in relation to queer theory needs to be briefly discussed. Both the novella and the opera are often discussed in relation to themes related to homosexuality. Therefore, a lot of secondary sources can be found on queer readings of *Billy Budd*. In this thesis the theme of homosexuality is discussed, especially in relation to the characters of Billy and Claggart. However, and to be clear, this is not a queer reading – or listening – the operatic *Billy Budd*. In the following discussion, homosexuality is regarded as one of the subordinated nonhegemonic masculinities or as an expression of 'otherness'. For further reading on *Billy Budd* and queer theory, the following sources are suggested: Judith Schenck Koffler's article "The Feminine Presence in Billy Budd", Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's book *Epistemology of the Closet*, Daniel Hannah's book *Queer Atlantic : Masculinity, Mobility, and the Emergence of Modernist Form*, and chapter II.6 'Mutiny and homosexuality in Billy Budd' of Hanna Rochlitz's book *Sea-Changes : Melville - Forster - Britten : The Story of Billy Budd and Its Operatic Adaptation*.

1.2 Methodology

As stated in the introduction, this thesis explores how themes of voice, gender, and silencing are literalised in the operatic adaptation of *Billy Budd*. In the analysis of these themes, the focus is on the operatic form as it is presented in the score and the libretto: the music and the text. Individual productions are not taken into consideration, since each production of an opera (one can even argue, each performance) is a new level of adaptation. Alternatively, the stage directions in the libretto are used in the analysis, since these are part of the source material Britten used in his compositional process. Melville's novella, as well as additional secondary sources on either the novella or the opera, are consulted, to examine how the operatic form gives additional or new meaning to the primary source.

Importantly, the music of the score and the text of the libretto are not regarded as separate discourses in the analysis of the opera. As is explained in section 1.1.1, the interrelation between words and music, and how they work together as one to generate a new layer of meaning, is generally regarded as one of opera's defining features. Therefore, when examining how a theme is expressed, the music, text, and possible stage directions are used. Regarding the music, both the vocal and the orchestral music are included in the analysis. After all, "In opera there exists a synthesis of orchestral sound, vocal melody, and verbal signifiers" (Halliwell 76). Based on the previous discussion of musical narration, the narrative function of the orchestra is also taken into account.

Regarding the operatic characters, the Abbate and Parker's differentiation between "voice-characters" and "plot-characters" is acknowledged (17-18). However, a combination of these two is used in the analysis of an operatic persona. In other words, the interrelation of verbal language and musical language, which can be vocal or orchestral, is used in the examination of a character. What is more, not all of these forms of expression need to be present at the same time. Even with a few of these, a character's influence or presence can be illustrated. A good example of this phenomenon is how Claggart's disembodied 'voice' can be heard during the trial scene, via the orchestra playing his musical motive.

In the discussion of gender, the concept of masculinity is used based on the theories of Bourdieu's masculine domination and Connel and Messerschmidt's hegemonic masculinity. This included the notion of crisis of masculinity, which can result from challenges to masculine dominance. Finally, when discussing the topic of homosexuality in relation to gender, it is regarded as a non-hegemonic or subordinated pattern of masculinity. Even though the theme of homosexuality in *Billy Budd* is often approached from queer theory, it is not related to the topic of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Gender

This chapter focuses on

2.1 Space and Labour on *The Indomitable*

An eighteenth-century ship of war is a predominantly masculine environment: an all-male crew whose main job is hard physical maritime work and fighting the enemy. In many respects, life on board a Royal Navy ship like the *Indomitable*, as it is portrayed in the novella as well as in the opera, can be regarded as a representation of patriarchal society. For example, there are men from all age groups: from teenage boys (some as young as eleven years old [Lavery xi]), working as midshipmen, powder monkeys, and cabin boys[6], to old seamen like Dansker, who have probably lived most of their lives at sea. Furthermore, the men are from all walks of life, coming from upper-class, middle-class, and lower-class backgrounds. Usually, the higher-ranking men like the officers were from the higher social classes and the crew from the lower classes. However, around 1800 "the [Royal] navy had a

[6] The cabin boy is young boy who can be regarded as Vere's personal assistant, which is a spoken part in the opera. In the novella Melville speaks of a boy called Albert and describes him, rather dubiously, as "the captain's hammock-boy, a sort of sea-valet in whose discretion and fidelity his master had much confidence" (BB57).

much stronger middle-class element" (Brian Lavery xii). This range of various backgrounds can also be seen in the opera. Since he is an orphan and unable to read or write (LIB15), one can assume that Billy is from a lower-class background[7]. The two other men, who are, like Billy, impressed from the *Rights o' Man*, have a middle-class background: Red Whiskers' trade is butcher, and Arthur Jones used to be a weaver (LIB14). The young midshipmen (who are called "cocky young bastards" by Donald in Act 1.1 (LIB9]) most likely have an upper-class background, as have Captain Vere, First Lieutenant Redburn and second Lieutenant Ratcliffe. In the Captain's orders of the HMS *Amazon* from 1799, the Midshipmen are referred to as "young gentlemen" (Lavery 129), as it was not uncommon for young boys from well-to-do families to start off at a lower-ranking naval position, as part of their training to become an officer. Other hierarchical positions on board of the *Indomitable* that are mentioned in the opera are warrant officers like the Sailing Master, standing officers like the Bosun (or Boatswain), petty officers like the Master-at-Arms, and of course the seamen, differentiating between ordinary seamen, who are less-experienced, and able seamen like Billy, who have served at least three years at sea (Lavery 13). To summarise, a miniature patriarchal society is created on board, inhabited by men of all ages, from various social backgrounds, and with strictly defined hierarchical positions. The men live and work on the ship and perform their duties, all in accordance with naval rules, "the Articles of War", and "the King's Regulations" (LIB57).

Even though eighteenth-century maritime space, like the *Indomitable*, is inhabited by men only, it is not a purely masculine environment. To put it differently, the absence of women does not mean an absence of femininity. In her article, Sarah Wilson examines the influence of physical space on gender identity in Melville's oeuvre. Of particular interest here is her discussion of "the 'masculine' space" of the whaler the *Pequod* in *Moby Dick* (1851) (60). She states that "on the ships that are central to many of Melville's early writings, male workspace and domestic space are the same" (61). Furthermore, "Melville's whaler puts enormous pressure on the physical and conceptual boundaries drawn between male work and domesticity" (61). In other words, in the limited space of a ship like the *Pequod*, but also the

[7] In the novella, it is suggested that Billy might be from an upper-class background but was abandoned after birth: "something in the mobile expression, and every chance attitude and movement, something suggestive of a mother eminently favoured by Love and the Graces; all this strangely indicated a lineage in direct contradiction of his lot" (BB15). A few paragraphs later the narrator confirms his suspicions about Billy's background by stating that "Noble descent was as evident in him as in a blood horse" (BB16).

Indomitable, there is no longer a strict division between a workspace, which is considered masculine, and a domestic space, which is considered feminine. As discussed in the literature review, the notion of gendered space is also recognised by Bourdieu. When referring to "the socially constructed division between the sexes" (9), he speaks of 'male' and 'female' spaces, which he explains as "the opposition between the place of assembly or the market, reserved for men, and the house, reserved for women" (9-11). What is more, Bourdieu also speaks of "the sexual division of labour", which he describes as "a very strict distribution of activities assigned to each sex" (9). For example, cleaning is deemed feminine[8], whereas hunting is masculine. Transferring this to an eighteenth-century maritime environment, the boundaries between masculine and feminine space and labour are blurred, since all labour, whether it is scrubbing the deck or fighting the French, must be performed by men. Because there are hardly any physical sites of gender identification on board a ship, Wilson states that maritime space can be regarded as a site of nonconventional masculinity (65). What is more, this interpenetration of "the spaces of male- and female-identified work" (62), could result in a fluidity of gender identifications experienced by the crew (66).

Whether as a conscious decision or not, the makers also chose to display this dichotomy of "male- and female-identified work" in the opera, particularly in its two major ensemble scenes: the opening of Act 1.1 and the battle scene in Act 2.1. Not only are the two scenes related with regard to the presence of gendered labour and their complexity (nearly all the characters come into play at some point, and, with their many stage directions, a lot is happening on the stage), there are also some musical similarities. In the following paragraphs the two scenes will be compared, paying attention to the vocal and orchestral music from the score, but also the text and stage directions from the libretto.

Starting with the opening of Act 1.1, which is a scene in which some sailors are holystoning[9] the main-deck. Holystoning can be regarded as an activity with mixed gendered characteristics: it can be labelled as feminine as it is a form of cleaning, but also as masculine, since it is physically hard work that requires muscle and stamina. The physicality of the holystoning can be read in the stage directions as well: when a second party of men arrives, they are "dragging holystones", and when the first party are ordered to make way, "the men move painfully to a new patch of deck" (LIB8). The sailors are grouped in three

[8] A good illustration of this is the nautical nickname given to the sailor responsible for cleaning the weapon storage room: 'Lady' of the Gunroom (Lavery xx)

[9] A holystone is a soft and porous stone, which is used to rub and scour the deck (Lavery xx).

separate parties, which are represented in the score as three separate choruses. The First Party and the Second Party are in the charge of the First Second and Second Mate respectively, the Third Party enter the stage later in the scene to hoist a yard and are in the charge of the Bosun. While working the sailors are singing "O heave! O heave away, heave!" (LIB8), imitating the repeated action of pushing the heavy holystone across the deck[10]. The shanty's setting in a minor key, creates a mood of malcontent and displeasure. At one point, the holystoning is briefly interrupted by the Bosun. The men are ordered to "Lead those halyard aft – at the double!" (LIB9), and "pull on their lines hand over hand to hoist the yard" (stage directions LIB10). During the pulling, the men rhythmically sing "and sway! and sway! and sway!" (LIB10). The line is sung unisono by the chorus of sailors, and orchestrally mirrored by the first and second violins. At the same time, the woodwinds (oboe, clarinet, and bassoon) and the brass (trumpet, horn, trombone, and tuba) have a rhythmically descending line, which can be interpreted as a musical representation of the line being pulled further and further down, moving the yard upwards.

The naval hierarchy is clearly visible in this scene. The singing sailors are hard at work cleaning the deck, while their superiors are keeping watch and shout instructions ("Pull, my sparrow-legs! That's right! Pull with a will! Bend to it, damn you!" [LIB8]). Men from various naval positions are seen or heard, giving the audience good insight into the hierarchical relations on board the ship. The maintop is heard off stage ("All manned above! Yards manned!" [LIB9]), the Sailing Master is shouting instructions to the Bosun ("Hands to braces! Man the yards!" [LIB9]), and the young Midshipmen are putting the sailors to work ("Toplights down there, and scrub! Scrub!" [LIB9]). On some occasions, violence is used to maintain naval discipline: the first Mate "hits one man a crack with a rope's end" (stage instructions LIB8) for not working hard enough, the sound of which is mirrored in the orchestra with a whip (SC8). What is more, later in the scene the Novice is punished with a flogging ("twenty strokes" [LIB11]), after bumping into the Bosun and then slipping and falling on the deck. It can be stated that the officers' language when addressing the scrubbing sailors can be regarded as an indication of their hierarchical dominance. Of particular interest is their use of emasculating language, such as "Pull, sparrow-legs" (LIB8) and "Toplights down, you bantams" (LIB9). It seems that emasculation is used to assert dominance, as well as maintain or confirm the hierarchical divide.

[10] Interestingly, the verb heave can also be synonymous for the gentle rising and falling of a ship on the ocean.

Even though holystoning and getting ready for battle are both activities that are part of a seaman's life, the latter is arguably much more liked by the sailors. In the opera this is illustrated in contrasting elements of scene 1.1 and 2.1. As soon as the French ship is sighted ("Deck ahoy! Enemy sail on starboard bow!" [LIB39]), the chorus from the Main Deck and from the Quarter-deck eagerly and excitedly jump into action and take their posts for battle. The battle is eagerly anticipated by all, as can be heard in chorus: "We'll blow her from the water! She's a Frenchman, for sure!" (LIB40). In the scene that follows, men from various naval hierarchical positions are called into action, illustrating how well a complex shipboard society like that of the *Indomitable* can run. From the the Seamen ("Quick, lads, there's a battle in the wind!" [LIB41] and the Gunners ("Ready for loading! Stand by your guns!" [LIB41]), to the Afterguardsmen ("Tubs ahoy! Sand the Decks! We'll put out the fires!" [LIB42]) and the Powder monkeys who are "chattering like monkeys *ad lib*" (SC191), everyone is doing their designated job to make the British ship of war operate like a well-oiled machine. Like the opening of Act 1, the audience gets an insight into life onboard a ship of war, including its hierarchical power relations. However, there is an important difference worth mentioning here: as opposed to scene 1.1, discipline does not need to be maintained through displays of power or threats of violence during the battle scene. Indeed, the men are very eager to get to work and respond immediately to the orders of their superiors.

What is more, there are also some musical characteristics juxtaposing the opening of scene 1.1 and the battle scene in 2.1. To pursue the French ship, the *Indomitable* has to make course change ("Nor'-nor'-east" [LIB40]), therefore, a hauling party is ordered to "Man the braces[11]!" (LIB40). During their work, the chorus of the hauling party repeat the "and sway! and sway! and sway!" (LIB40) from scene 1.1. Like before, the vocal line is orchestrally mirrored by the strings. However, the brass (trombone and tuba) and woodwinds (contrabassoon) are mirroring the chorus of the Main Deck, who are singing a different vocal line: "This is our moment we've been waiting for these long weeks" (SC180-181). In other words, where in scene 1.1. the brass and woodwinds can be regarded as a musical representation of the action performed on stage (hoisting the yard) during the hauling party's "and sway", in this scene they seem to represent the anticipatory mood of the men. The line is set in a minor key, giving the impression that the sailors are eagerly anticipating the long-awaited moment of action, but are perhaps not sure it is really going to happen. The moment

[11] Braces are "ropes attached to the ends of yards, to adjust the angle of the sail to the wind" (Lavery xxvii).

of realisation that a battle might indeed be at hand is a few moments later, when the chorus of the Quarter Deck and the Main Deck both sing "This is our moment, the moment we've been waiting for these long weeks. Now we'll see action. We're through with waiting. Now for deeds" (LIB44). The men's eagerness is not only heard in their words, but also in their vocal line and in the orchestra; one bar before the chorus's entrance ([15]) the key changes, setting the sailors' chant in a radiant G-major and making their song even more jubilant.

To summarise, in the juxtaposition of the two opera's main ensemble scenes argued above, the following observations are discussed: firstly, the scene 1.1 chorale "O heave" is set to a minor key, whereas the scene 2.1 chorale "This is our moment" is set to a major key. Secondly, in deck-scrubbing scene a hierarchical divide can be seen in the use of language in the form of emasculating comments of the officers to assert their dominance over the lower-ranked sailors. Contrastingly, no such hierarchical divide is present during the chase scene. Finally, there is a hierarchical divide in labour in scene 1.1; the lower-ranked sailors doing feminine labour while being subordinated by their superior officers. This hierarchical divide is not present in scene 2.1, in which the masculine 'labour' of preparing to fight the French is done by all ranks. It can therefore be argued that the hierarchical divide mirrors the gender divide, which confirms Bourdieu's notion of masculine domination over the feminine.

2.2 The Handsome Sailor

As established in the previous section, the naval environment of the *Indomitable* is one of non-conventional masculinity, as there is no clear divide between masculine and feminine space and labour. This section focusses on the character of Billy and how he is functioning in this gender fluid environment. First, Billy's gendered attributes will discussed, focussing on both is masculine and feminine characteristics. Finally, Billy's role as a homosexual icon will be explored, especially in his dealings with the character of John Claggart. The libretto, the novella and secondary sources will be used for the analysis.

At first glance, Billy probably comes across as masculine. As described in a previous section, being an Able Seaman, he must have spent at least three years working on a ship. Even though there is no detailed description of his physique, he is probably taller than the average man. When Claggart instructs Squeek to "play all [his] little tricks on this Budd", he describes him as "the big lad, with the stammer" and warns him to "Look out for those fists" (LIB18). As it turns out, this is not an empty warning: Billy is able to kill Claggart with a single blow to the head, he therefore must possess a decent bit of strength. Furthermore, Billy seems to be thriving in the all-male naval setting of the *Indomitable*: he is doing very well in

his position as foretopman and during the chase scene he has the opportunity to display his virility by volunteering to be one of the first to "board the Frenchie ship" (LIB42). The libretto even hints at a possible promotion to the position of Coxswain or Captain of the mizzen. When Billy is asked to see Vere in his cabin, he first thinks it is because of a promotion: "Oh, the honour! – and you telling me! I shouldn't speak so quick, but the talk's got around" (LIB51). In fact, if it were not for Claggart and his false accusations, Billy could have had that promotion and worked his way up the naval ranks: after hearing Vere's testimony at Billy's trial, the Sailing Master sadly remarks that "He might have been a leader" (LIB57). All in all, with these masculine attributes, Billy can easily be described as a typical manly sailor.

On the other hand, Billy also possesses several characteristics that can be labelled as feminine. One of these can be seen in his outcry of delight after being appointed as the *Indomitable*'s foretopman. After his exultant "Billy Budd, king of the birds!" he proclaims how much he is looking forward to his new life: "Working aloft with my mates. Working aloft in the foretop. Working and helping, working and sharing" (LIB17). Helping and sharing can be regarded as a rather feminine qualities, even more so when considering the rough and all-male environment that is a ship of war. As it turns out, Billy stays true to his word and is indeed looking after his shipmates. A good example of Billy's caring nature can be found in scene 1.3, in which the sailors are singing shanties on the berth-deck. Dansker is not joining in the fun, after which he is called a spoil sport. However, when it turns out that he is out of "bacca", and that that is the "only one thing in the world" that he wants, Billy replies with "That's easy put right. I'll lend you a chew. I'll give you the whole bar" (LIB29). In other words, Billy goes out of his way to make his shipmate Dansker feel better by selflessly giving him all the tobacco that he owns.

Billy's caring nature is not his only gendered feature worth mentioning here. For example, embellishing one's uniform can also be described as a feminine attribute. This is exactly what Billy has done in scene 1.2, when Claggart orders him to "Take off that fancy neckerchief!" since "This is a man-o'-war" (LIB21). The "fancy neckerchief" is a rather curious detail of Billy's attire, and it might seem odd to include such a seemingly random interaction based on an item of clothing in the opera. However, this garment is also part of the attire of the legendary figure of The Handsome Sailor, which the Melvillian narrator describes in the first chapter of the novella: "A symmetric figure much above the average height. The two ends of a gay silk handkerchief thrown loose about the neck danced upon the displayed ebony of his chest; in his ears were big hoops of gold, and a Scotch Highland

bonnet with a tartan band set off his shapely head" (BB8). A lengthy and detailed description of this "superior figure", in which his "strength and beauty" and his "moral nature" are praised, is used to introduce the character of Billy Budd. The Melvillian narrator clearly draws a parallel between the Handsome Sailor and Billy. Even though not all his "blazoning feminine accoutrements" (Koffler 4), like the gold earrings[12] and the plaid bonnet, ended up in libretto, the "fancy neckerchief" is a clear reference to Melville's idea of the Handsome Sailor.

Another detail from the novella which did not make the operatic adaptation, is the scene in which Captain Graveling of the *Rights o' Man* expresses his regrets over losing Billy as a shipmate. He recalls how the situation was before Billy's arrival on board: "my forecastle was a rat-pit of quarrels". However, when Billy came "it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy" (BB11). Billy managed to unite the quarreling crew ("a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sour ones" [BB11]) and turned the men into "a happy family" (BB12). As Koffler points out, "More than figuratively, Billy makes life on board the *Rights of Man* 'the happy family', eliciting 'maternal' and feminine qualities from the sailors themselves" (7). In other words, with his mere presence Billy significantly improved the atmosphere on board and established a sense of comradery among the sailors. Graveling's tale about Billy on the *Rights* confirms the parallel between him and that of the figure of the Handsome Sailor.

Even though Graveling's scene is not included in the opera, it is argued here that the operatic Billy can also be regarded as an embodiment of Melville's Handsome Sailor. After all, Britten's Billy is having a similar effect on the men of the *Indomitable* as Melville's Billy on the men of the *Rights o' Man*. For one, Billy's kindness to Dansker, as is described in a previous paragraph, is reciprocated: when Billy is locked up and waiting for his execution "*Dansker steals in with a mug of grog"* and a biscuit (LIB59). This can be regarded as an illustration of what Koffler describes as Billy's ability of "eliciting 'maternal' and feminine qualities from the sailors themselves". Furthermore, just like Melville's Billy on the *Rights o' Man*, Britten's Billy is well-loved among the crew: when the Novice, being forced by Claggart, agrees to betray Billy, he mutters miserably to himself "Why had it to be Billy, the one we all love?" (LIB34). What is more, Britten's Billy is also the one who is able to unite

[12] It can be argued that another reference to one of the Handsome Sailor's "blazoning feminine accoutrements" made it into the libretto. Billy catching Squeak going through his kitbag in scene 1.3, the chorus sings: "Squeak! Got him at last. He took them earrings of mine" (LIB30-31)

the sailors of all ranks, even if it is only for an instant. Moments before his execution, Billy cries out “Starry Vere, God bless you!” (LIB62), which is then repeated by all the men present (except for Billy and Vere). Even though this might not seem significant, the men’s echo of Billy’s outcry is one of only two moments in the entire opera in which both the lower-ranked and the upper-ranked sailors have the same vocal line (SC321, [130]+4). As discussed in a previous section, the hierarchical divide between the sailors is made visible through two separate choruses: the Main Deck chorus of common sailors and the Quarter Deck chorus of officers. Billy’s “Starry Vere, God bless you!” is echoed in unisono by both choruses, suggesting that, despite hierarchical differences, the crew is united as one in their support of Billy and Vere. The only other occasion both choruses sing in unison, is in the jubilant “This is our moment” from scene 2.1 when they are chasing the enemy ship (SC185, [15]).

To summarise thus far, the operatic Billy embodies both masculine and feminine qualities. Even though Melville’s idea of the Handsome Sailor is not included in the adaptation, the opera makers made sure that he is still represented in the character of Billy. Evidence of this can be found in the libretto (the “fancy neckerchief”) and in the score (Billy’s talent of uniting the men of all ranks as a unisono vocal line of both the Main Deck and Quarter Deck Chorus). In the following paragraphs Billy’s role as a homosexual icon will be explored, in the novella as well as in the opera. The main focus is on the character of Claggart and how his feelings for Billy are the motivation behind his plot to “destroy” him.

Even though it is not explicably mentioned, many authors agree that the Handsome Sailor evokes homosexual feelings in Claggart, some in very certain terms: “There is a *homosexual* in this text—a homosexual person, presented as different in his essential nature from the normal men around him. That person is John Claggart” (Sedgwick 92). In Koffler’s analysis of the feminine presence in the novella, she states that “while Billy's unhidden femininity makes him … the companionable animal among the sailors, in the mysterious Claggart it stirs envy” (8). This envy is because of Billy’s “moral phenomenon of his complete innocence” (8), which then turns into love. She also calls Melville’s tendency for using dubious language to attention, examples of which can be interpreted as evidence for the Claggart’s desire for Billy. One of the more visual ones is the “sexual allusion in the spilled

soup episode[13]": "Billy's accident streaming the greasy liquid just across Claggart's path, as if the latter's wet dream came to life" (8). In the opera, arguably the strongest piece of textual evidence for Claggart's feelings for Billy is a line from scene 2.1, when Claggart informs Vere of his suspicions of Billy. When Vere expresses serious doubts about the accusations, Claggart interjects the following: "You do but note his outwards, the flower of masculine beauty and strength. A man-trap lurks under those ruddy-tipped daisies" (LIB49). Considering he is accusing Billy of a serious crime, such an elaborate and poetic reference to his appearance seems rather abundant. Furthermore, his use of the word "man-trap" can be interpreted in multiple ways. Claggart probably means to say that under the disguise of the dutiful and good-looking seaman, Billy is secretly having mutinous intentions. However, it can also be interpreted as Billy being the 'trap' and that Claggart is the man who has fallen for him, suggesting that Claggart regards Billy as the male equivalent of a *femme fatale*.

Claggart is very troubled by his feelings for Billy. What is more, in their analysis of the novella, it is suggested by several authors that Claggart's desire for Billy is the main reason behind his plot to "destroy" him. Koffler states that Claggart's "feelings split him apart" (8) and since he "cannot endure the civil war inside him between love and hate, desire and envy, he must destroy its cause" (9). Martin describes Claggart's hatred for Billy as "envy of Billy's physical beauty, desire for that which he cannot have but by his own gestures acknowledges he wants – these forces cumulate in Claggart and are transformed into hatred that is the opposite side of the coin of love" (112). In other words, both authors suggest that Claggart recognises his feelings for Billy as homosexual, but he does not allow himself to have them.

When adapting the novella into the libretto, Forster and Crozier made an addition to Claggart's character which seems to support this view: Claggart's "Beauty, handsomeness, goodness" aria (LIB32), aptly referred to as "Claggart's Act 1 Credo aria" by Philip Ernst Rupprecht (97). Especially the following lines of his Credo are of significance here:

> 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

[13] Even though this scene was not included in the opera, Forster did make a reference to the "spilled soup episode" in the libretto. When Claggart instructs Squeek to make life difficult for Billy, he orders him to "Go and play all your little tricks on this Budd, - tangle up his hammock, mess his kit, spill his grog, splash his soup" (LIB18)

> order such as reigns in Hell. But alas, alas! the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it and suffers. (LIB32)

It seems that before he met Billy, Claggart's world made sense to him, dark and depraved as it may have been, and that he had "found peace of a sort". However, everything has changed now that Billy's light is shining in his darkness. The phrase "the darkness comprehends it and suffers", can be interpreted as Claggart regarding this light as his feelings for Billy. What is more, he understands what they are, and he is suffering because of it. In other words, like Koffler and Martin suggested, Claggart does not allow himself to have these feelings. Therefore, the object of his desire must be eliminated: "Having seen you, what choice remains to me? None, none! I am doomed to annihilate you, I am vowed to your destruction" (LIB32). Indeed, Claggart's Credo culminates in a malevolent vow to end Billy's life: "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" (LIB33).

To summarise, there is textual evidence from both the novella and the libretto that supports the notion of Claggart's homosexual feelings for Billy. It is also argued that Claggart recognises these feelings as homosexual but does not acknowledge them. In other words, he cannot allow himself to have these feelings. Therefore, he vows to "destroy" the object of his desire. Important to note here is the fact that, as of yet, it is not clear why Claggart renounces these homosexual feelings so strongly. This will be topic of discussion in the next section.

2.3 Crises of masculinity in *Billy Budd*

This section delves deeper into Claggart's reasoning behind denouncing his homosexual feelings for Billy. Furthermore, parallels will be drawn between the opera and theories on masculinity discussed in the literature review. Finally, two crises of masculinity are identified in *Billy Budd.*

As stated in the previous section, Sedgewick is very clear about Claggart's homosexuality. On the other hand, she also argues that it remains unclear how homosexuality is regarded in the novella: is it perceived as inherent to masculinist hierarchies or as a threat (93)? In any case, by describing Claggart as someone who is presented "as different in his essential nature from the *normal men* around him" (92, cursive mine), she does acknowledge Claggart's 'otherness'. When returning to the theories on masculinities discussed in the literature review, in particular Connel and Messerschmidt's notion of hegemonic masculinity, homosexuals can be regarded as subordinated non-hegemonic patterns of masculinity.

Bourdieu takes it a step further by stating that, within his concept of masculine domination, homosexuality can be regarded as "the sacrilegious feminization of the masculine, i.e. of the dominant principle, which is inscribed in the homosexual relationship" (119). Regardless of which of the views mentioned above is held, homosexuality can be regarded as emasculating and therefore as a threat to hegemonic masculinity.

It is argued here that Claggart's intense and irrational hatred for the Handsome Sailor is grounded in fear: fear of emasculation. Even though Claggart is clearly attracted to Billy, he regards homosexuality as a threat to his masculinity. Therefore, for Claggart to keep his hierarchical position of masculine power, the object of his desire must be eradicated. Claggart's choice of words in his vow suggests that eliminating Billy is indeed related to his position of power: "I … have you in my power, and I will destroy you" (LIB33). By emphasising that he has Billy in his power, Claggart asserts his dominance over him and by doing so he is re-establishing himself as the hegemonic pattern of masculinity. Contrastingly, Billy, the Handsome Sailor with his "blazoning feminine attributes" (Koffler 4) and the object of homosexual desire, can be regarded as an expression of non-hegemonic masculinity. One could even say that "Billy embodies 'the feminine in man'" (Koffler 6).

In his analysis of the novella, Martin states the following: "*Billy Budd*, although lacking female characters, is deeply aware of the need of male authority to suppress the female, just as masculine authority suppresses the feminine", affirming "the perpetual tyranny of man over woman" (124). Indeed, when regarding Billy as Koffler's "feminine in man" and Claggart as a representation of masculine power, there is no question that the feminine is suppressed by the masculine. Even though Martin and the other authors quoted in this section did their analyses on Melville's *Billy Budd*, their observations on gender, sexuality, and power also apply to the opera. After all, Claggart's Credo with his "I … have you in my power, and I will destroy you" is an addition from the librettists, and as argued above, it clearly confirms the notion of Claggart's homosexuality and him asserting his dominance over Billy. What is more, it can be argued that the opening of scene 1.1, which is discussed in the first section of this chapter, also displays a form of masculine domination over the feminine: in the masculinist hierarchy on board the *Indomitable*, the lower-ranking sailors are forced to do feminine labour under threat of violence ("You need a taste of the cat!" [LIB10]), while under the supervision of their superior officers. To summarise, Martin's observation of male authority suppressing the female in *Billy Budd* is present in both the novella and the operatic adaptation.

Previous paragraph has described masculine domination on two levels: Claggart exerting power over Billy and naval officers exerting power over the sailors. In both cases violence is used to maintain the order: Claggart's plot to "destroy" Billy is to maintain the masculine order, the officers' use of corporal punishment, the flogging, is to maintain the social order. This social order is represented in the naval hierarchical system, but also in the overarching masculinist hierarchy that is the patriarchy. Interestingly, Koffler describes Claggart as "patriarchy's underground man" since he is "submerging his sexuality in darkness, breeding distrust, multiplying intrigue, and suffocating his desires – the chief of police on the surface and the Guy Fawkes within" (9). Indeed, Claggart does prove himself to be an agent of patriarchal violence, especially in the opera's first act: he abuses his hierarchical position by ordering Squeek to do his dirty work for him, forces the Novice to betray a shipmate, and arbitrarily uses excessive violence, for example when he savagely beats a boy who only bumped against him. In the second act Claggart even takes it a step further, by using the patriarchal system of law as a tool to trap and kill the innocent Billy. Therefore, two oppressive and violent hegemonies are embodied in the character of John Claggart: masculinity and the patriarchy.

The observations from the previous paragraphs confirm a connection between the themes of gender and power in Britten's *Billy Budd*. In this paragraph it is argued that the opera displays a dichotomy of crises of masculinity because of a perceived threat. The first is perhaps the most obvious crisis and has already been discussed at length: Claggart's masculinity is threatened by Billy, who as the "object of his unacknowledgeable desire" (Martin 123), arouses homosexual feelings in him. He uses violence to eliminate the threat ("I will destroy you") to maintain the masculine order. The second and perhaps less obvious crisis is that of the *Indomitable*'s masculinist hierarchy being threatened by mutiny, which can be regarded as a crisis which result from challenges to patriarchal dominance (Purvis 5). The *Indomitable*'s officers are in constant fear of "French notions" (LIB26) which could result in a revolt on board. A good illustration of their fear is their misinterpretation of Billy's goodbye to his old ship ("Dangerous! 'The Rights of man' indeed!" [LIB17]), a scene which will be discussed in more detail in a later section. In fear of possible mutinous intentions from the lower-ranking seamen, violence (the flogging) is used to maintain the social order.

Chapter 3: Voice

In the following paragraphs, the three main characters of *Billy Budd* and the choir of sailors will be discussed. As discussed in the methodology, the interrelation between the words, the vocal line, and orchestral sound is used for analysis of the characters. On some occasions, Melville's novella is revisited to examine how the characters exist in the primary source and how they are adapted for the operatic stage.

When discussing the voices of the characters, it is important to emphasise that their voices can be expressed in two ways: vocally and musically. In other words, a character can be heard because he is using his singing voice, but his voice can also be expressed through music only. The first half of this chapter focuses on the voices that are either heard or unheard by the characters on stage. These voices are present and expressed musically, either vocally or orchestrally. As is one of the operatic conventions discussed in the literary review, the audience always hears these voices, whether the characters do or not. The second half of this chapter focusses on voices that are either silent or silenced. These voices have no musical expression, because they are either silent by choice or silenced by an external force.

3.1 Heard and unheard

3.1.1 John Claggart, Master-at-Arms

The *Indomitable*'s Master-at-Arms is arguably the character with the most distinct musical presence. Both Claggart's vocal and orchestral music are "characterised by a composite configuration of leitmotifs, orchestral timbre and specific keys". A good example is Claggart's first appearance on the stage, which is when the three new recruits from the *Rights o' Man* are about to be questioned. His first vocal utterance ("Your honour, I am at your disposal" [SC31]) is preceded by a temporary slowing of the tempo and heavy low wind chords, which are easily recognised by any listener and leave "no doubt that this is the villain of the piece" (Rochlitz 129). Another of Claggart's musical characteristics is his leitmotiv of two falling fourths followed by a rising minor second. This musical motive is used in many of his vocal lines, including the vocal utterance mentioned above. Other significant vocal lines of Claggart's on this leitmotiv worth mentioning here are the following: "Do they think I'm deaf" (his rhetorical question in reaction to his senior officers, whether he had heard Billy's outcry of "Farewell, ol' Rights of Man" [SC49]), "Let him crawl" (when he hears that the Novice can no longer walk after being flogged [SC56]), "Look where you're going!" (when a boy stumbles into him and he subsequently "lashes savagely at him with his rattan" [SC130]), and his ominous "I will destroy you" (when he vows to "destroy" Billy [SC143]).

Interestingly, there are also instances in which Claggart's musical leitmotiv is used in vocal utterances of other characters when they are referring to the Master-at-Arms. Just after Claggart ordered Billy to "Take off that fancy neckerchief!" (LIB21, a scene which will be discussed in more detail in a later section), Donald and Dansker try to warn Billy not to trust Claggart. Both Donald's "That's the one to study" and Dansker's "Billy, be warned, keep clear of him" (SC72) are set to Claggart's leitmotiv. Donald and Dansker clearly have a better insight into Claggart's character, they can see – or better yet, hear – through him.

In Melville's novella the narrator makes it very clear that Claggart is a figure of deceit, as his persona is described as "the hidden nature of the master-at-arms" (BB38). In the opera, Britten employed the narrative function of the orchestra to give the audience an insight into his devious character. As an audible illustration of his two-faced persona, on some occasions the key changes when Claggart's vocal utterances are moved from public to private. An example of this public-private dichotomy is Claggart's response to the First Lieutenant's "Master-at-arms, instruct your police. You heard what he called out", after Billy's outcry of "Farewell, old *Rights o' Man*!". Claggart replies with "I heard, your honour!", which is still in the key of E-major. However, as soon as the First Lieutenant has left the stage and Claggart is on his own, he sarcastically repeats his "I heard, your honour! Yes, I heard" which is then followed by the previously discussed "Do they think I'm deaf" After this, the key changes to F-minor, which, as will be discussed later, is the key most strongly associated with Claggart's evil persona. It is rather significant that "Claggart's rhetorical question about his superior officers … refers to specifically auditory powers of cognition, for it is through the musical disguise of a "deceitful" tonal idiom" (Rupprecht 96) that Claggart tries to keep his true nature hidden from others. As explained in the previous paragraph, Donald and Dansker can hear through Claggart's musical disguise, and as will be discussed in the section on Vere's voice, so can Captain Vere ("I'm not so easily deceived!" [LIB51]). However, the naïve Billy cannot and is therefore 'deaf' for Claggart's motive in his friends' warning.

Another part of Claggart's musical disguise is his vocal and orchestral music when he talks about Billy or addresses him directly. Rupprecht describes this musical utterance as a "warm major-mode chorale" (96) and aptly refers to this music as Claggart's "chorale of deceit" (93). The first time this chorale is heard is when Claggart praises Billy in front of the officers, after he has been impressed from the *Rights o' Man*. The tempo slows down during Claggart's vocal line and is orchestrally accompanied by a triad of trombones and tuba (SC41). The second and third occurrences of this chorale can be regarded as "musical echoes

of Claggart's first comment" (Rochlitz 30): the tempo also slows down, Claggart's vocal line is about the same, as are the triads of trombones and tuba (SC71, SC129). Of particular interest is Claggart's line "Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it, too" in the third chorale (SC129), which is a direct quote from the novella. It is taken from a scene which was not included in the opera (but has been discussed in a previous section), in which Billy spills his soup in front of Claggart. The Master-at-arms responds "in a low musical voice peculiar to him at times". This peculiarity in his voice is translated musically into Claggart's chorale of deceit, which Britten also cleverly used in other scenes in which Claggart addresses Billy, like for example "Look after your dress" (SC71, [54]+7)This is yet another example of how operatic adaptation can be employed to shape and elaborate on the source material. As mentioned before, Donald and Dansker are not fooled by Claggart's words of praise for Billy and try to warn the handsome sailor on more than one occasion. In other words, there is a "distance between Claggart as he seems to Billy and Claggart as he really is", which can be heard in "the shifting harmonic and tonal manoeuvres that animate the Master-at-Arms's operatic presence" (Rupprecht 90). By successfully concealing his true 'nature', Claggart traps the innocent Billy (Rupprecht 90). Interestingly, when Claggart denounces Billy to Vere in scene 2.1, he describes him as "A man-trap [lurking] under those ruddy-tipped daisies" (LIB49). However, considering Claggart's musical "mask" (Rupprecht 96) through which his deceitful nature is expressed, it seems that it is in fact Claggart himself who is the "man-trap".

One final musical feature associated mainly with Claggart (which has already been mentioned in in the section of Claggart's public and private utterances) needs to be discussed in more detail: his characteristic F-minor tonic. The association between this tonic and the character of Claggart has been topic of discussion by several other authors (Rochlitz 130, Rupprecht 94, Haggarty 75, Hindley 103), the interpretation of this tonic-Claggart association varies, however. For example, Hindley claims that the key of F-minor is not directly associated with Claggart himself but rather "symbolises the rule of malign fate", of which Claggart serves as its main agent (105). It is argued here that the F-minor tonic, whether it is expressed in a triad or in the overall key, is indeed directly linked with Claggart's character and his intentions, particularly regarding Billy and his vow to "destroy" him.

It can hardly be called a coincidence that two pivotal scenes, in which Claggart speaks privately and during which his devious and violent nature become evident, are set in the F-minor key. The first scene is a passage directly following Claggart's "Do they think I'm deaf" (LIB18; SC46, [36] 1 through 8). The second scene with F-minor passage is arguable even

more indicative of Claggart's evil and devious nature, as it is what Rupprecht refers to as "his Act 1 Credo" (125): "I, John Claggart, Master-at-Arms upon the *Indomitable*, have you in my power, and I will destroy you, I will destroy you" (LIB33; SC142-3, [110]+17 through 23).

However, the average opera listener might not have such a trained ear as to be able to distinguish certain musical keys and associate them with a specific theme or character. In other words, the connection between the F-minor tonic and Claggart's malicious character may have been lost on most of the audience if Britten had left it at these two passages. Obviously, Britten did not. In some of Claggart's scenes the action is accompanied by a "widely-spaced F-minor chord with a characteristic timbre" (Rochlitz 130). As Hindley pointed out, this chord (often played by a combination of brass and woodwinds) is heard during moments "when Claggart's venom is embroiling, or about to embroil, others in senseless suffering" (Hindley 104). By now, even an untrained musical ear will probably have picked up on the connection between the F-minor tonic and Claggart's malicious nature, violent tendencies, and intense hatred for Billy. As can also be seen in Figure 3, in the first three fragments Claggart's vocal line is set on his leitmotiv of two falling fourths followed by a rising minor second.

Most crucially, Claggart's signature F-minor key is also used as a musical illustration of the power of his voice, even when he is not present on the stage. Claggart is killed halfway through the second act, which would suggest the end of his voice and his manipulative influence. However, it is discussed here that Claggart is present during the trial scene, albeit not in physical but in musical form, through leitmotivic returns and especially his thematic F-minor chord. What is more, almost simultaneously with the emergence of Claggart's orchestral voice, "Vere's dramatic presence as a singing character begins to falter" (Rupprecht 108), as if the non-corporeal Claggart is taking possession of the confused Captain Vere. For example, Vere's entire testimony is in the F-minor key, which could be interpreted as Claggart using Vere's voice to give the jury his version of the events. Indeed, despite Vere's firm belief in Billy's innocence ("John Claggart, beware! … The boy whom you would destroy, he is good; you are evil" [LIB51]), he gives a dry, brief, and musically monotonous account of the events. More on the topic of Vere's faltering musical presence will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.2 on Vere's voice(lessness).

Another significant moment of the trial scene which is set in F-minor is when Billy is begging Captain Vere to save him (SC278, [87]). Vere does not answer poor Billy, despite his continuous pleading: "Captain, save me! I'd have died for you, save me!" (LIB56). After Billy's final "Save me!" (SC279, [88]), while "*The other officers lead Billy back to his*

stateroom", the key changes to F-minor. The timing of Billy's final words, quickly being followed by Claggart's signature key, suggests that he cannot be saved, and his fate is doomed. What is more, when the jury pronounces their verdict, an F-minor chord from the harp is heard, which closely precedes the officers' "Guilty" (SC287, [94]+12). The same harp F-minor chord is heard preceding the penalty of "Death" (SC288, [94]+14), and preceding Vere's "I accept their verdict" (SC288, [95]). Again, the timing of these F-minor chords can be interpreted as Claggart's influence over the trial's proceedings, and that he has planned everything as such. It can be argued that this is indeed the case, as can be seen in his "I will mutilate and silence the body where you dwell. I shall hang from the yard arm" (LIB33).

3.1.2 The chorus of sailors and the Mutiny motive

In the literary review, Wagner's use of leitmotivs as a narrative tool has been discussed. In *Billy Budd*, one of the most frequently occurring leitmotivs is one that has been described as the Mutiny cluster (Rochlitz 123) and the Mutiny theme (Rupprecht 86), which consists of a rising fifth followed by a rising minor second. The theme is often part of a vocal line, for example Vere's "Oh what have I done?" in the Prologue (LIB7) or the Sailing Master's "the floating republic" in the captain's cabin in Act 1.2 (LIB26). Sometimes it is more subtle and heard as an orchestral utterance, for example the harps (SCO280) just before Vere's aria "I accept their verdict" in Act 2.2 (LIB58). As Rochlitz points out, "many of the musical themes and motifs of *Billy Budd* do not show a fixed, unambiguous relationship between melodic shape and semantic content" (123), therefore, the Mutiny theme does not necessarily mean mutiny or mutinous thoughts directly. It is argued here that the Mutiny theme represents a threat to hegemonic power and control. What is more, this threat does not necessarily have to be present, but can also exist solely "in the minds of certain characters at specific moments in the opera" (Rupprecht 89).

The first time the mutiny motive is heard prominently is the opening of Act 1[14], which is already described in detail in a previous section: lower-ranking officers holy-stoning the deck under supervision of officers on the Quarter Deck, use of emasculating language to assert dominance and maintain hierarchical divide, naval discipline through threats and actual use of violence. All these incidents are interspersed with the sailors singing "Oh heave", which is set on a clearly recognisable musical motive. Important to note here, is the fact that

[14] As stated before, the motive is also heard in the Prologue, in Vere's vocal line of "Oh what have I done?"

at this point in the opera no "relationship between melodic shape and semantic content" (Rochlitz 123) has been established yet; the opera being only ten minutes in, the audience has not had the opportunity to make the connection between a particular musical motive and a verbal signifier. However, the musical theme is very prominently heard; not only does the chorus sing the theme multiple times, but the vocal line is also mirrored in the orchestra by the strings (SC8). Therefore, the musical theme will most likely be remembered, even by less-experienced opera listeners. Since this music is accompanied by a stage image (based on the libretto's stage directions) in which naval power relations are clearly visible, it is very likely that some sort of connection is made between the musical theme and that of naval discipline or hierarchical power relations.

As mentioned before, an on-stage character does not necessarily have to be aware of the leitmotiv and its meaning, whether it is expressed vocally or orchestrally. However, a leitmotiv can also work in another way: by giving the audience information about how a situation is perceived by one or more characters. In other words, certain characters 'hear' the leitmotiv and its implicated meaning whereas other may remain 'deaf' to it. An example of this is on-stage hearing of leitmotivs is Act 1.1, when Billy bids farewell to his friends on the ship he had previously worked on. After being appointed as the *Indomitable*'s foretopman, a position he is overjoyed to have, Billy exultantly shouts seawards "Farewell to you, old comrades! … Farewell, old *Rights o' Man*" (LIB17). As can be seen in Figure 4, the vocal line of Billy's "Farewell, old *Rights o' Man*" is set on the Mutiny motive, and (albeit in a different key) the same as the chorus's "Oh heave! O heave away, heave!" from earlier. The musical phrase is then wordlessly echoed by an off-stage chorus. With *Rights o' Man*, Billy is of course referring to his previous ship, which carries that name. However, all the present officers interpret these words quite differently. To shed more light on the officers' reaction, a closer examination of the setting of the opera and British naval history is required.

In 1789, a month after the storming of the Bastille, the new National Assembly of France passed the Declaration of the Rights of Man (Norton Anthology Vol.D 193). This human civil rights document contained the core values of the French Revolution, proclaiming natural rights and equality for all men, regardless of social class, wealth, or possession of property. In 1791, the British born revolutionary Thomas Paine published his book *Rights of Man*, in which he defends the French Revolution, speaks out against hereditary forms of government like the British monarchy, and advocates a democratic republic for England (Norton Anthology Vol.D 209-213). The opera being set in 1797, "in the difficult and dangerous days after the Mutiny at the Nore" (LIB7), and only a few years after the French

Revolution and the publication of Paine's book, it is understandable that the *Indomitable*'s officers associate the words *Rights of Man* with revolutionary tendencies that oppose the established order. Crucial to note here, is the fact that Billy does not have any mutinous thoughts when saying the words "Farewell *Rights o' Man*", he is merely saying goodbye to his "old comrades" (LIB17). In other words, despite singing the leitmotiv of mutiny, Billy is 'deaf' to its implicated meaning.

By contrast, the officers on deck (Mister Flint the Sailing Master, Mister Redburn the First Lieutenant, and Mister Ratcliffe the Second Lieutenant) clearly do hear the motive and react strongly to it: "What's that? 'Rights o' Man'? Down, sir! How dare you? Clear the decks!" (LIB 17). It can therefore be argued that the Mutiny motive is only 'heard' by the officers and not by other on-stage characters. True, after Billy's exultant farewell, the phrase is echoed by the chorus, which at first glance would suggests that the sailors are indeed responding to Billy's cry. However, there are two points of interest here. Firstly, the echoing chorus is off-stage (SC46, LIB17), the on-stage chorus members do not participate. Secondly, the off-stage chorus sets in after Billy has already completed an entire phrase ([33]), which is then quickly followed by the officers' reaction ([33] + 2). As Rochlitz points out, this "sequential ordering" suggests that "the chorus of men wordlessly echoing the Mutiny motif *from off-stage* is not actually 'heard' by anyone on-stage, but merely represents the officers' fear that the crew might be incited to mutiny by the dangerous new recruit" (127). In other words, what the audience hear is the officers' interpretation of Billy's words and does not necessarily represent an actual threat of mutinous intentions.

By contrast, the next time the Mutiny motive is heard in the chorus's vocal line, the threat of mutiny is much more realistic. In Act 2.4, after Billy's execution "Slowly the crew on the main deck turns in rebellion to the quarter-deck" (stage directions LIB62). Billy was well-loved by the other sailors, and it is evident that his death "arouses mutinous sentiments among the crew" (Rochlitz 125). The following compositional scene is arguably Britten's most brilliant musical adaptation of Melville's words. Melville describes the sailors' reaction as follows:

> Whoever has heard the freshet-wave of a torrent suddenly swelled by pouring showers in tropical mountains, 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 if its source was because of its murmurous indistinctiveness since it came from close by, even from the men massed on the ship's open deck. (BB82)

Britten has managed to turn Melville's words into a "wordless fugue" (Haggarty 77), which not only emanates the threat and menace of the angry sailors, but its terrifying sound leaves the audience on the edge of their seats. The audience first only hear the second basses, who are very quietly singing a variation of the Mutiny motive without words[15]. They are followed by the first basses, then the second tenors, and finally the first tenors. The vocal line is a rising cadence, starting in a lower register for each vocal group, progressively moving to the upper limits of the singers' vocal range. What is more, as each vocal group joins in, the sound they produce not only gets fuller, but also louder, starting as a pianississimo and already at a mezzo forte at the first tenors' entrance (SC322-324). The crescendo continues from there, resulting in a fortississimo at the climax (SC327). The chorus's wordless 'murmur' very effectively symbolises "the rising anger of the crew" which "appropriately takes the Mutiny motive as its theme" (Rochlitz 125). As opposed to the wordless off-stage echo of Billy's "Farewell, old *Rights o' Man*" from Act 1.1, this chorus is definitely 'real' and a genuine act of rebellion.

The officers are quick to respond to the sailors' menacing anger. At first, "there is a growing agitation among the officers in the quarter-deck" (stage directions LIB62). When the chorus' 'murmur' is nearing its climax, the First Lieutenant Redburn, Sailing Master Flint, and Second Lieutenant Ratcliffe sing "Down all hands! And see that they go!" (SC326), which is then repeated by all the voices on the Quarter-deck (SC327) [16]. The libretto stays very close to the novella here, when it states that "[t]he men slowly obey the commands from force of habit and begin to disperse" (stage directions LIB62). What Forster and Crozier describe as "force of habit" Melville explains as "True martial discipline long continued superinduces in average men a sort of impulse of docility whose operation at the official sound of command much resembles in its promptitude the effect of an instinct" (BB83). In other words, years of naval discipline seem to have 'conditioned' the men to put their own feelings and notions aside and obey orders from their superior officers. The sailors' obedience is also heard in the music; after the Quarter-Deck's second "Down" there is

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[15] In the score it is indicated that "This passage should be sung to a dark vowel – like *ur* in *purple*, or the French *un*" (SC322), which enhances the sense of threat and menace.

[16] There is a slight difference when comparing the score with the libretto in this scene. In the libretto the three officers shout "Down all hands" which is then followed by the Quarter-deck chorus with "Down all hands! Down! … See that they go!" (LIB62), whereas in the score the three main officers shout "Down all hands! And see that they go!" (SC326)

rallentando in the orchestra, and after the third "Down!" ([138]) a key change (from E to F), after which the phrase of the chorus of sailors continues in the new and much slower tempo. What is more, the vocal line turns into a falling cadence, with a slight alteration of the Mutiny motive, and decrescendos while "*the deck empties by degrees and the light slowly fades*" (LIB62).

As an overall summary of this chapter so far, section 3.1 illustrates how the operatic form can be employed to shape and expand the primary text. In other words, Britten's music combined with the text in the libretto, can be regarded as an operatic interpretation of Mellville's words. As argued in section 3.1.1., The origin of Claggart's chorale of deceit can be found in a single sentence from the novella which is used in the opera to illustrate other instances of Claggart's musical mask. Some characters are able to hear this chorale and interpret it as Claggart's deceitful nature. Unfortunately, Billy remains 'deaf'. Furthermore, the Mutiny motive has its textual origin in Melville's description of the sailors' mutinous murmur after Billy's execution. Britten used Melville's words and expanded the idea of a mutinous threat by incorporating the sound in a leitmotif. By musical motive, the threat of mutiny is woven "into the operatic score as a distinct presence" (Rupprecht 75).

3.2 Silent and silenced

3.2.1 Billy Budd, able seaman

In this section it is argued that Billy is silenced by two separate sources: one internal, being his stammer, and the other external, in the figure of John Claggart. Nevertheless, the power of Billy's voice, his singing voice in particular, is also argued here.

First topic of discussion is Billy's vocal deficiency needs to be addressed: he has a stammer, which makes it more difficult for him to make himself be heard to begin with. Under stressful circumstances this "flaw" tends to crop up, or, as Billy himself describes it: "Ay, it comes and it goes, or so the chaps tell me" (LIB16). The added "or so the chaps tell me", suggests that Billy is not fully aware of the situation and of himself during an episode of his stammer, and has to be told about it afterwards. There are four crucial moments when Billy is silenced by this vocal deficiency: when he is being questioned after his arrival on board (LIB16), when he catches Squeek in the act of rummaging through his kitbag (LIB30), when the Novice tries to persuade him to join the alleged mutinous gang (LIB36), and, most significantly, when Claggart accuses him of mutiny (LIB52). In the first two scenes, the stammer is displayed in Billy's vocal line ("They say I was a … a… a…" [LIB16]), followed

by the bystanders identifying this vocal utterance as a stammer ("He stammers! That's a pity. Fine recruit otherwise" [LIB16]). However, in the scene with the Novice, the stammer in Billy's vocal line is accompanied by specific stage directions, which state that "*Billy clenches his fists with rage as the stammer chokes his utterance*" (LIB36). These directions seem to foreshadow the events in Vere's cabin which result in Claggart's death. In this scene the stage directions also state that Billy is "*unable to speak*", after which "*Billy's right fist shoots out, striking Claggart on the forehead*" (LIB52). Interestingly, it could be argued that Claggart's death is in fact the result of manslaughter, and not murder. After all, when assuming that Billy is not fully self-aware when he is stammering, and his inability to speak is expressed in a brief but uncontrollable fit of rage, it can be stated that his fatal blow to Claggart's forehead is unintentional.

Billy's stammer is not only expressed as a vocal utterance, but also by the orchestra as a musical utterance. In each of the four scenes mentioned above, Billy's stammer is accompanied by muted trills of the trumpets which are followed by a series of quick arpeggios of the woodwinds (SC39 [27], SC122 [94], and SC256 [68]). According to Rupprecht "the music itself realizes, by onomatopoeic gesture, the action of stammering", and he has therefore labelled the motive as the Stammer-Motive. The trills of the trumpets can be interpreted as the temporary speechlessness of the stammer, and the woodwind arpeggios as the occasional non-verbal and meaningless sounds that are being produced. Furthermore, the author states that "it is typical of Britten's operatic technique that 'voiced inarticulacies' of Melville's original should assume a directly thematic form in the score" (84).

Interestingly, the very first time this Stammer-Motive is heard, is in the Prologue when Billy has not even been mentioned yet. In Old Vere's reminiscences about his life, and how he has been shown both good and evil, the following lines are accompanied by the Stammer-Motive: "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*" (SC3-4 [2]), cursive mine). In other words, the musical motive is accompanied by references to voice and verbal expression, or lack thereof: song, stammer, and speech. As is explained in a previous section, like the first occurrence of the Mutiny Motive, the audience has not had the opportunity to connect the musical motive to Billy's stammer yet. However, as the motive returns in scene 1.1, when Billy's "flaw" crops up for the first time, "the Stammer-motive's role in the main plot" is confirmed (Rupprecht 84).

Another point of interest is Britten's music during the opera's climax or point of no return: Billy's stammer in act 2.2. Again, preceding the stammering sounds in Billy's vocal line the Stammer Motive is heard. However, one bar before Billy's first "..a ..a ..a ..a ..a" the Stammer-motive's C-sharp trill of the trumpets is accompanied by a G from the strings (SC257, [68]+5). The interval that is heard is a diminished fifth, which is also known as *diabolus in musica*. (Rochlitz 128-129). According to Rochlitz, this musical detail can be regarded as an "ingenious yet simple manifestation of the Devil's 'little card'" (128), a phrase used by the Melvillian narrator to refer to Billy's stammer:

> In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interferer, the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth. In every case, one way or another he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us – I too have a hand here. (BB17-18)

Even though the Melvillian narrator first compares Billy to how Adam might have been "ere the urbane Serpent wriggled himself into his company" (BB17), he adds that this "envious marplot of Eden" has made sure to add something of himself to the creation of every human being. Interestingly, Old Vere, who can be regarded as the opera's narrator, uses a similar phrase in the Prologue. His statement that "the good has never been perfect" and that there is always "some defect, some imperfection in the divine image", is followed by "So that the Devil still has something to do with every human consignment to this planet of Earth" (LIB7). Forster's near direct quote from the novella cannot be anything but deliberate: it seems that both Melville's narrator and the opera's Old Vere agree that Billy's stammer is the one imperfection in his "divine image", which is given to him by either "the envious marplot of Eden" or "the Devil". On top of Britten's addition of the devil's chord, Billy's verbal utterance when he delivers his fatal blow seems to solidify the connection between his stammer and some evil interference: "…a …a …a …DEVIL!" (LIB53). The two syllables of the word "Devil" are on the notes F and B respectively, constituting the diminished fifth interval which is, of course, this '*diabolus in musica'*.

Even though his stammer can be regarded as Billy's "diabolic imperfection" (Rochlitz 129) and is responsible for silencing him occasionally, it is John Claggart and his diabolic scheme which silences the Handsome Sailor indefinitely. As mentioned in the Introduction, on their very first meeting Billy is quite literally silenced by John Claggart: when Billy tells the Master-at-Arms he cannot read but that he can sing, Claggart orders him to "Never mind the singing" (LIB15). Soon after their first meeting it becomes clear that Claggart did not merely say these words to restrain Billy's excitement about having just boarded the

Indomitable. True, at first Claggart only aims to make Billy's life on board more difficult by ordering one of his corporals, Squeek, to "Keep an eye on the big lad with the stammer" and to "play all [his] little tricks on this Budd" (LIB18). However, his intentions quickly turn out to be much more sinister when Claggart, in no uncertain terms, vows to silence Billy for good: "I am doomed to annihilate you, I am vowed to your destruction. … I will mutilate and silence the body where you dwell … I, John Claggart, Master-at-Arms upon the *Indomitable*, have you in my power, and I will destroy you" (LIB32-33). Claggart cunningly uses the officers' misinterpretation of Billy's "Farewell, old *Rights o' Man*" (LIB17) to his advantage, by forcing the Novice to incriminate Billy and falsely accuse him of mutinous intentions. As discussed in the section on Claggart's voice, Billy is oblivious to his musical disguise.

In stark contrast to Claggart and his mission to silence Billy, the rest of the men on board the *Indomitable* are very appreciative of Billy's voice. In other words, Billy's presence is very valuable on board the ship. Billy's accomplishments in uniting the crew like a "happy family" (BB12) and his caring nature have already been discussed in section 2.2. In addition there are two scenes in which Billy's (singing) voice is very much welcomed to be heard. The first is scene 1.3, in which the sailors are on the berth-deck and singing shanties. It starts off with "Blow her to Hilo, blow her away" (LIB28), which is sung by the entire chorus of sailors. However, it soon turns into a shanty 'battle' between Donald, Red Whiskers, and Billy. Billy is taking the lead by repeatedly interrupting his friends' shanty with one of his own, which is either in a different key (SC111, [84] +1) or a quicker tempo (SC114, [87]). Donald ends the battle with a shanty which features Billy, much to the amusement of the other sailors, including Billy himself: "We're anchored off Scilly, My aunt willy nilly, Was winking at Billy, She'll cut up her Billy for pie" (LIB29). Clearly, Billy's presence and his singing voice is much appreciated, as it contributes to the amicable atmosphere on the berth-deck.

The second scene in which Billy's voice is very welcomed to be heard, seems to oppose Claggart's goal to silence Billy even more, because of a direct reference to Billy's singing voice. During the chase of the French ship in scene 2.1, Vere orders the First Lieutenant to "Call for boarding volunteers" (LIB42). The First Lieutenant's choice of words when addressing the crew are of significance here: "Men! Who'll volunteer to board 'em in the smoke? … Sing out your names!" (LIB42). Instead of ordering the men to speak up or shout, he asks them to sing their names. Not only does this seem like an odd way to phrase an order, it also juxtaposes of Claggart's "Never mind the singing". The first men to respond are Donald, Red Whiskers and Dansker, who are greeted by the chorus of sailors with a unisono

and low-registered "Red Whiskers – good for him! And good old Dansker! Board 'em in the smoke" (SC199, [22]+6). Billy is the fourth one to sing out his name, while his still in the foretop: "Here's another. I'm coming down to you. Billy Budd! I'll come down from the birds" (LIB43). His vocal line is accompanied by a jubilant A-major triad from the flutes and the alto saxophone (SC200, [23]), which seems to illustrate his happiness and eagerness to join the excitement. As opposed to their rather subdued reaction to the first three volunteers, Billy's arrival on the main deck is greeted much more enthusiastically by the chorus of sailors on the main deck: their polyphonic "Billy Budd! He's the one! He's with us!" is in a higher register, which seems to mirror Billy's contagious excitement.

It seems, therefore, that Billy's voice, despite being flawed with a stammer, has a powerful effect on the men on board the *Indomitable*: with his shanties he contributed to the amicable atmosphere among the sailors during off-hours, and by singing out his name during the chase he showed everyone what he is worth as a sailor. Interesting to point out here, is the fact that in both these scenes Billy's singing voice is emphasised. Even though Claggart aims to silence his singing, these two scenes illustrate that Billy's singing voice and his overall presence is very valuable on board the *Indomitable*. In other words, despite being flawed with a "diabolic imperfection", Billy's voice can be regarded as a powerful one.

To summarise, it is argued that Billy is 'unvoiced' on two different level: Claggart's evil plot and his own vocal deficiency. It is also demonstrated that Claggart's wish to silence Billy directly opposes that of all the other men on board, who welcome Billy's presence and his voice. The choice of words in scenes discussed in this section is significant: in all three scenes is referred to singing instead of speaking. It is argued here that this is referring to the to the main form of communication inherent to the operatic form: since all verbal language is sung, it would make sense to refer to a character's singing voice instead of their speaking voice. Furthermore, Britten's clever use of the *diabolus in musica* is yet another illustration of how Melville's original text is reinterpreted in operatic adaptation. As a final point of interest, the juxtaposition of Claggart's voice and Billy's voice needs to be addressed. Opposing Billy's powerful but inherently flawed voice is Claggart's non-corporeal or orchestral voice, as it is heard during the trial scene. It can be argued that the power of Billy's voice is vocal, whereas Claggart's is orchestral.

3.2.2 Edward Fairfax Vere, Captain of the *Indomitable*

Even though Captain Vere's is the one voice which has hardly been discussed so far, it can easily be described as the most powerful and influential one. After all, as discussed in the literature review, as Old Vere he can be regarded as the opera's narrator. Furthermore, he also seems the ultimate representation of the traditional masculine order: not only is he Captain of the *Indomitable* ("king of this fragment of earth, of this floating monarchy" [LIB58]), he is regarded as a father figure to many of the men ("he cares for us like we are his sons" [LIB22]). What is more, he receives unconditional love and support from his crew ("Starry Vere, God Bless you" [LIB62]. In other words, Vere occupies the ultimate position of power on board the *Indomitable,* therefore, one assumes that his voice and overall musical presence would match that. However, as it is argued in this section, Vere's musical presence is characterised by confusion. What is more, over the course of the opera Vere seems to lose his voice and even remains silent on crucial moments.

As mentioned in the literature review, in the adaptation process some alterations were made that significantly altered the character of Vere. Therefore, it seems fitting to start this section with a comparison of the operatic and the novella's Vere.

Melville's Vere dies after a battle, not long after Billy's execution. On his deathbed "he was heard to murmur words inexplicable to his attendant – 'Billy Budd, Billy Budd'" (BB 85). Whittal describes "Vere's regretful but not guilty recall of Billy's name" as that of a "fulfilled, fatherly politician" (151). This is a very different Vere when compared to the operatic Vere as an old man in the Prologue and Epilogue. Old Vere is full of remorse and confusion: "Oh what have I done? Confusion, so much is confusion! I have tried to guide others rightly, but I have been lost on the infinite sea" (LIB 7). Obviously, Vere's confusion is caused by the events after Billy's arrival on board the *Indomitable*, especially regarding his trial and execution. The following paragraphs discuss some adaptive alterations of the source material and how these have altered the character of Captain Vere, especially in relation to the themes of voice and power. Topics of discussion are the alleged threat of mutiny on the *Indomitable*, the legal procedure of the trial, and Vere's behaviour during the trial.

In the novella, Vere is acting out of a justified fear of mutiny, there are definitely some grumbling sailors on board who are looking for supporters. Melville's Billy is approached by one of the after-guards, who tries to persuade him to join their gang of impressed sailors (BB43). In the opera it is the novice who approaches Billy and tries to talk him into becoming their leader: "But you were pressed too, Billy, and there's others like us too. … We can't stand it any more… It's gone too far. … Couldn't you help us at a pinch? …

we're wanting a leader" (LIB35). However, the Novice is acting under strict instructions of Claggart, by whom he is forced to pretend to be disloyal, "tempt him to join you" with some coins, and "compromise him" (LIB34). In other words, there is no real threat of mutiny in the opera, it is all staged by Claggart to set up Billy. What is more, Vere is aware of Claggart's scheme. Shortly after Claggart has informed Vere of Billy's alleged mutinous intentions, Vere states the following: "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 have studied men and their ways. The mists are vanishing – and you shall fail!" (LIB51). Clearly, Claggart's musical mask, as discussed in section 3.1.1., is not working on Vere: "the mists are vanishing" and he can see right through Claggart's deceitful disguise. Vere recognises Claggart's evil, just as he recognises Billy's goodness. When Vere speaks to Billy alone, just before Claggart is invited in to officially accuse Billy, Vere is certain he has judged Billy's goodness of character correctly. While Billy is pledging his loyalty and devotion to his captain ("I'd look after you well. You could trust your boat to me, you'd be safe with me"), Vere speaks the following: "And this is the man I'm told is dangerous – the schemer, the plotter, the artful mutineer! … Claggart, John Claggart, beware!" (LIB51). The line might even suggest that Vere also realises that Claggart, who had previously called Billy a "man-trap [lurking] under those ruddy-tipped daisies" (LIB49), has fallen for the young sailor, and that the Master-at-arms' accusations are in fact a scheme to revenge himself on Billy (Rochlitz '12 109).

The second and arguably most significant alteration of the source material, is the trial scene. Firstly, Melville's Vere deviates from the legal procedure, whereas operatic Vere does not. In fear of awakening "any slumbering embers of *The Nore* among the crew" (BB62-63), Melville's Vere calls a drum-head court, instead of waiting for the squadron so that the matter could be referred to the admiral (BB61), which would have been the regular procedure. The possible threat of mutiny seems to be the justification for Vere's suspension of proper legal procedure (Martin 115). However, contrary to the novella, in the opera there is nothing "to indicate that this proceeding diverges from naval usage" (Rochlitz '12 111). The drum-head court is summoned because "The enemy is near", therefore, "The prisoner must be tried at once" (LIB 54). During the trial the operatic Vere only contributes as a witness, which is no more "than is relevant to the investigation within the bounds of martial law which governs the warship world" (Rochlitz '12 111). This is another alteration of the source material because Melville's Vere acts as "the accuser, the witness, and the judge; he is even the defence counsel at moments" (Martin 115). What is more, he is also interferes in the jury's

decision-making process by using "his power to manipulate the court's decision", making the trial "a sham" and "the pretence of justice and not justice itself" (Martin 115). Again, this is very different from the operatic trial. This Vere refrains from interfering in the jury's decision-making process, despite repeated pleas from his officers requesting his knowledge, wisdom, and guidance ("No. Do not ask me. I cannot. … Pronounce your verdict" [LIB57]).

What is more, apart from his statement as "the sole earthly witness" (LIB54), Vere remains silent during most of the trial. His silence is not only represented textually in the libretto, but also musically in the score. Not only does Vere lose his voice because of voluntary silence, during the trial scene Vere's musical presence "splinters and weakens" (Rupprecht 96), which can be regarded as powerlessness. Furthermore, as Rupprecht points out, when he does speak, words from other characters can be recognised, as well as "salient musical returns, both in Vere's vocal part, and in its orchestral context" (97). A good example of this phenomenon is found in Vere's Scylla and Charybdis aria: "Beauty, handsomeness, goodness coming to trial. How can I condemn him? How can I save him? My heart's broken, my life's broken" (LIB53). The phrase "my heart's broken" has been uttered before in the opera, namely in the Novice's lament after his flogging. In fact, Old Vere also uses the Novice's words in the Prologue and Epilogue: "I have been lost on the infinite sea" (LIB7) and "I was lost on the infinite sea" (LIB63) respectively[17]. Vere using the Novice's words suggests he now shares the young man's doubt, desperation, and sense of being lost.

However, the Novice is not the only character who is represented in Vere's musical persona. In section 3.1.1, Claggart's non-corporeal musical presence during the trial scene has already been discussed. However, the powerful presence of his voice does not end there: "The dark side of Vere's muteness is his apparent assumption of Claggart's music after the Master-at-Arms's death" (Rupprecht 122). As explained by Halliwell, "Frequently in opera the vocal line or accompaniment of one character insinuates itself into that of another, and one character's 'music' can speak through another character" (79). In other words, Vere sings with Claggart's words and his music too. An example of this can be find in the excerpt from Vere's Scylla and Charybdis aria discussed in the previous paragraph; the words "Beauty,

[17] Interestingly, there is a slight alteration in the phrase: the Novice sings how he is "lost forever on the endless sea" (LIB19), contrasting Old Vere's "I was lost on the infinite sea" (LIB63) from the Epilogue. Vere's use of the past tense in the Epilogue suggests that he is no longer lost and that he has found at least some redemption. As Whittal put it, the Epilogue's resolution onto pure B flat major can be regarded as a hollow triumph: "As the dissonances of remorse and struggle resolve, Vere at last achieves acceptance" (168)

handsomeness, goodness" are a direct quote from Claggart's Act 1 Credo (LIB32). Furthermore, Claggart's leitmotif of the descending fourths plus semitone can be found in many of Vere's vocal utterances, especially in his "I accept their verdict" aria (Rochlitz 130). To summarize, Vere's splintering and weakening musical presence is illustrated by his assumption of the Novice's and especially Claggart's words and music. What is left of his musical presence and his character is confusion, which is heard in the atonalities and discordant melodies of the opera's Prologue.

With these alterations of the court scene, Forster and Crozier significantly changed the character of Vere compared to that of the novella. Melville's Vere is described as "a tyrant, exercising total political authority" (Martin 114) and "a puppet of the God of War" (Whittal 146). Operatic Vere is torn between his feelings for a young man who he knows to be innocent at heart on the one hand, and his duties as an officer of the King's navy and his allegiance to the "laws of the earth" on the other. It is argued here that Vere losing his voice, and therefore indirectly also his position of power, is directly linked to him losing his faith in the patriarchal institution of Western civilisation, whose laws he used to follow and trust unconditionally. Even though he knows that Claggart's accusations are false, and that Billy is innocent at heart, he knows that saving Billy would be "to strike at the system … with which Vere has aligned himself so completely" (Rochlitz 112). A very apt description of operatic Vere is from Martin, who summarises his character as "a portrait of a reasonable man in the service of an unreasoning office" (113). What is more, Vere also realises that the patriarchal institution executing the "laws of the earth" (LIB58) is an oppressive system, which can be abused to silence people who are lower on the social or hierarchical ladder: "For I could have saved him. He knew it, even his shipmates knew it, though the earthly laws silenced *them*" (LIB63 cursive mine). In other words, as Captain and former disciplinarian, he realises that he can be regarded as a representation of an oppressive power, or "a social order that values control and suppression" (Martin 107), or, simply put the patriarchy.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the interrelation between the themes of voice and gender in Benjamin Britten's all-male operatic adaptation of Herman Melville's novella *Billy Budd*. In the chapter on gender, it has been established that the *Indomitable* can be regarded as an environment with a fluidity of gender identifications, as is illustrated by the absence of a strict gender division in space and labour on board the ship. Nevertheless, the feminine is still regarded as hierarchically weaker and being associated with feminine qualities is regarded as emasculating, as is demonstrated with the use of language in the opera. The sailors often use feminisation to display virility and assert dominance over their shipmates. Contrastingly, Billy seems to have embraced his feminine qualities and does not seem to have a problem with his more fluid gender identification. What is more, despite his non-hegemonic pattern of masculinity he is functioning very well in the naval environment of the *Indomitable*. As is explained in the final section of the chapter, the opera showcases a series of dichotomies of perceived threat to the hegemony. Firstly, hegemonic masculinity is being challenged by other patterns of masculinity, which can be seen in Claggart and his vow to "destroy" the object of his homosexual feelings. Secondly, hegemonic power is being challenged by the French and the act of mutiny, who are, respectively, considered a threat to the patriarchal system of the British monarchy and to the social order of naval hierarchy on the ship.

In the chapter on voice, it has been established that the voices of three main characters differ greatly in their ability to make themselves heard. Over the course of events, Captain Vere seems to gradually lose his voice. After Claggart's death Vere's musical presence weakens and his voice seems to be overtaken by those of other characters: some of his vocal lines, words, and even orchestral music contain material which is associated with Claggart and the Novice. Billy seems to have the most vulnerable voice. Not only is Billy the object of Claggart's hatred and is literally silenced by the malevolent Master-at-Arms, but he is also unvoiced by his own stammer, which prevents him from speaking up for himself during crucial moments. Arguably the most eloquent voice is that of John Claggart. With his leitmotiv of two falling fourths followed by a rising minor second, his signature F-minor tonic, and his "chorale of deceit" in his interactions with Billy, he has a very distinct musical presence. What is more, Claggart's F-minor tonic serves as his non-corporeal presence during the trial scene, enabling him to let his voice be heard and influence events, even from beyond the grave. Interestingly, Claggart's post-mortem musical presence is not the only powerful non-corporeal voice of the opera: using the Mutiny motive, Britten made sure the audience is able to hear the officers's fear of a revolt on board, even though that fear seems to be

unjustified. Especially these two non-corporeal voices illustrate how Britten employed the orchestra as a narrator, as a replacement of Melville's strong narrative point of view which is typical of his work.

Regarding literary adaptation, the first chapter included the following Hutcheon quote from Hutcheon: "Despite being temporally second, it is both an interpretive and a creative act" (Hutcheon 111). It has been established that the operatic adaptation of *Billy Budd*, in fact, it can serve as its primary example. In the adaptation process, creative choices were made that altered the source material which resulted new possibilities for interpretation of the familiar plot. For example, small alterations of the trial scene significantly changed the character of Captain Vere, transforming him from a strict disciplinarian who follows the letter of the law into a troubled man filled with remorse over his inability to save a young man. Another illustration of Hutcheon's quote can be found in Britten's use of the *diabolus in musica* and his use of Melville's description of the sailor's murmur and incorporating it into a recurring musical motive.

To conclude this thesis, let us revisit arguably the most significant vocal line of the opera: "Never mind the singing" (LIB15). This short sentence can be regarded as the essence of the opera, as it can be applied to all the voices that have been discussed. Firstly, as demonstrated at the start, with this phrase Claggart silences Billy. However, Billy is also silenced by his own stammer and eventually his execution. Claggart on the other hand, despite being killed, it can be argued that he continues the 'singing': despite being silenced by death, his voice is still heard in the orchestra and in Vere. Lastly, Captain Vere is the one who almost literally stops singing: he either remains silent or permits his voice to be used by a non-corporeal Claggart.

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