

EXPANDED PERCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY IN BENJAMIN

BRITTEN'S *NOCTURNE*, OP. 60

Anna Grace Perkins, B.A.

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2008

APPROVED:

Paul B. Berry, Major Professor

Bernardo Illari, Minor Professor

Benjamin Brand, Committee Member

John P. Murphy, Chair of the Department of Music
Theory, History, and Ethnomusicology

Graham Phipps, Director of Graduate Studies in
the College of Music

James C. Scott, Dean of the College of Music

Sandra L. Terrell, Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse
School of Graduate Studies

Perkins, Anna Grace. Expanded Perceptions of Identity in Benjamin Britten's *Nocturne*, Op. 60. Master of Music (Musicology), May 2008, 67 pp., 6 musical examples, references, 53 titles.

A concentrated reading of Benjamin Britten's *Nocturne* through details of the composer's biography can lead to new perspectives on the composer's identity. The method employed broadens current understandings of Britten's personality and its relationship to the music. After creating a context for this kind of work within Britten scholarship, each chapter explores a specific aspect of Britten's identity through the individual songs of the *Nocturne*. Chapter 2 focuses on how Britten used genres in a pastoral style to create his own British identity. Chapter 3 concentrates on the complex relationship between Britten's homosexuality and his pacifism. Chapter 4 aims to achieve a deeper understanding of Britten's idealization of innocence. The various aspects of Britten's personality are related to one another in the Conclusion.

Copyright 2008

by

Anna Grace Perkins

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF EXAMPLES.....	iv
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. THE “PASTORAL” AND A BRITISH IDENTITY.....	14
3. WORDSWORTH, OWEN, AND PACIFISM.....	29
4. “THE WANDERINGS OF CAIN” AND THE INNOCENT IDEAL.....	44
5. CONCLUSION.....	53
APPENDIX.....	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	64

LIST OF EXAMPLES

	Page
1. Rocking Figure.....	6
2. Song One, measures 34-39.....	23
3. Song Four, measures 174-176.....	25
4. Song Five, measures 211-215.....	39
5. Song Three, measures 136 and 147.....	50
6. Song Eight, measures 402-408.....	55

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Britten was one of the major composers of the twentieth century, and he enjoyed great success and popularity within his lifetime. Britten was born in 1913 and was active as a composer from his teens until his death in 1976. His music is generally understood to have combined some of the most prominent compositional techniques of his own century and the previous one. Furthermore, Britten's compositions served as a starting point for those working early in queer scholarship, specifically Philip Brett, and have continued to inspire discussions regarding the relationship between music and sexual orientation among the current generation of musicologists. However, much of the available literature on Britten's identity is limited in its scope. This project looks at Britten's work in new ways, examining multiple aspects of his personality and exploring how they may be represented in his music. I aim to reveal a more complete understanding of Britten's identity and its relationship to his compositional style.

One particular work that can be studied in order to reach this deeper understanding is the *Nocturne*, op. 60. My method of analyzing this piece relates facets of Britten's biography to specific moments in the text and music in order to more fully comprehend the composer's character. The concept of the pastoral characterizes three of the songs in particular and is important for Britten's place in the context of British composers from the preceding generation. Two of the songs can arguably be related to Britten's pacifist ideals, which in turn were influenced by major events during his lifetime. Finally, Britten's fascination with boyhood and the relationship between adults and children provides a new means of interpreting one of the songs in the cycle.

The question of the composer's identity in relation to musical composition is a problematic one for many musicologists. Many would argue that music has no relationship to identity or that a composer's intentions are irrelevant to a study of his or her music. Musicologists who work within approaches informed by formalism do not speculate about the composer's intentions.¹ Those who are aligned with the post-modernist leanings of the New Musicology are also less inclined to make such conjectures, though some do so.² However, the desire to find a hermeneutic meaning in music is an influential urge that finds expression in the work of prominent twentieth-century musicologists such as Joseph Kerman and many who consider themselves to be New Musicologists.³ Additionally, nearly all of the musicological work that has been done on Britten, especially since his death, has carried the assumption that identity did indeed affect his music. This is particularly true in regard to queer studies, but it is also more generally understood that for Britten, identity and composition were not mutually exclusive.

Among Benjamin Britten's works on themes of night or dreams, the *Nocturne* stands out for several reasons. This twenty-five minutes of seamless music for tenor solo, seven obligato instruments, and string orchestra is unusual not only for the instruments it features, but also for its creative use of those instruments.⁴ The *Nocturne* was premiered at the Leeds

¹One example is the tonal theory of Heinrich Schenker; also Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

²See Gary A. Tomlinson, "The Web of Culture: A Context for Musicology," *Nineteenth-Century Music* 7 (1983-84): 350-62 or *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Also, Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

³See Joseph Kerman, "A Profile for American Musicology," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 18 (1965): 61-69.

⁴Britten himself chose this particular spelling of obligato, as observed by Humphrey Carpenter, and evidenced within the score for the *Nocturne*, op. 60. Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1993), 384.

Centenary Festival on October 16, 1958, with Rudolf Schwarz conducting the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra and Peter Pears singing the tenor part. The eight texts by English poets are almost all taken out of their original context; only three are complete poems, and the strings provide constant, unifying music while the seven obligato instruments divide each poem from the next. The instruments are often used to communicate the text more vividly than the voice, and peaceful scenes in Songs One, Three, Four, Seven, and Eight are interrupted by more troubling visions in Songs Two, Five, and Six.

Song One sets the poem “On a poet's lips I slept,” from *Prometheus Unbound* (1818-1819) by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Only the strings accompany the tenor, introducing a rocking, soothing rhythm in compound rhythm that returns throughout the work. The text of Song Two is the poem *The Kraken* (1830) by Alfred Tennyson, which presents the first nightmare of the work. The low notes of the bassoon obligato evoke the murky, deep waters of the ocean, and the dotted rhythms in the voice create a sense of adventure and the hunt. In “Encinctured with a twine of leaves,” (1815) which sets a fragment from *The Wanderings of Cain* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the harp obligato serves Britten's purposes in ways that will be further explored. The next song, “Midnight's bell goes ting,” sets a text taken from a play attributed to Thomas Middleton called *Blurt, Master Constable* (ca.1600-1602), and uses extended techniques in the horn to mimic the different animals in the poem. The obligato instruments set the mood in the next two pieces as well: witness the foreboding timpani in “But that night,” excerpted from *The Prelude* (1805) by William Wordsworth, and the otherworldly english horn in *The Kind Ghosts* (1918) by Wilfred Owen. “What is more gentle” sets *Sleep and Poetry* (1816) by John Keats, and uses flute and clarinet to vividly portray sounds of nature: the bees buzzing and the wind blowing the musk rose. The final

poem, William Shakespeare's *Sonnet 43* (1609), combines all of the instruments in a fully romantic portrayal of unattainable love. See the Appendix for the texts as Britten set them.

Without a doubt, these eight songs create a cohesive unit of some kind, but questions remain in the scholarly literature as to how to classify this work. While scholars including Humphrey Carpenter and Peter Evans refer to the *Nocturne* as either a song cycle or an orchestral song cycle,⁵ at least one writer has claimed that this is not the case. Peter Porter, in “Composer and Poet” from *The Britten Companion* says that the *Nocturne* is a “song collection” and not a “true cycle.” He cites Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin* as an example of a “true cycle” because it has a specific dramatic narrative. By contrast, Porter groups the *Nocturne* together with Schumann's *Dichterliebe* and Britten's *Winter Words* as works that have a theme or author common among their poems, but are not really cycles because they do not tell a story.⁶ Another reason for Porter's skepticism about how to classify the *Nocturne* may be that the texts of the songs are by different authors.

Porter's interpretation of the genre of the *Nocturne* is, however, a rare view. In *The Romantic Generation*, Charles Rosen claims explicitly that “A song cycle cannot tell story directly – at best it can hint at one that remains untold.”⁷ In fact, he argues that *Die schöne Müllerin*, which Porter names a “true cycle” because it tells a story, only outlines a series of dramatic events, and does not behave like a true narrative.⁸ Susan Youens, one of

⁵Carpenter, 385; Graham Elliott, *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension* (London: J.M. Dent, 1989), 370.

⁶Peter Porter, “Composer and Poet,” in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 279.

⁷Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 175.

⁸*Ibid.*, 176, 207. Rosen also reveals that Schumann designated *Dichterliebe*, which Porter states is not really a cycle, as a *Cyclus* rather than a *Liederkreis*, because the sequence of events is chronological, and because the speaker is the same in all of the poems.

musicology's foremost experts on the nineteenth-century song cycle, defines the genre as “A group of individually complete songs designed as a unit,” and states that there are many ways for this unity to be achieved. For her, cycles like Schumann’s *Myrthenlieder* are still cycles, despite using texts by multiple authors.⁹ By this definition, the *Nocturne* is indeed a song cycle, and in fact it has several features in common with one of the most important song cycles, and the first to carry the title *Liederkreis*, Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* from 1815-1816. Beethoven's model was not strictly followed by later generations, but the innovations that the *Nocturne* shares with *An die ferne Geliebte* include continuous music to connect the various songs and an unusually pronounced role for the accompanying instruments.¹⁰

Another feature that contributes to our sense of the *Nocturne* as a cycle is a returning melody. The melodic line that sets the words “nurslings of immortality” in Song One returns during the mewling of the cat in Song Four and is also present during lively Song Seven. This line is striking because it contains all of the notes in the chromatic scale except for A natural. Finally, the feature that provides the most cohesion throughout the entire piece is a lilting rhythm in the strings that returns from time to time, often in the interludes that connect the songs. The rhythm of this feature can be seen in Example 1. It opens and closes the piece, is present during parts of Songs One and Four and at the ends of Songs Seven and Eight, and occurs during the transitions from Songs Two to Three and from Six to Seven. It is worth noting that this figure is only present for the peaceful or happy poems, and disappears during the nightmarish ones. As early as 1959, this feature has been recognized

⁹Susan Youens, “Song Cycle,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed October 22, 2007).

¹⁰*Ibid.*

by scholars such as Imogen Holst as the rhythmic breathing of the speaker, who is asleep during the *Nocturne*.¹¹

Example 1. Rocking Figure



Within the scholarly literature, the *Nocturne* is mentioned often, but nearly always in comparison to another of Britten's works or in the context of his artistic output as a whole. The *Nocturne* has been connected with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because of the themes of dreams and night throughout the piece and with *Owen Wingrave* and *War Requiem* because of the subjects of persecution and pacifism evident in the texts by Wordsworth and Owen. But the relationship that is most often observed is the one between the *Nocturne* and a work from 15 years earlier, the *Serenade*, op. 31. The rocking figure that unites the *Nocturne* is also evident in a song that was written for the *Serenade* but not included in the final product, on the poem "Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white" by Tennyson. The *Nocturne* is also mentioned in the context of Britten's oeuvre in general, including in conversations about vocal music, orchestral song cycles, or Britten's spectacular writing for the horn. Exploring the literature will give a fuller picture of the work that has already been done on the *Nocturne*.

Arnold Whittall, in *The Music of Britten and Tippett*, notes that *Sonnet 43* in the

¹¹Imogen Holst, "Britten's *Nocturne*," *Tempo* 5 (1958-59): 15. However, as Humphrey Carpenter observes, if this is true, then the sleeping person's breathing is unusually fast. See Carpenter, 385.

Nocturne is Britten's first use of a Shakespearean text.¹² In “The Truth of the *Dream*” from *The Britten Companion*, Wilfrid Mellers comments that the bond between dreams and truth is a theme not just in the *Nocturne* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but also in Britten's operas in general.¹³ Mervyn Cooke makes several specific music-analytic comparisons between the *Nocturne* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in “Britten and Shakespeare,” published in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*. Cooke claims that in both works the key of C# or D^b is used to recall sleep or moonlight.¹⁴

Britten uses a particular cluster of text-setting devices to represent armed conflict in the *Nocturne*, *Owen Wingrave*, and *War Requiem*. Tremolo strings are used in *The Kind Ghosts* and in the Prelude from *Owen Wingrave* to convey historical conflict, and the timpani used in the Wordsworth poem about the September Massacres in the *Nocturne* are echoed in the *War Requiem*.¹⁵ Both the *Nocturne* and the *War Requiem* utilize texts by the British poet and World War I soldier Wilfred Owen, who died at age 25. The fact that Owen's *The Kind Ghosts*, which is about the consequences of wars of the past, is included in the *Nocturne* is evidence enough of a strong connection with *War Requiem*, but there are also similarities in uncertain tonalities and links between formal parts.¹⁶ Donald Mitchell even claims that the influence of the *Nocturne* is so powerful that the *War Requiem* actually constitutes an

¹²Arnold Whittall, *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes and Techniques* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 178.

¹³Wilfrid Mellers, “The Truth of the *Dream*,” in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 181.

¹⁴Mervyn Cooke, “Britten and Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 137, 144.

¹⁵Christopher Palmer, “The Orchestral Song-cycles,” in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 326; Donald Mitchell, “Violent Climates,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 196.

¹⁶Whittall, 175-176.

“innovative incorporation of a chamber-orchestral song-cycle into a 'traditional' large-scale choral work.”¹⁷

Britten's *Serenade*, op. 31, was written in 1944 for Peter Pears and the couple's friend, the virtuoso hornist Dennis Brain. The *Serenade* has been studied much more than the *Nocturne*, and often the later piece is included merely for comparative commentary. The *Serenade* receives more exposure because it is performed more regularly, for the basic reason that with one advanced instrumental solo instead of seven, the *Serenade* is logistically more feasible to put together. Both cycles are scored for tenor voice; both use poems from various English authors on themes of nights and dreams; and both are accompanied by chamber orchestra. Christopher Palmer even notes close relationships between specific songs from each work. Keats' poem in the *Nocturne*, with its summer images, corresponds to the “Hymn” in the *Serenade*, and Owen's poem from the *Nocturne* matches in tone the “Dirge” from the *Serenade*.¹⁸ Lloyd Whitesell, in his dissertation, “Images of Self in the Music of Benjamin Britten,” devotes an entire chapter to this connection between the *Serenade* and the *Nocturne*.¹⁹

Another significant connection between the *Nocturne* and the *Serenade* is noted by Humphrey Carpenter in *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* and expanded upon in Donald Mitchell's article “Now sleeps the crimson petal': Britten's other 'Serenade,’” which first appeared in *Tempo* and later in *The Horn Call*. This connection is a single piece, a setting of

¹⁷Mitchell, “Violent Climates,” 207.

¹⁸Palmer, 324, 326.

¹⁹Lloyd Whitesell, “Images of Self in the Music of Benjamin Britten,” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1993), 91-134. In the chapter “Voices in the Dusk,” Whitesell discusses Britten's “pastoral self,” but is not as strongly dedicated to a homosexual reading of either the *Serenade* or the *Nocturne* as he is in an article that will be looked at later in this document.

Tennyson's poem "Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white," which was written for possible inclusion in the *Serenade* but ended up being left out. Carpenter observes that the rocking string rhythms that unify the *Nocturne*, as seen in Example 1, were featured prominently in "Now sleeps the crimson petal."²⁰ Mitchell argues that not only was the creation of "Now sleeps the crimson petal" significant in the development of the *Serenade*, it was a "crucial compositional link between the two works."²¹

Finally, the *Nocturne* is more often than not considered as just one component of Britten's total creative output. Sources that take this approach usually analyze the *Nocturne* superficially and seldom delve into what this work might imply about Britten and his personal identity. Christopher Palmer includes the *Nocturne* in his discussion "Embalmer of the Midnight: The Orchestral Song-cycles" in *The Britten Companion* and Ralph Woodward inserts it into his chapter on "Music for Voices" in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*. Peter Evans lumps the *Nocturne* briefly into the chapter on "Later Vocal Works" in his book *The Music of Benjamin Britten*, and even more generally, both Michael Kennedy and Humphrey Carpenter include a few short pages on the work in their biographies of Britten.

Since the work's premiere in 1958, only two investigations devoted to the *Nocturne* on its own have been made available. In the Winter of 1959, Imogen Holst, daughter of Gustav Holst and assistant to Benjamin Britten, wrote a short article about this piece for *Tempo*.²² Holst's contribution consists of around four pages of glowing prose about the

²⁰Carpenter, 384.

²¹Donald Mitchell, "'Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal:' Britten's Other 'Serenade,'" *The Horn Call – Journal of the International Horn Society* 22 (1991): 9-14. Mitchell's article, short as it is, is the only source to really explore the importance of "Now sleeps the crimson petal" to both the *Serenade* and the *Nocturne*, rather than simply mentioning this connection in passing.

Nocturne, simply describing the music and poetry without drawing any real conclusions about the work or its extra-musical implications. Given the brevity of the article and the close personal relationship between Imogen Holst and Benjamin Britten, it is difficult to consider her article, “Britten's 'Nocturne',” as a serious piece of scholarship, though it provides important evidence as to the work's initial reception among Britten's friends.

Almost forty years later, another article about the *Nocturne*, by Lloyd Whitesell, appeared in the 1997 issue of *Repercussions*. “Translated Identities in Britten's *Nocturne*” is derived in part from his dissertation, “Images of Self in the Music of Benjamin Britten.” According to Whitesell, in writing the *Nocturne*, Britten had several audiences in mind, including both the general listening public and a homosexual audience that would have been in tune with messages about the gay minority that most people would not notice. Whitesell also claims that Britten used musical procedures to distance himself from the general, heterosexual audience and to create a loosely defined, homosexual identity that runs throughout the entire piece.

By now, it is common knowledge that Benjamin Britten was a gay man who spent more than half of his life in a committed relationship with Peter Pears. Most scholars believe that his sexuality had a great impact on his compositions. Philip Brett was the first musicologist to carefully explore the connections between Britten's sexuality and his music, in the article “Britten and Grimes” in the *Musical Times* in 1977. Brett's scholarship was so well respected that his article is still the current entry on Benjamin Britten in *Grove Music Online*, despite the fact that Brett himself passed away in 2002. Many of his writings were collected after his death and published as *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*. In his biography of Britten, Humphrey Carpenter outlines the growth of Britten's awareness and

²²Holst, 14-17, 21-22.

acceptance of his own sexuality, and the chronology of his relationship with Peter Pears from friends and roommates to lovers and lifelong partners.²³ Ruth Sara Longobardi investigates in detail the connections between sexuality and opera in her 2005 article “Reading between the Lines: An Approach to the Musical and Sexual Ambiguities of *Death in Venice*.”²⁴ Even more recently, Graham Elliot has explored the relationship between Britten's homosexuality and the nature of his spirituality in his book *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension*.²⁵

Whitesell's interpretation of the Nocturne fits into this tradition of scholarship. Indeed, he bases his arguments explicitly on Brett's claims,²⁶ and his own arguments are cited by Longobardi.²⁷ It is certainly true that some aspects of Britten's identity in the *Nocturne* are veiled or detached; witness the first song, with, as Whitesell observes, “a speaker whose nature is never revealed.” He asks, “Is it a personification of the poet's uncreated works, an inspiring consciousness, or a projection of the poet's audience?”²⁸ Whitesell feels that Britten distanced himself from the general listening public while disguising specifically homosexual messages. Whitesell's overriding argument is that all of Britten's compositional decisions within the *Nocturne* were motivated by sexuality and designed specifically for a homosexual audience.

However, Whitesell fails to explore alternative sources of identity in the *Nocturne*. Britten's homosexuality was not the only aspect of his personality and background that

²³Carpenter, 97-131.

²⁴Ruth Sara Longobardi, “Reading Between the Lines: An Approach to the Musical and Sexual Ambiguities of *Death in Venice*,” *The Journal of Musicology* 22 (2005): 327-364.

²⁵Elliot, 35-44.

²⁶Lloyd Whitesell, “Translated Identities in Britten's *Nocturne*,” *Repercussions* 6 (1997): 111.

²⁷Longobardi, 343, 352, 354.

²⁸Whitesell, “Translated Identities,” 112.

infiltrated his work: Whitesell glosses over broader issues such as Britten's strong interest in poetry and his opinions on the pastoral genre, and he completely ignores Britten's pacifism, his fascinations with the parent/child relationship, and his idealization of innocence, even though all of these ideas are clearly important in the *Nocturne*. Like myself, Graham Elliott believes that Britten scholarship has been focused too much on the composer's identity as a pacifist and a homosexual, and other factors of his personality have been largely ignored.²⁹ The following chapters focus on how musical elements of the *Nocturne* can act as means of access for illuminating various aspects of Britten's personality. My arguments are not intended to replace Whitesell's but to complement his interpretation.

Chapter 2 focuses on Songs One, Four, and Seven and how they relate to Britten's particularly complex relationship with the pastoral genre. This chapter explores his feelings about specific composers like Purcell and Vaughan Williams and investigates how Britten might have reconciled his negative opinions of the English "pastoralists" and his use of genres in a pastoral style. Chapter 3 presents a reading of Songs Five and Six, which have themes of war, concentrating on Britten's pacifist ideals and his status as a conscientious objector in Britain. The complex relationship between Britten's homosexuality and his pacifism is explored. Chapter 4 comprises an analysis of Song Three in order to achieve a deeper understanding of Britten's idealization of childhood, as well as his beliefs about the nature of adult-child relationships. All of these various aspects of Britten's personality are related to one another. Some, like Britten's construction of his own personal "Britishness" and his vocal objections to war were part of his public identity. Others, like his homosexuality and his longing for innocence, were more internal and personal. Overall, a

²⁹Graham Elliott, *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3, 35-36.

deeper understanding of this particular piece generates a broadened sense of Britten's identity.

CHAPTER 2

THE “PASTORAL” AND A BRITISH IDENTITY

There is no doubt that the *Nocturne* is primarily concerned with night and dreams. The evidence is in the title and in the descriptions by Britten himself. However, the work also has much to do with nature. With the exception of the songs about war, Song Five, “But that night,” and Song Six, “She sleeps on soft, last breaths,” all of the songs contain some images of nature in the text. The musical genre most closely associated with nature is perhaps the pastoral, and the *Nocturne* falls into that category, even though it is not directly labeled as such.

This observation leads to one of the more complicated subjects in Britten studies. Britten felt resentful of some of the other composers of his time, including Vaughan Williams and the “Pastoral School,” so one might be inclined to believe that Britten would stay as far away from folk and pastoral genres as possible. However, Britten’s place in the musical world was established through his use of genre. He did things that seemed to align him both with and in opposition to the Pastoral School. He wrote folksong arrangements that were uniquely his; he concentrated on the largely neglected Henry Purcell as the basis of his own English creative heritage; and he used traditional genres in new ways to make statements about the musical establishment.

In the *Nocturne*, nature is everywhere. *The Kraken* in Song Two is a monster, without a doubt. Tennyson describes a giant sea creature that only surfaces when it dies. Here nature is powerful but dangerous and mysterious. Song Three also describes a scene in nature, this time in a “wilderness.” There is a young boy, wandering among the trees and flowers in the moonlight. This song is fascinating enough to demand its own analysis, which

will occur in Chapter 4. In the final song, nature is present, but the images are not as explicit. Shakespeare explores differences between shadow and light and between night and day rather than any specific scene. However, Songs One, Four, and Seven are the most useful when looking at how Britten used genres associated with nature to carve for himself a place in music history within his country but apart from the major composers of the day. These pastoral songs also shed light on Britten's choice of texts as another method of generating a specifically English artistic lineage for himself.

When Britten was a young composer studying at the Royal College of Music, there were two major movements in English music. Elgar and the "Brahms imitators" led one side, and on the other side was the "Pastoral School," with Vaughan Williams at the forefront and Holst, Delius, Bax, and Ireland close behind.¹ Britten found Elgar's music to be disappointing. He also felt that the music of Vaughan Williams and his followers lacked sophisticated technique. During Britten's time at the Royal College of Music, he had trouble getting his music performed, and this made him resent Vaughan Williams even more. Later in his life, Britten admitted that when he was young, he purposefully tried to cultivate his technique in order to be different from the Pastoral School. In an effort to distance himself from the Pastoral School, he longed to study composition with Berg, but that was not to be.² Nevertheless, he found other ways to set his music apart. Whereas other British composers drew inspiration from music of the Tudor period, Britten instead aligned himself with

¹This topic is discussed in Meirion Hughes and Robert Stradling, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), especially 74-75, 79-80, 95-96, 108-109. Also Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1993), 42.

²Carpenter, 39, 42, 46, 52.

Dowland and especially Purcell, considered to be one of the greatest English composers to that point.³

In the years between his graduation from the Royal College of Music and his departure for the United States in 1938, Britten's music was performed more often, but the critics were becoming bored. A prevalent attitude among contemporary critics was that Britten's music was not improving, and some even felt that the quality was declining.⁴ At that time, the opinions expressed in the *Scrutiny*, published at Cambridge, were taken very seriously. Gay artists like W.H. Auden were treated with animosity and distrust in the *Scrutiny*, and because of his association with Auden's social circle, Britten was treated this way as well.⁵ Britten traveled to the U.S. in part to refocus and try to find himself in his work. His music continued to be played in England, but the composer was highly criticized for abandoning his country with a war looming.⁶ America was not what Britten expected, and he discovered that he missed England as well as his family and friends. He realized that he really belonged at home, and needed to find his place there.⁷

When Britten returned to England, his career began to flourish, particularly in respect to opera. He really was the first composer since Purcell to be able to successfully write

³Philip Brett, "Toeing the Line: To What Extent Was Britten Part of the British Pastoral Establishment?," *The Musical Times* 137 (1996): 11.

⁴Carpenter, 125.

⁵Hughes and Stradling, 176-177.

⁶Carpenter discusses in detail an incident involving Ernest Newman of the *Sunday Times* known as the "battle of Britten." Despite angry letters to the editor condemning Britten, Newman defended the composer, maintaining that he would do better working in America, alive, than to die in combat and have his potential destroyed. Carpenter, 151-152.

⁷Ibid., 159.

serious opera in English.⁸ Even though he resented major establishments associated with opera and with high society in general, he was able to make a place for himself in that world. He distanced himself from the mainstream composers, first physically by going to the United States, and then by carving a niche for himself in opera. Once his music began to be recognized, he was able to create a name for himself on his own terms. He was able to become a composer of national significance, despite his early doubts in that area.

Philip Brett has observed that as Britten aged, he became more “English,” not simply in his status as a national composer, but in his music as well. Britten moved away from his earlier desire to have pan-European appeal, and moved toward, as Brett calls it, “a cosy provincialism.”⁹ Evidence of this change can be seen in Britten’s reclaiming of genres to convey his own messages. While he was in America, he wrote an article called “England and the Folk-art Problem.” Britten criticized composers who used folksongs as raw materials for their works. He thought that folksongs were too simple and impeded the development of good compositional technique.¹⁰

However, Britten himself arranged many folksongs, especially later in his life. These works are not meant to be “authentic” arrangements, but, as Graham Johnson observes, Britten elevates these folksongs to his own standards of concert repertoire.¹¹ Brett notes that by arranging folksongs in his own way, Britten was able to distinguish himself as unique

⁸Hughes and Stradling, 189, 227-228.

⁹Philip Brett, “Benjamin Britten,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed October 22, 2007).

¹⁰Benjamin Britten, “England and the Folk-Art Problem,” *Modern Music* 18 (1941): 71-75.

¹¹Graham Johnson, “Voice and Piano,” in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 303-304.

from the Pastoral School, while benefiting from the same trends they started and followed.¹²

Britten also reclaimed other genres for himself in order to make a statement against the establishment. Donald Mitchell describes how in the *War Requiem*, Britten used the traditional religious genre of the Requiem Mass combined with a song cycle on texts by Wilfred Owen to express his own personal message of pacifism.¹³

The reclaiming of folksong and the Requiem Mass extends to the way Britten blurred the lines between the genres of nocturne and pastoral, most notably in the *Serenade* and the *Nocturne*. “Nocturne” is perhaps the more loosely defined genre of the two, requiring only an association with night. Pieces in the nocturne genre are traditionally calm and serene, but that is not always the case.¹⁴ “Pastoral” as a genre always evokes country life, either explicitly or through suggestion. The idea of pastoral is built upon dichotomies, either urban/rural or culture/nature.¹⁵ Arnold Whittall has explored Britten’s use of pastoral genres and what is implied about his relationship with the Pastoral School. Whittall claims that by playing with the audience’s expectations of the pastoral genre within the *Serenade*, Britten was able to create for himself an “alternative Englishness” that allows him to love his home while rejecting the composers of the Pastoral School.¹⁶

¹²Brett, “Toeing the Line,” 9.

¹³Donald Mitchell, “Violent Climates,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 207.

¹⁴Maurice J.E. Brown and Kenneth L. Hamilton, “Nocturne,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed February 25, 2008). See also Nicholas Temperley, “John Field and the First Nocturne,” *Music & Letters* 56 (1975): 335-340 and Jeffrey Kallberg, “The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin’s Nocturne in G Minor,” *Nineteenth-Century Music* 11 (1988): 238-261.

¹⁵Geoffrey Chew, “Pastoral,” *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed February 25, 2008). See also Chew, “Handel as Shepherd,” *The Musical Times* 125 (1984): 498-500 and A. Hyatt King, “Mountains, Music, and Musicians,” *The Musical Quarterly* 31 (1945): 395-419.

¹⁶Arnold Whittall, “The Signs of Genre: Britten’s Version of Pastoral,” in *Sundry Sorts of Music Books: Essays on The British Library Collections*, ed. Chris Banks, Arthur Searle, and Malcolm Turner (London: The British

In short, Britten explored generic possibilities in order to create for himself an identity as an Englishman. He established a place for himself as a great national composer, but did not associate himself with the majority of the English “National Composers.” The *Nocturne* contains many opportunities to investigate how exactly Britten accomplished this. The most useful songs for this exercise are Songs One, Four, and Seven. These songs contain the most “natural” and “pastoral” images, and are therefore best suited for Britten’s subversive uses of the nocturne and pastoral genres.

Poetry was a very important part of Britten’s life. Peter Porter recognizes that Britten’s compositional style was especially suited to vocal music because of his lack of interest in thematic development and his remarkable gift for melody. But Porter also notes that Britten had exceptional taste in poetry, and this instinct guided his entire musical output.¹⁷ He would wander around the house and read snippets at random.¹⁸ He also would take with him at least one anthology of poetry whenever he traveled.¹⁹ Many of Britten’s works present collections of favorite poems, but in the *Nocturne* and the *Serenade*, these poems were grouped by a theme rather than by a single author. Exploring the background of each poem chosen for Songs One, Four, and Seven may reveal some of Britten’s reasons for selecting these texts.

The text for Song One of the *Nocturne*, “On a poet’s lips I slept,” comes from *Prometheus Unbound* by Percy Bysshe Shelley. *Prometheus Unbound* was written in the

Library, 1993), 363-364.

¹⁷Peter Porter, “Composer and Poet,” in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 272-273.

¹⁸Carpenter, 185.

¹⁹Boris Ford, ed., *Benjamin Britten’s Poets: The Poetry He Set to Music* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1994), xii.

period 1818-1819 while Shelley was living in Italy. Shelley based his epic poem upon *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus. Shelley was always rebellious, and he identified with Prometheus, who defied the gods to give fire to man.²⁰ Britten, who also had a tendency to be subversively rebellious, may have identified with both Shelley and Prometheus, both of whom did as they pleased in defiance of higher authority.²¹ “On a poet’s lips I slept” is taken from near the end of Act I. The Furies have been trying to dishearten Prometheus, but spirits step in to encourage him. The lines in Song One are those of the Fourth Spirit of four, with the last line, “And I sped to succour thee,” cut out.²²

“Midnight’s bell goes ting,” used for the text of Song Four, is taken from a play written between 1600 and 1602 called *Blurt, Master Constable*. For many years scholars believed that Thomas Middleton wrote this play, and it was Middleton whom Britten cited as the author in the score of the *Nocturne*. In recent years, it has become clear that the author of *Blurt, Master Constable* was in fact Thomas Dekker. Middleton and Dekker may have collaborated on the play, but, if that is the case, Middleton likely had a very small role in its creation. *Blurt, Master Constable* was also known as *The Spaniard’s Night-walk*, and it is essentially an Elizabethan romantic comedy.²³ “Midnight’s bell goes ting” comes from Act IV, scene ii and is accompanied by the direction “a song within.” One of the main characters, Lazarillo, can hear this song and others coming from another room. The song

²⁰John R. Greenfield, “Percy Bysshe Shelley,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 96: British Romantic Poets, 1789-1832, Second Series*, ed. John R. Greenfield (1990), UNT Electronic Resources <http://irservices.library.unt.edu> (accessed February 25, 2008).

²¹ Brett often characterizes Britten as both subversive and rebellious. See Brett, “Benjamin Britten.”

²²Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts,” in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), 242.

²³Cyrus Hoy, “Thomas Dekker,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 62: Elizabethan Dramatists*, ed. Fredson Bowers (1987), UNT Electronic Resources <http://irservices.library.unt.edu> (accessed February 25, 2008).

inspires him to say “I shall be mous'd by puss-cats, but I had rather die a dog's death; they have nine lives apiece--like a woman--and they will make it up ten lives if they and I fall a-scratching.”²⁴ In his version, Britten modernized the English spelling and orthography and removed some repetitions from the original.

Song Seven, “What is more gentle,” uses the first stanza of “Sleep and Poetry” by John Keats. “Sleep and Poetry” was written in 1816, and was among Keats’ first longer serious poems. This poem was a kind of mission statement for the poet, and themes addressed here continued to present themselves in his poetry.²⁵ Although the poem goes on to declare that poetry is even more wonderful than sleep, the first stanza, used in Song Seven, praises sleep. Sleep is proclaimed to be more satisfying than all the sights and sounds of nature.

Song One begins with the gentle rocking in the strings that connects the *Serenade* and the *Nocturne* through shared use of material borrowed from the song “Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal.” This feature returns throughout, and is one of the ways Britten provides continuity within the cycle. But Song One is the only song in which the rocking is constant. It does not stop until the bassoon’s first flourish at the beginning of Song Two. Song One is also the only song accompanied solely by the strings. Because the rocking figure is repeated over and over in Song One, there is no possibility for melodic or rhythmic variety in the strings. Instead, Britten creates interest in the accompaniment through manipulations of texture and register. The string sections pass the figure back and forth among one another, overlapping their entrances.

²⁴Anonymous, *Blurt, Master Constable* (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1996).

²⁵Mark Kipperman, “John Keats,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 96: British Romantic Poets, 1789-1832, Second Series*, ed. John R. Greenfield (1990), UNT Electronic Resources <http://irservices.library.unt.edu> (accessed February 25, 2008).

The two main musical climaxes are at measures 11-13, which sets the words “Of shapes that haunt thought’s wildernesses,” and the final vocal entrance at measure 34 on “Nurslings.” Britten builds tension by adding string parts from highest to lowest until all are playing during these climactic moments. At these moments the pitches being played in the strings span almost six octaves in the first instance and almost five octaves in the second. The contrasting middle section begins at measure 16 and ends at measure 27. In this middle section the texture changes. The string sections pass the rocking figure between them much more quickly, creating a sparser texture. Then, at measure 22 the violins and violas play together, but they are all in the same low register. This middle section sounds much more mysterious and dark than the outer sections because of the register and texture of the low strings.

Because there are no obligato parts in Song One, the singer does not have to share the spotlight. When the tenor first enters, his line seems to grow naturally out of the string parts through shared pitches and dynamics. The melody is in obvious arch shapes, but in the first section ascending lines are emphasized and in the second section descending lines are brought out. When the final section begins, the tenor’s melodic line on the words “But from these create he can” is the same as the first entrance, “On a poet’s lips I slept.” By contrast, the final entrance, “Nurslings of immortality” is unlike anything heard previously in this song. Example 2 isolates this melody. The line is much more disjunct, and contains all of the pitches of the chromatic scale except A natural. This line is especially important because it comes back later within the cycle in other nature-related songs.

Example 2. Song One, measures 34-39



Lloyd Whitesell has presented a seemingly plausible interpretation of this particular song. He believes that Song One is a “problematic border” for the *Nocturne* because the identity of the speaker is unclear. Whitesell emphasizes the erotic in this piece and the intimacy between the speaker and the poet referred to in the poem. He also states that the use of a tenor to comment on the male poet in the text is homoerotic. Within the original work, the “I” was most certainly the Fourth Spirit. However, it is true that in the *Nocturne* that context is removed and there is a question of who is speaking. Because the word “I” only appears once in the song, Whitesell is left wondering who the “I” is. Does it stand for a human speaker, or the personification of the poem itself? Musically, Whitesell hears uncertainty in the harmonies that never settle on a tonal center, and suggests that this ambiguity represents the longing for something out of reach.²⁶

Whitesell’s interpretation may be one way to understand this song, but there are certainly others. Although Whitesell could not decide who or what was speaking, I believe that it is most likely the personification of the poet’s works, for at least two reasons. First, the text supports this interpretation, because the poet described in the excerpt is creating things from images and thoughts, not searching for physical pleasure. Second, the music does not lend itself to another interpretation, because the parts of the poem that might be erotic (“lips,” “breathing,” “kisses”) are not emphasized melodically or harmonically, and the

²⁶Lloyd Whitesell, “Images of Self in the Music of Benjamin Britten,” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1993), 116-119, 125; “Translated Identities in Britten’s *Nocturne*,” *Repercussions* 6 (1997): 120.

“nurslings of immortality,” which are the products of the creative mind, are given special importance. And while the harmonies do not always avoid ambiguousness and dissonance, I do not think that they represent anything more than the mysteries of sleep explored throughout the cycle: dreams and disturbances. As Arnold Whittall observes, “closure and repose in Britten need not be states from which all instability and allusiveness have been purged.”²⁷

The most fascinating feature of Song One is that although night is touched upon, as well as nature, poetry is the real subject of the text. But when looked upon in light of Britten’s relationship with his own country, his choice of poem here is not so strange. England’s greatest artistic contributions have arguably not been in visual arts or even music, but in literature, especially poetry. Because Britten was not focused on following his contemporaries by using folk sources to define himself as “English,” the great English poets could have provided Britten with an alternative creative lineage. Song One is also important because the themes presented here, both musical and textual, continue to return.

Song Four begins with the rocking figure in the strings. This figure does occur frequently in this song, but with less intensity than in Song One. The strings are voiced much lower, and the rocking is alternated with long tied notes. The tenor sings many repeated notes, and his melodic lines are quite static until the end of the song. The horn obligato is the real star of this piece. Britten used extended techniques, including mutes and special articulations such as flutter tongue, to explore the timbral possibilities of the horn.

At the beginning of the song, the horn plays all twelve peals of the “midnight’s bell” on a B natural, while the tenor’s five “tings” are in an uneven rhythm and sung on a C natural. In contrast to the well-maintained bells of a city like London, this clash evokes a

²⁷Whittall, “The Signs of Genre,” 368.

badly tuned old bell in a small, rural town. Throughout the song, the tenor describes the image of a nighttime setting with only animals awake, while the horn provides the aural representation by perfectly imitating all of the animals. At the end of the song, on “And still the cats cry mew,” the tenor finally has a more melodically active part. It is here that the “Nurslings of immortality” theme from Song One returns, now created in alternating fragments by the tenor and horn lines. Example 3 presents the melody as divided between the two solo parts, in contrast to the original in Example 2.

Example 3. Song Four, measures 174-176

Whitesell questions the identity of the speaker again in Song Four. The text simply describes the scene, and there are no humans present, except possibly the speaker.²⁸ Whitesell is disturbed by the lack of an identifiable speaker, but Christopher Palmer thinks that this song is simply “a picture of the sleeper asleep surrounded by night sounds and the creatures that make them.”²⁹ Whitesell is also bothered by the sudden potency of the cats at the end, saying, “The ordinary, domestic ‘mew, mew, mew’ is musically transformed into a rich, poignant outcry whose expressive significance one guesses at without

²⁸Whitesell, “Images of Self,” 91.

²⁹Christopher Palmer, “The Orchestral Song-Cycles,” in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 324.

comprehending.”³⁰ In short, Whitesell believes that Britten’s treatment of the text in Song Four leaves the listener feeling displaced and not knowing how to interpret the scene.

To my mind, Whitesell’s interpretation is forced and contrived. Sometimes a cat really is just a cat. I agree with Palmer’s more straightforward view, but I think that there is one more level to explore in this song. Britten is playing with genre here in Song Four. The song fits into the genre of nocturne, because it sets a nighttime scene, and it fits into the genre of pastoral, because it evokes a rural setting and natural surroundings. Britten’s contemporaries like Vaughan Williams treated neither of these genres with humor, but that is precisely what Britten provides in this song. The horn deftly imitates one animal after another, and each sound is so vastly different from the one before that it might be easy to believe that the horn is no longer playing. By the time the tenor joins the horn for the mewing of the cat, the musical scene has become so bizarre that the humor reaches an almost ridiculous level.

There are several reasons why Britten might have chosen to accentuate the humor that may have been latent in the text into his setting of Song Four. The first is to advance the *Nocturne’s* overarching storyline of the sleeper’s journey through one night. Perhaps it is the animals, specifically the cat, that wake the sleeper before the insomnia of Song Five. The second reason is comic relief. Even without the two war songs, the affect of cycle as a whole is very serious, and Song Four breaks the tension. Furthermore, this song is placed at the end of the first half, before the violence-dominated second half, providing some levity before Song Five and Song Six. Finally, perhaps Britten was consciously turning the genres of nocturne and pastoral on their heads by poking fun at all of his contemporaries who took the rural and pastoral so seriously.

³⁰Whitesell, “Images of Self,” 92.

Song Seven, void of all tension, brings back the light that was absent from war-related Song Five and Song Six. Palmer observes that Song Seven is a scherzo, like the “Hymn” of the *Serenade*, and Whitesell notes that Britten is mimicking the style of the English pastoral.³¹ There is a long string interlude between Song Six and Song Seven to facilitate this change. The strings bring back the rocking figure before dropping out for Song Seven. The obligato instruments in this song are clarinet and flute. From measure 278 to 322 the clarinet and flute alternate, fluttering and swirling around each other until finally playing together just before the tenor sings “More full of visions than a high romance.”

The strings slowly re-enter, one or two chords at a time, once it is revealed that sleep is the thing more beautiful than all of the wonders of nature. All of the strings join in at measure 360, and then drop out one section at a time to the end of the song. This moment is particularly important, because not only do the strings finally return with the rocking motive, but also the tenor’s melody on “when the morning blesses/Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes/That glance so brightly at the new sunrise” is once again the “nurslings of immortality” theme. The praise of the morning and the sunrise places Song Seven firmly in the pastoral genre. Additionally, the rocking sleep theme is reminiscent of lullaby. The juxtaposition of these two features at the end of Song Seven is further evidence that Britten experimented with genre in the *Nocturne*.

Song Seven joins Song One and Song Four as one of the most pastoral songs in the *Nocturne*, and all three are linked by the gentle rocking and the “nurslings of immortality” theme. However, “pastoral” is established within a “nocturne,” and both genres are questioned and pushed to their limits. This is done subtly, but when looked at in regard to

³¹Palmer, 324; Whitesell, “Translated Identities,” 120.

Britten's relationship with the Pastoral School of composers, his choices of text and manner of musical setting are quite significant in regard to his identity as an English citizen.

CHAPTER 3

WORDSWORTH, OWEN, AND PACIFISM

One reading of the *Nocturne* that is generally accepted among scholars is of a journey through sleep, taking place over the course of one night.¹ Within this dreamy narrative, there are three occasions when the sleeper's rest is disturbed. The first instance comes in the Song Two, "Below the thunders of the upper deep," with its groaning bassoon obligato. The text of this song is "The Kraken" by Alfred Tennyson. The poem describes a sea creature, far below the surface, which lives there year after year. Lloyd Whitesell sees Britten's use of this text as "a nightmare of internalized oppression."² Whitesell believes that this is one more song in which Britten has hidden a message about the plight of homosexuals in society. The song could also be seen as yet another song about nature, dark and mysterious, but nature nonetheless.

In fact, the only songs in the *Nocturne* that are not about nature are Songs Five and Six, the other two interruptions of sleep, and the ones I believe are more important than Song Two when searching for a broadened understanding of Britten's identity. One might even say that these songs are about something that Britten thought of as most unnatural: violence and war. After the animals in Song Four awaken the sleeper, Song Five "But that night" and Song Six "She sleeps on soft, last breaths" begin and comprise most of the second half of the cycle. Some scholars have made connections between Britten's pacifist beliefs and his status as a homosexual. But the connection is complex: Brett has suggest that Britten might have

¹This interpretation is discussed by: Philip Brett, "Benjamin Britten," *Grove Music Online*; Humphrey Carpenter, *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1993), 384; Donald Mitchell, "'Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal': Britten's Other 'Serenade'," *The Horn Call – Journal of the International Horn Society* 22 (1991): 10; and, Lloyd Whitesell, "Translated Identities in Britten's *Nocturne*," *Repercussions* 6 (1997): 111.

²Whitesell, "Translated Identities," 125.

resented this strain of thinking, because he was so passionate and public about pacifism and his anti-war statements but was less forthright about his sexual orientation.³

The ideas that probably led to Britten's outright pacifist stance seem to have come about first in childhood. He recalled, as a young boy, being able to hear other students receive corporal punishment at school. He remembered wanting to help and being appalled that nobody would do anything. Both he and Pears felt that those incidents played a large role in the development of pacifist feelings for Britten. In adolescence, Britten wrote an essay about the deplorable nature of foxhunting, and talked to his teacher, Frank Bridge, about pacifism. After college, Britten began to spend time with W.H. Auden and his social circle while working in the film industry. It was through this group that Britten began to be exposed to left-wing ideas, and there is evidence that he spent at least one afternoon handing out anti-war pamphlets.⁴

In April of 1939, Britten and Pears left England for North America. During their stay, World War II began, and by September of that year Britten had made a conscious decision to support the cause of peace. Pears was also a pacifist, and while the war did not cause the pair to leave England, it was part of what prevented them, for a while at least, from returning. When Britten finally did go back to England in April of 1942, he declared himself a Conscientious Objector, and had to face a tribunal to explain and defend his beliefs against the war. He was assigned to non-combatant duties, but felt that participation in any capacity to support the war was wrong for him. After a successful appeal against that decision, he was able to continue composing.⁵

³Brett, "Benjamin Britten."

⁴Carpenter, 10, 41, 69.

Given how strongly Britten felt about pacifism and how outspoken he was in that capacity, might he have tried to make pacifist statements through his music, and if so, how might these attempts be heard? Some insight in this regard can be gained by inspecting Britten's own comments on one specific work, *Sinfonia da Requiem*. The program notes at the premier in 1941, which were written by Britten, only contain remarks about the music itself. But Humphrey Carpenter observes that nearly a year before the work premiered, Britten gave an interview for the *New York Sun* in which he said the following about the progress of this particular piece:

I'm making it just as anti-war as possible...I don't believe you can express social or political or economic theories in music, but by coupling new music with well known musical phrases, I think it's possible to get over certain ideas. I'm dedicating the symphony to the memory of my parents, and, since it is a kind of requiem, I'm quoting from the Dies Irae of the Requiem Mass. One's apt to get muddled discussing such things—all I'm sure of is my own anti-war conviction as I write it.⁶

However, while Carpenter seems to take this sentiment at face value, Philip Brett has a different interpretation. Brett states that composers in the twentieth century were ingrained with a canon of ideology of the autonomy of art. This line of thought, which values formal structure over extra-musical meaning, comes from a tradition based on Eduard Hanslick's treatise of 1854, *On the Musically Beautiful*.⁷ Hanslick writes that "Music consists of tonal sequences, tonal forms; these have no other content than themselves. They remind us once again of architecture and dancing, which likewise bring us beautiful relationships without content."⁸ Brett believes that despite this environment, artists of the twentieth century

⁵Ibid., 127, 134, 174, 176-177

⁶Interview with Benjamin Britten, *New York Sun*, April 27, 1940. Quoted in Carpenter, 146.

⁷Philip Brett, "Pacifism, Political Action, and Artistic Endeavor," in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 172-174.

⁸Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music*,

desired to communicate their thoughts and feelings about the world around them, and did so in creative and sometimes clandestine ways.⁹

Brett observes that Britten was one composer who clearly sought to express meaning in his music. In regard to Britten's comments on *Sinfonia da Requiem* in the *New York Sun*, Brett writes that Britten "maintained a canny ability to have the traditional cake of autonomy and at the same time to eat away at it." Britten was able to communicate his pacifism through music by consciously rejecting some expectations inherited from the nineteenth-century. For example, in the second movement of *Sinfonia da Requiem*, Britten uses a scherzo to build intensity and anticipation. However, instead of finishing the movement with a grand flourish, the music stumbles and dies like soldiers on the battlefield. Brett goes on to state that Britten continued to successfully portray pacifism in his music, and that his "artistic effort was an attempt to disrupt the center that it occupied with the marginality that it expressed."¹⁰

For many scholars, simply to note that Britten opposed war and used his works to make a statement about pacifism is not enough. Graham Elliott argues that among those who study Britten's music, too much emphasis has been placed on the composer's pacifism and homosexuality, to the point of suppressing other aspects of his life and personality.¹¹

However, it is hard to ignore the trend within Britten scholarship to view pacifism and

trans. Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986), 78.

⁹Brett, "Pacifism, Political Action, and Artistic Endeavor," 174-175.

¹⁰Ibid., 175-176, 185.

¹¹Graham Elliott, *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3, 35-36.

homosexuality as not only singularly important, but as undeniably interrelated.¹² Those who agree with this way of thinking believe that whenever Britten claimed that a given work was about pacifism, it was likely that he had also included, consciously or subconsciously, a message about sexuality. Philip Brett explains that in Britain, conscientious objectors against the war and homosexuals were seen as marginal members of society. And while Britten himself compared the story of persecution in *Peter Grimes* with his own experience as a conscientious objector but excluded any mention of sexuality, Brett claims that for both Britain and Britten, gay men and pacifists were one and the same.¹³

Stephen McClatchie suggests that if indeed Britten felt this way, it was because of the influence of W.H. Auden and his circle of friends. McClatchie implies that because Britten was discovering both his pacifism and his sexuality while spending much of his time in the 1930's with Auden, anti-war sentiments and homosexual feelings must have been indelibly connected in the composer's mind. McClatchie exposes these parallel ideas and their manifestation in music through a reading of *Owen Wingrave*, Britten's penultimate opera and his last ostensibly pacifist work. *Owen Wingrave*, based on a work by Henry James, tells the story of a young man who refuses to follow the family tradition of a military career because he feels passionately about pacifism. The Wingraves are so angry with Owen that they force him to spend the night in a haunted room, where he is found dead in the morning.¹⁴

McClatchie observes that despite the homosocial implications of male bonding, there are psychological links between the military and heterosexual masculinity for the Wingrave

¹²This trend, like so many in Britten studies, began with Philip Brett's article from *The Musical Times* in 1977, "Britten and Grimes."

¹³Brett, "Pacifism, Political Action, and Artistic Endeavor," 177.

¹⁴Stephen McClatchie, "Benjamin Britten, *Owen Wingrave*, and the Politics of the Closet; or, 'He Shall be Straightened Out at Paramore,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8 (1996): 59, 65.

family. Similarly, McClatchie notes that in the opera, pacifism is connected with deviations from social norms and homosexuality. For McClatchie, when Owen dies, confined in the haunted room, it is symbolic of gay men being forced into the “closet” by an unjust, patriarchal society. The main way that this is expressed through the music is with tonality. In *Owen Wingrave*, diminished triads represent militarism, and pure triads stand for peace.¹⁵ Additional authors have noted the symbolic relationship in Britten’s music between diatonicism and dissonance on the one hand, and peace and conflict on the other. Lloyd Whitesell writes that harmonic conflict in the *War Requiem* represents an “internal battlefield.”¹⁶ Philip Brett remarks that for Britten, diatonic triads are “always a sign of truth and goodness.”¹⁷ For these scholars, the use of tension and resolution in Britten’s work was just as much about homosexuality as it was about pacifism.

On one hand, like Elliott, I believe that the extent of this influence should be questioned. However, the ideas of conflict and peace are of crucial importance when striving for a deepened understanding of Songs Five and Six from the *Nocturne*. Many scholars believe that homosexuality and pacifism are always linked, especially for Britten. These two facets of Britten’s life are not mutually exclusive, but one can be expressed more strongly without obviously calling upon the other. There is a tension between the two that is always, though sometimes delicately, present. The following will investigate Song Five and Song Six of the *Nocturne* as two instances in which one may interpret Britten as having focused on

¹⁵Ibid., 61, 66-67.

¹⁶Lloyd Whitesell, “Images of Self in the music of Benjamin Britten,” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1993), 148.

¹⁷Brett, “Pacifism, Political Action, and Artistic Endeavor,” 183.

projecting a pacifist identity without explicitly expressing his homosexuality. This particular balance is evidenced in both the poetry and music of these two songs.

As with all of Britten's vocal music, the poetic selections for these particular songs are significant in the interpretation of the music. The text of the Song Five of the *Nocturne* was excerpted from William Wordsworth's epic work, *The Prelude*. Song Six sets "The Kind Ghosts," a short poem by World War I poet Wilfred Owen. Both of these texts reference sleep, which gives continuity to the theme of the *Nocturne*, but these are the only two songs of the cycle that mention war. Britten would have surely been familiar with the broad outlines of the biographies of both of these men; by inspecting the context of these poems within the lives of their authors, one might gain a greater appreciation for what resonances Britten may have drawn upon in choosing to set them to music.

William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770 and died on April 23, 1850. He studied at Cambridge, but was not particularly successful in his endeavors there. After his disappointing time at Cambridge, Wordsworth spent about a year in France, where he fell in love and fathered a child. During his time in France, he was exposed to the horrors of the French Revolution. The September Massacres occurred while Wordsworth was in France, and this event had a lasting impact on him. September of 1792 saw mass killings of about 1200 prisoners in Paris over the course of five days. The French monarchy had been overthrown merely a month before, and the revolutionaries feared that political prisoners would band together against them.¹⁸ Even after his return to England, Wordsworth's

¹⁸"September Massacres" in *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2008.

experiences in France and the war between the two countries were causes of distress for some time.¹⁹

The Prelude is an autobiographical epic poem completed by Wordsworth in 1805 and revised for publication in 1850. The earlier version is the one that most literary scholars prefer because it provides a less edited picture of Wordsworth's mental and emotional state in his early life. Britten used the version from 1805 when selecting the text for Song Five, as evidenced in the front matter of the score for the *Nocturne*. "But that night," apart from one omitted line, is taken in whole from Book X of *The Prelude*. Book X is remarkable because it leaves a record of how one artist reacted to living in a politically tumultuous time.²⁰ In the text of the excerpt used for Song Five, Wordsworth describes a sleepless night, invaded by troubling visions, specifically the September Massacres.

In this particular excerpt, Wordsworth fears that the worst has not yet passed. He finds himself repeating schoolteacher proverbs about the cyclic nature of history, remembering, "the tide returns again...all things have second birth." Perhaps Britten gravitated towards this selection because the first half of the twentieth century, much like the second half of the eighteenth century, was rife with armed conflict in Western Europe. Each generation tends to see its own time as being the most restless, and Britten may have identified with the artist's need to express his response to political and social turmoil.

The work of Wilfred Owen has not been studied as extensively as that of William Wordsworth. Wilfred Owen was born on March 18, 1893, and died on November 4, 1918, at the age of 25. Owen did not go to university, but worked at a parish caring for the sick and

¹⁹F.R. Watson, "William Wordsworth" in *British Writers*, vol. 4, ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert (New York: Scribner, 1981), 1-26.

²⁰Ibid.

poor before enlisting in the military in 1915. He went to France near the end of 1916 and was exposed to the atrocities of trench warfare for several months.²¹

Owen's letters to his mother reveal that through the trials of his situation, he never blamed the enemy. His anger was instead directed towards the English, who could have helped to relieve the suffering of their young men on the war front but chose not to do so. Owen also spent time in two different military hospitals for a concussion and shellshock. It was during his stay at Craiglockhart War Hospital, through the encouragement of his friend and psychologist Dr. Brock, that he experienced an intense period of creativity. Owen probably spoke then about his resentment towards women and his attraction to men. Owen produced the bulk of his output in a matter of about a year, while he was at the hospital. He stopped writing when he returned to the French warfront in the fall of 1918, and it was there that he died, one week before Armistice. After Owen's death his brother Harold made an effort to cover up all mention of Owen's homosexuality.²²

Because Owen was a gay man and a soldier who was sacrificed at a young age, Britten could easily have seen Owen as the ultimate victim of twentieth-century British society. For Song Six of the *Nocturne*, Britten chose one of Owen's lesser known poems, "The Kind Ghosts." Britten owned a collection of Owen's poetry from 1931, edited by Edmund Blunden and published by Chatto and Windus, which is marked with notes for the *War Requiem*. This is most likely the same edition used for the *Nocturne*.²³ "The Kind Ghosts" personifies England as a sleeping woman, who is not disturbed from her sleep with

²¹Margaret B. McDowell, "Wilfred Owen," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Donald E. Stanford, vol. 20, *British Poets, 1914-1945* (Detroit, MI: Gale Group, 1983), 258-269.

²²Ibid.

²³Mervyn Cooke, *Britten: War Requiem* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 28.

guilty feelings about the soldiers who die for her. Their deaths have built her palace walls and colored her rooms, but their sacrifice does not affect her.

Britten's musical choices in setting these texts help lead the audience to hear pacifism as being expressed more clearly than anything else. Song Five opens the second half of the *Nocturne* with an ominous timpani obligato over sustained strings. This was not the first time that Britten used timpani to portray drums of war, nor would it be the last. Donald Mitchell recognizes a consistent use of this imagery, beginning with the movement "War in Heaven" from *The Company of Heaven* in 1937, through "But that night" in the *Nocturne*, and culminating in the *War Requiem* of 1961.²⁴ In "But that night," the almost incessant playing of the timpani represents the constant threat of war, which was surely a reality for Britten as well as for Wordsworth. And Britten did not make any compromises to get the effect he wanted, requiring the timpanist to change tunings while playing throughout much of the song.

Song Five can be divided into five sections. The first section contains four measures of introduction and ends at measure 192. Here the strings sustain long tied notes; when they do change pitch, they follow the vocal line, which is a legato, sleepy melody. Against this background the timpani provides strong contrast, even though it is soft, with active, marcato rhythms. This section serves to set the scene of a weary insomniac, trying to read so that he might sleep for a while. The second section starts at measure 193 and ends in measure 204. Here, the images keeping the speaker of the poem awake during the night are revealed. He is thinking about the recent September Massacres, and fears that the worst might be yet to

²⁴Donald Mitchell, "Violent Climates," in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 195-196.

come. The rhythms of the tenor and strings increase to a climax at “September Massacres,” after which the strings drop out one section at a time, dying off.

The following section is short, spanning measure 204 to measure 211. It becomes clear through the music that the sleepless person is not only haunted by the September Massacres, but by thoughts of other violent events, both real and fictional. In this third section, the strings do not have sustained tones as before, but instead viciously interject in an irregular pattern. The voice has also sped up here, and the increasing tension leads to the next section. The fourth section is the climax of the song, from measure 211 through 222. The speaker is remembering warnings to heed the lessons of history, and his level of panic grows. While the double bass and the timpani play a somber march on the beats, the rest of the strings add to the feeling of unrest by playing on the upbeats. The voice rises in pitch and intensity, finally erupting on “The earthquake is not satisfied at once.” The tenor’s line deserves special mention here, because it contains a tuneful, almost folk-like melody unlike anything in this song, or indeed, in the entire cycle, which can be seen in Example 4. This “borrowed” sounding phrase is transposed higher and higher, expressing frustration at the uselessness of these maxims on history.

Example 4. Song Five, measures 211-215



The final section, from measure 223 to the end of Song Five is reminiscent of the first section. The speaker’s thoughts have returned to the present, but no rest is to be found. The

roles of the timpani and the tenor are those of the first section. The timpani plays the recognizable role of the war drum, the tenor brings back the legato line, and the melodic contour is the same as that from the beginning of the song until the very last line, “Sleep no more,” which is much higher. However, even though the strings are again playing long notes, this time they are in tremolos. The mood has calmed, but there is no real resolution. The trembling strings and the ever-present war drumming show that for Wordsworth and for Britten, so many horrible events were in the past, but the fear of war was never truly gone.

Song Six of the *Nocturne*, “She sleeps on soft, last breaths,” has received more attention from scholars than Song Five. Donald Mitchell sees the ghosts of soldiers in Song Six as direct repercussions of the drums of war in Song Five.²⁵ Lloyd Whitesell also takes a closer look at this song in his article, “Translated Identities in Britten’s *Nocturne*.” His argument is that throughout the *Nocturne*, Britten encodes messages about homosexuality into songs that may seem to be about something else. In Whitesell’s opinion, this essentially creates two audiences for himself and for this work: gay members of society who can understand the secret messages, and everyone else. In this particular song, he believes the desire for “soft breaths” and “red mouths” is “the undercurrent to an icy, ironic anger.” He also claims, “For those attuned to the subliminal erotic channel, the fleeting glimpses of male flesh form a tantalizing promise of meaning.”²⁶ For Whitesell, these flashes of skin and the subsequent sexual desire are the driving force behind the meaning of Song Six, especially for those who are a part of his proposed homosexual audience.

There are undeniably sensual moments in the text of Song Six, but one can argue that Britten might have chosen not to emphasize the “soft breaths” and “red mouths.” Instead, his

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Whitesell, “Translated Images,” 122-123.

music creates an ironic picture of England's role in the deaths of so many young men. The shift from Song Five to Song Six takes place with a transition in the strings from an unsteady rhythm to a steady march. However, this is no lighthearted march; the tempo is slow, and the strings play very softly with pizzicato throughout. A D-minor chord over an E in the bass is voiced low, and this chord does not change for ten measures. For the entire song, the strings continue to play a pure major or minor triad over a conflicting bass. Having investigated the significance of pure triads and dissonance in Britten's music, we can interpret this feature as supporting the metaphor in the poem: an illusion of peace, built on a foundation of conflict and violence.

The english horn and the voice are also compelling in their interactions. For most of the song, the english horn only plays when the tenor has a rest or a long note. But when the voice sings, "The shades keep down which well might roam her hall. Quiet their blood lies in her crimson rooms," the english horn plays roaming, wandering arpeggios. During the next line, "And she is not afraid of their footfall," both the english horn and the tenor have repeated, alternating B flats. Because the english horn provides such a distinct image of the roaming and the footfalls of the ghosts, it becomes clear that the english horn indeed represents the dead soldiers.

This song is quiet and subtle, and despite what Whitesell says, the latent images of sexual desire in Owen's poem are not directly brought to the surface in Britten's song. Sensuality and anger are minimized while irony is revealed. All of the passion and intensity of Song Five is gone, and instead an eerie calmness is present. Song Six appears more intellectual and less emotional, because unless the words are really thought about, the musical affect alone might lead one to believe that the ghosts really are kind to let the woman

sleep. This makes the horror all the more intense when one realizes that England sleeps soundly because of all the men who have died to make it so. Brett's observations on Britten's use of Owen's poetry for the *War Requiem* are quite fitting here as well: "The integrity of Britten's homosexual politics explains a great deal here, particularly the use of fellow pacifist and homosexual Wilfred Owen's poetry to transmit his anger about the fate of young men sent to their deaths by an unfeeling, patriarchal system."²⁷ In other words, Owen's poetry combined with Britten's music asserts outrage at a nation willing to allow thousands of young men to die for what both poet and composer most likely saw as a futile mission.

By examining these two songs, it can be seen that Britten was able to express his strong feelings about pacifism in very different ways. The intense panic of Song Five and the subtle irony of Song Six both serve to communicate a message about the horrors of war. Of course, Britten was opposed to violence of all kinds, and so by extension these songs could also be about conflict in all aspects of life. But whether, in these particular songs, this opposition focuses on strife between homosexuals and the rest of society is questionable. Evidence for a strong relationship between Britten's pacifism and his homosexuality has been successfully argued in the case of *Peter Grimes* and even that of *Owen Wingrave*, but in these two songs, the desire for peace is so evident that there seems to be little need to search for other motivating factors.

Within the context of the *Nocturne*, it becomes even clearer that these songs were probably little more than two very powerful arguments against war. These two songs are paired together, and they comprise most of the second half of the cycle. Additionally, all of the other songs deal with some aspect of nature – forest, ocean, or animal – and Songs Five

²⁷Brett, "Benjamin Britten."

and Six become starkly unnatural in comparison. It is for these reasons that the audience is strongly urged to hear Britten's case for peace. For Britten, pacifism was as integral to his identity as homosexuality, even though his position as a pacifist was what he consciously chose to reveal to the world. A closer look at Songs Five and Six of the *Nocturne* suggest that while homosexuality and pacifism may have sometimes been parallel influences, Britten could perhaps choose to so emphasize one that the other seems to fade largely into the background.

CHAPTER 4

“THE WANDERINGS OF CAIN” AND THE INNOCENT IDEAL

This chapter and the previous one share an argument for a broadened sense of Britten’s identity, which allows for sexual identity to be considered as one among several aspects that may have informed his musical and textual decisions. It has been recognized that Britten was fascinated by young boys, but whether this was true sexual attraction or the appeal of the innocence of childhood cannot be truly known. Philip Brett examines the issue of pederasty in “Britten's Dream,”¹ and Humphrey Carpenter explores Britten's relationships with boys, suspected abuse from his childhood, and his relationship with his parents, which no doubt affected his view of appropriate adult/child dynamics. It is also important to note that Britten searched his whole life for a mother figure who could help him return to the pure state of childhood. Song Three, on the poem *The Wanderings of Cain* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, is especially ripe for considering these issues of pederasty, innocence, and parent/child relationships. Song Three presents an ethereal, delicate tableau of night and purity. Underlying this serene scene, however, is a sense of longing. The object of that longing has provoked questions about who or what is being desired, and from where these yearnings are coming. When one investigates Song Three in light of details of Britten’s biography, the text and music can be seen as expressing what may have been Britten’s own multi-faceted personal desires.

Britten developed friendships with many young boys, usually between the ages of 10 and 15, throughout his life. As many observed, these relationships were fueled, at least in

¹Philip Brett, “Britten’s Dream,” in *Musicology and Difference* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 259-280.

part, by sexual desire. This was noticed other adults, the boys, and even Britten himself.² This attraction may somehow be related to Britten's experiences as a schoolboy. In fact, there is evidence that Britten may have first witnessed homosexual romance while in school at Gresham's.³ He did not identify with the stereotype of the "queen," and, according to Peter Pears, Britten resented the word "gay."⁴ As noted in *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension*, Britten may have modeled his homosexuality on the "image of the adolescent 'chum'."⁵

However, although Britten probably felt a physical attraction to his young friends and some of the boys sensed that Britten felt erotic desire towards them, many of these boys never detected anything more than friendly affection from the composer.⁶ Britten confessed his feelings for these young boys to Myfanwy Piper and she certainly sensed that he experienced remorse and internal conflict within himself.⁷ Piper thought that this pederastic manifestation of Britten's sexuality might have had something to do with his claims that a schoolmaster had raped him as a child, but there is no real evidence that this abuse ever occurred.⁸

²Humphrey Carpenter discusses the topic of Britten's relationships with young boys throughout his biography.

³Ibid., 29.

⁴Philip Brett, "Britten and Grimes" in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 25.

⁵Graham Elliott, *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 31.

⁶The boys' own thoughts about Britten are given in detail in Carpenter, 340-356.

⁷Ibid., 352.

⁸Ibid., 20-25. Britten only talked about being abused to a couple of people. This included Beata Mayer, daughter of Elizabeth Mayer, who heard Britten talk about this experience while he was feverish and ill. The only other to ever hear of this event were Eric Crozier, a librettist, while they were working on an opera together. Carpenter could find no further evidence of this story being true, and he treats it as a product of a very active imagination.

Sexual desire was not the only motivation for Britten's involvement with children. He also saw himself as a father or teacher figure for these boys, and some of them, including Wulff Scherchen, Piers Dunkerley, and Roger Duncan, saw the relationship in that same light.⁹ There are several examples that illustrate this point. Britten claimed to want to be a father, and saw himself in a surrogate- or stepfather role for several boys. This was even endorsed by the parents of the children, who knew that Britten could teach and give their sons things that they could not. Britten even "adopted" one boy from a refugee Basque family, and the child lived with him for a while.¹⁰

As Carpenter explains, part of this need to be around children could have grown from Britten's lifelong desire to reclaim his own innocence. Britten loved being around children, and also had friendships with young girls. Many people observed that Britten's demeanor changed around children, and he was described as "childlike" and "boyish." He loved practical jokes and word games, and he was known to go sledding and participate in snowball fights. Britten would light up if there were children in the room, and quite preferred young people to adults.¹¹ Brett explains that for Britten, this idealized innocence is "arguably his principal fount of non-verbal inspiration."¹²

In addition to having what might be considered unusual relationships with children, Britten's relationship with his mother was also unique. He and his mother, Edith Britten, were extraordinarily close. She pushed him to excel musically, and acted as his publicist when he was in his teenaged years. Even as Britten entered young adulthood, Edith

⁹Ibid., 75, 122, 365.

¹⁰Ibid., 111, 117, 349, 364-366.

¹¹Ibid., 76, 81, 342-343, 345.

¹²Brett, "Benjamin Britten."

controlled his career and had a strong influence on his personal life. The pair even traveled Europe together.¹³ Edith died very suddenly when Britten was 23. He was devastated, and some scholars, including Brett, Elliott, and Carpenter, believe that Britten spent the rest of his life searching for a mother figure to fill the void that she left.¹⁴

One of these mother figures was Elizabeth Mayer, with whom Britten stayed in 1939 on Long Island. Britten's housekeepers also played the role of mother, and were expected to make what Britten called "nursery food."¹⁵ Perhaps another parental figure in Britten's life was Peter Pears. Britten used much of the same language and wording in letters to Pears as he did in the letters he wrote to his mother, especially as a child.¹⁶ Several people, including Britten's sister, noted that Pears' voice was very similar to Edith Britten's.¹⁷ Humphrey Carpenter portrayed Pears throughout *Benjamin Britten: A Biography* as being parental, nurturing, and hypnotically controlling towards Britten. Perhaps this constant search for a mother figure was another incarnation of Britten's deep-seated longing for the innocent nature of childhood, and he was looking for someone to help him return to that state.

In spite of Britten's close personal relationship with his mother and his close working relationships with soprano Joan Cross, librettist Myfanwy Piper, and his assistant Imogen Holst, he did not favor women in his dramatic works. Philip Brett notes that although "Homosexual artists and thinkers have often shown great sensitivity to the oppression of

¹³Carpenter, 60-62.

¹⁴Ibid., 135-136, 139-140; Brett, "Benjamin Britten;" Elliott, 8.

¹⁵Ibid., 260, 313.

¹⁶Ibid., 259-260.

¹⁷Philip Brett, "Auden's Britten," in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 201.

women in patriarchal society,” for Britten, “A full half of the dramatic works include no women’s voices or (like *Paul Bunyan* and *Death in Venice*) no significant female roles.”¹⁸ Brett draws his arguments from an article by Ellen McDonald called “Women in Benjamin Britten’s Operas.” She argues that even though Britten felt compassionate towards victims of oppression, this was saved almost exclusively for males. Very few, if any, of Britten’s female characters are portrayed as sympathetic figures. They are either oppressive to those around them, or are themselves exploited but powerless to make any changes or statements.¹⁹

The issues discussed thus far can help to illuminate a new understanding of Song Three from the *Nocturne*. The musical and textual choices made by Britten may have been motivated by a complex combination of his desire for young boys and his guilt about those feelings, his longing for a mother figure, and his search for the lost innocence of childhood.²⁰ For Britten, pederastic longing itself might have been connected to his feelings of lost innocence. A desire to be with a young boy might be linked to a desire to be a young boy. The overriding desire for innocence, especially, may be interpreted as having informed the decisions that Britten made when writing this particular song.

The Wanderings of Cain, used for Song Three, comes from an unfinished project by Samuel Taylor Coleridge on the story of Cain and Abel that was attempted twice, first in prose, and later in verse. The lines that Britten sets are all that were ever written of the version in verse, and were written by Coleridge as an example of the meter and style that the

¹⁸Brett, “Benjamin Britten.”

¹⁹Ellen McDonald, “Women in Benjamin Britten’s Operas,” *Opera Quarterly* 4 (1986): 83.

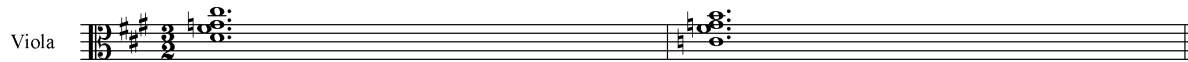
²⁰Brett explains that in the case of Britten, this longing for innocence may be better served by the term “nescience” or the Lacanian “pre-symbolic” principle. See Brett, “Benjamin Britten.”

whole project would take. Coleridge himself called this abandoned project a “trifle.”²¹ Thus, this poem was not a famous poem of Coleridge's but simply a fragment of what was to be a much larger work, yet Britten chose to set it anyway. Perhaps this was one of those texts he happened upon by chance through his nervous habit of random reading. The verse describes a boy, alone in the forest, naked but for “that leafy twine his only dress!” This poem, rejected by its literary father, is much like the boy in the poem: lost and alone. Perhaps this was part of the appeal for Britten: an opportunity to adopt this fragment and claim it for his own.

The transition from Song Two to Song Three brings back the lilting strings that were missing from “Below the thunders of the upper deep.” At measure 96, two measures before the harp enters, the mood changes as the strings settle into a comfortable tonality based on A. This is where the tonal center remains until the end of the song, with two exceptions. There are two dissonant tone clusters in the violas, prepared by a glissando in the harp, before each of the two questions in the text. Not only highly dissonant, these tone clusters also depart from the A major diatonic collection through the use of G natural in both clusters and C natural in the second. Example 5 presents the tone clusters as played in the violas, without the harp preparations. Once the harp comes in, the strings move far into the background. When the strings are involved, they play either long, sustained tones or short pizzicato interjections. The sparseness of the string parts leaves the role of filling in the gossamer texture to the harp.

²¹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Works* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1993), 301-302.

Example 5. Song Three, measures 136 and 147



The harp does what harps do best, playing long, flowing scales and arpeggios in almost constant sixteenth notes. There are three instances when the harp rests for an extended period. The first occurs in measures 114 and 115, when the voice sings, “A lovely boy was plucking fruits.” The second pause is from measures 136 through 139, during the line “But who that beauteous Boy beguiled, That beauteous Boy to linger here?” Finally, the harp stops at measure 147, when the tenor has “Has he no friend, no loving mother near?” and does not return again in Song Three.

The tenor, on the other hand, alternates between two melodic ideas. These ideas provide most of the contrast over the sparkling backdrop of strings and harp. One melodic idea is comprised of smooth, legato quarter notes and moves exclusively in thirds and steps. This idea occurs any time the text is about nature, happening from the measures 119 through 134. This legato idea does return once, on the line “In place so silent and so wild,” which describes the isolated place rather than the boy. The other melodic idea consists of staccato eighth notes and is much more disjunct, with more intervallic variety. This music is always used when the text describes the boy directly. After the final question of Song Three, there is almost no pause before the animals of Song Four enter.

Between the swirling harp and the textual image of the boy “encinctured with a twine of leaves,” there is no doubt that there is a sensual element to Song Three, even while the diatonicism suggests something innocent. Christopher Palmer recognized this but avoided a pederastic reading by saying that “there is no paradox when we remember that children are

sensual in a quite innocent and unselfconscious way.”²² On the other hand, Lloyd Whitesell claims that the harp represents sensuality and “the more intimate caress of the leaves twining about the boy's body.”²³ For him, there is a figure lurking in the background represented by disruptions in the “diatonic purity,” expressing erotic desires towards the young boy.

However, this song encodes a more complicated situation than a portrait of the object of desire. The details from Britten's biography explored above reveal some of the ways in which he might have understood the poem and shed new light on his compositional choices. One of the most compelling features of Song Three is that the characteristics which give the song its serene nature disappear both times a question is asked. Each time, the diatonicism turns into a dissonant cluster, and the harp stops playing. These pauses in the accompaniment give a strong sense of importance to these lines. Britten's music urges us to ask: who is the boy, and who is watching him?

In turn, the composer's biography allows us to consider that Britten himself may have identified both with the child and with the poetic speaker who wonders where his mother could be. One interpretation is to see the boy in Coleridge's poem as representing Britten, because he so desired to return to the innocent state of childhood. This is also appropriate because he spent his adult life without his mother and longed to regain that kind of relationship. Britten had a happy childhood, and, as noted earlier, he often behaved in a childlike manner. If we imagine Britten's identity as aligned with that of the boy, then the questions posed reveal that the boy is lost, and searching for some kind of parental guidance.

²²Christopher Palmer, “The Orchestral Song-Cycles,” in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 325.

²³Whitesell, “Translated Identities,” 120-121.

On the other hand, it is possible that Britten may have identified with the observer of the young boy. We know that Britten was attracted to boys, but it appears that he never fully acted on those feelings. The music pauses when the person who is watching the boy wonders about the boy's origin and guardians. This might, as Whitesell suggests, imply an almost sinister desire. However, the emphasis on wondering about the boy's friends and mother might be connected to Britten's own wish to be a parent. This might be a manifestation of Britten's need to be around children of both genders, because that was where he felt most comfortable. A view of Britten as the speaker in the poem leads us back to his constant longing for childhood, which he considered to be the most pure and innocent state.

In conclusion, Song Three of the *Nocturne* encodes many seemingly contradictory desires that were also present in Britten's life: sexual desire for young boys, a need for a parental figure, the longing to be a parent, and the yearning for innocence. Britten expresses these desires by creating a beautiful tableau of sound that is subtly broken down at crucial moments in the text. In "Britten's Dream," Philip Brett writes about *The Turn of the Screw* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which were composed four years before and one year after the *Nocturne*, respectively, and his observations apply just as well to the song in question. Brett states that for Britten, these works "represent a stage at which he searched for the clarity that eluded him, projected his doubts about the 'innocence' he could never recapture, and mulled over the nature of human relationships in a private world created out of the stuff of ghosts and dreams."²⁴ Brett's comments support my view that, unlike Whitesell's one-sided approach, a pluralistic interpretation that balances all aspects of identity is more appropriate in regard to Britten's music.

²⁴Brett, "Britten's Dream," 276-277.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Thus far, the *Nocturne* has revealed to us new perspectives on various aspects of Britten's identity. In Songs One, Four, and Seven, Britten used the genres of nocturne and pastoral in subversive ways to react against his contemporaries while securing for himself a place in the canon of great English music. Songs Five and Six demonstrate just how unnatural violence was to Britten. Some scholars believe that Britten always encoded explicit messages about homosexuality in his pacifist music. However, peace was so important to the composer that in some cases, as in Song Five and Song Six, sexuality was arguably not the most clearly perceived connotation of the music. Song Three provides some intriguing observations about Britten's relationships with young boys and his lifelong search for a mother figure. These relationships may have been motivated by Britten's constant longing to reclaim the innocence of childhood.

These strands of identity, pastoralism, pacifism, and innocence all belonged to the same person. When brought together, these characteristics create an image of a complex human being. How could Britten possibly reconcile all of these traits musically? The answer lies in Song Eight of the *Nocturne*, "When most I wink." This final song gathers all of the fragments presented throughout the cycle and creates a whole that is much greater than the sum of its parts. A closer look at this song is a fitting way to draw some last conclusions about the perceptions of Britten's identity in the *Nocturne*.

The texts for the *Nocturne* come from a great succession of English writers. In Song Eight, Britten turns to that most iconic of English poets, Shakespeare. For this song, Britten

chooses Sonnet 43, which declares that until the speaker and the beloved can be together, night is better than day. During the day, the beloved cannot be seen, but at night, while asleep, the speaker may see as much of their partner as desired. Lloyd Whitesell notes that, in the poem, nothing designates the gender of either speaker or their loved one, but this sonnet is among the set of 126 of Shakespeare's sonnets dedicated to a young man.¹

Immediately after the end of Song Seven, all of the instruments from the previous songs begin to return, above the rocking figure in the double bass. First the harp and the bassoon reappear, followed by the clarinet and the flute. Then the timpani, horn, and english horn join in so that all of the former soloists are now playing together. But after this striking entrance, the seven obligato instruments melt into the background. For Songs Two through Seven of the *Nocturne*, the strings supported each featured soloist in turn. Now the roles are reversed, and the strings are the highlight of Song Eight.

The strings move in grand, sweeping melodic lines, rising and falling to a climax at measure 396, before the tenor's entrance on the words "Through heavy sleep." The song begins in C minor, but is colored throughout by expressive chromaticism. The *Nocturne* is dedicated to Alma Mahler, Gustav Mahler's widow. Donald Mitchell says of this particular song, "There we do feel, and were probably meant to feel, Mahler's presence."² The rocking figure from Song One has returned from time to time in the *Nocturne*. It fades away during the transition from Song Seven to Song Eight, but comes back again at the very end of the cycle.

¹Lloyd Whitesell, "Translated Identities in Britten's *Nocturne*," *Repercussions* 6 (1997): 126.

²Donald Mitchell, "What Do We Know About Britten Now?" in *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 30-31.

The ending, on the final couplet, is the most compelling part of Song Eight. After a grand pause at measure 401, the voice sings, “All days are nights to see” a cappella. When the accompaniment does return, it has been pared down to high strings and harp. While the muted strings play the rocking figure, the voice also has a line that is almost familiar. This is the “Nurslings of immortality” theme, inverted around B flat. The inversion is not quite exact, but is very close. For a literal inversion, the intervals between the last note of measure 403 and the first two notes of measure 404 should be a minor second and a major third, corresponding to the intervals between the first three pitches of measure 36. Instead, the first interval is a major second, but the next interval compensates with a minor third. Britten probably made this adjustment so that the melody would fit into the D flat chord in the strings underneath those particular pitches. D flat is also the final chord of the entire piece, so a lack of dissonance was important at that moment. This change can be observed by comparing Example 6, the inversion, with the original in Example 2.

Example 6. Song Eight, measures 402-408

The “Nurslings of immortality” theme never occurs in the “nightmare” songs, but is heard at the end of Song One, Song Four, and Song Seven, and inverted at the end of Song Eight. The first three appearances of the theme are presented in a regular, symmetrical

pattern: One, Four, Seven. Song Three is the only song without the “Nurslings” theme that is not one of the more nightmarish ones. Thus, the joining of the inverted “Nurslings” theme and the harp from Song Three at the end of the cycle provides a formal and thematic closure.

Song Eight assimilates all of the aspects of Britten’s personality that can be observed in the rest of the cycle. Britten’s pacifist statements in Song Five and Song Six, which seem so separate from the other songs of the *Nocturne*, are integrated. All seven of the obligato instruments come back, even the timpani and english horn, which were associated with the statements about war. Britten’s personal identity as an Englishman may also be discerned in Song Eight. The vivid imagery of nature and night in the poem lends itself to the nocturne and pastoral genres, and, as noted earlier, Shakespeare is part of England’s creative heritage. However, Britten seeks inspiration from Mahler, a continental composer, when setting this song, further reinforcing his creative interpretation of an identity as an English composer.

In this reconciliation of multiple features of identity, the one that perhaps stands out the most is Britten’s idealized innocence. After the grand pause in measure 401, the harp from Song Three is the only obligato instrument that rejoins the strings in finishing the piece. In Song Three, the harp helped to create a world in which the desire for young boys and the search for a mother figure could be sublimated into a longing for the innocence of childhood. The harp carries this association with purity to the end of Song Eight. Additionally, the rocking theme returns, and it becomes clear that this figure might be heard more explicitly as a lullaby, another symbol of childhood and innocence. As Arnold Whittall so eloquently writes,

‘Lullaby’ may indeed have been a more potent musical icon for Britten than serenade, pastoral, or nocturne: and that could have been because – psychological speculation

aside – it offered a vision of innocence, of stability, that his music could only undermine, with all the tenderness and subtlety at his command.³

Whitesell claims that the main message of Song Eight is a yearning for a meeting of two souls, and a unification of two lovers. He states that this longing is portrayed in the music by the exchange of chords on C and D flat, and in the text by the use of the words “I” and “thee,” finally culminating on the last two words, “thee me.”⁴ The music does express a yearning and a sense of moving towards a consummation of some kind.

However, in the context of the *Nocturne*, this unity is more complex. The yearning in Song Eight is for a complete self, as evidenced by the music. Many of the features, musical and extra musical, that have been presented in the cycle return here. The study of Britten has had a tendency to focus on his pacifism and, more often, his sexuality as the sole motivating factors for his work. Scholars like Whitesell interpret Britten’s music as being affected by a homosexuality that colors all compositional decisions, to the exclusion of other facets that made up his real, human personality. It is my argument that while homosexuality and pacifism were important aspects of Britten’s identity, it was ultimately the search for a state of innocence that most deeply informed his musical choices in the *Nocturne*. All of the features of Britten’s individual character, public and private, were related to one another.

³Arnold Whittall, “The Signs of Genre: Britten’s version of pastoral,” in *Sundry sorts of music books: Essays on The British Library Collections*, ed. Chris Banks, Arthur Searle, and Malcolm Turner (London: The British Library, 1993), 373.

⁴Lloyd Whitesell, “Images of Self in the music of Benjamin Britten,” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1993), 130-132.

APPENDIX

BRITTEN'S TEXTS FOR THE *NOCTURNE*

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But fees on the aëreal kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!

(Prometheus Unbound— Percy Bysshe Shelley)

Below the thunders of the upper deep;
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
About his shadowy sides: above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;
And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
Unnumber'd and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.
There hath he lain for ages and will lie
Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,

Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
Then once by men and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

(*The Kraken*—Alfred Tennyson)

Encinctured with a twine of leaves,
That leafy twine his only dress!
A lovely Boy was plucking fruits,
By moonlight, in a wilderness.
The moon was bright, the air was free,
And fruits and flowers together grew
On many a shrub and many a tree:
And all put on a gentle hue,
Hanging in the shadowy air
Like a picture rich and rare.
It was a climate where, they say,
The night is more beloved than day.
But who that beauteous Boy beguiled,
That beauteous Boy to linger here?
Alone, by night, a little child,
In place so silent and so wild—
Has he no friend, no loving mother near?

(*The Wanderings of Cain*—Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

Midnight's bell goes ting, ting, ting, ting,
Then dogs do howl, and not a bird does sing
But the nightingale, and she cries twit, twit, twit;
Owls then on every bough do sit;
Ravens croak on chimneys' tops;
The cricket in the chamber hops;
The nibbling mouse is not asleep,
But he goes peep, peep, peep, peep, peep;

And the cats cry mew, mew, mew,

And still the cats cry mew, mew, mew.

(Blurt, Master Constable—Thomas Dekker)

But that night

When on my bed I lay, I was most mov'd

And felt most deeply in what world I was;

With unextinguish'd taper I kept watch,

Reading at intervals; the fear gone by

Press'd on me almost like a fear to come;

I thought of those September Massacres,

Divided from me by a little month,

And felt and touch'd them, a substantial dread;

The rest was conjured up from tragic fictions,

And mournful Calendars of true history,

Remembrances and dim admonishments.

'The horse is taught his manage, and the wind

Of heaven wheels round and treads in his own steps,

Year follows year, the tide returns again,

Day follows day, all things have second birth;

The earthquake is not satisfied at once.'

And in such way I wrought upon myself,

Until I seem'd to hear a voice that cried

To the whole City, 'Sleep no more'.

(The Prelude (1805) William Wordsworth)

She sleeps on soft, last breaths; but no ghost looms

Out of the stillness of her palace wall,

Her wall of boys on boys and dooms on dooms.

She dreams of golden gardens and sweet glooms,

Not marveling why her roses never fall

Nor what red mouths were torn to make their blooms.

The shades keep down which well might roam her hall.
Quiet their blood lies in her crimson rooms
And she is not afraid of their footfall.

They move not from her tapestries, their pall,
Nor pace her terraces, their hecatombs,
Lest aught she be disturbed, or grieved at all.

(The Kind Ghosts—Wilfred Owen)

What is more gentle than a wind in summer?
What is more soothing than the pretty hummer
That stays one moment in an open flower,
And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower?
What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing
In a green island, far from all men's knowing?
More healthful than the leafiness of dales?
More secret than a nest of nightingales?
More serene than Cordelia's countenance?
More full of visions than a high romance?
What, but thee, Sleep? Soft closer of our eyes!
Low murmurer of tender lullabies!
Light hoverer around our happy pillows!
Wreather of poppy buds, and weeping willows!
Silent entangler of a beauty's tresses!
Most happy listener! when the morning blesses
Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes
That glance so brightly at the new sun-rise.

(Sleep and Poetry—John Keats)

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected;
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear days with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!
How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day,
When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay!
 All days are nights to see till I see thee,
 And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.

(Sonnet 43—William Shakespeare)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anonymous. *Blurt, Master Constable*. Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1996.
- Brett, Philip. "Auden's Britten." In *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty, 186-203. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.
- _____. "Benjamin Britten." *Grove Music Online*. ed. Laura Macy. <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed October 22, 2007).
- _____. "Britten and Grimes." In *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty, 11-33. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.
- _____. "Britten's *Dream*." In *Musicology and Difference*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.
- _____. "Pacifism, Political Action, and Artistic Endeavor." In *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty, 172-185. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006.
- _____. "Toeing the Line: To What Extent Was Britten Part of the British Pastoral Establishment?" *The Musical Times* 137 (1996): 7-13.
- Britten, Benjamin. "England and the Folk-Art Problem." *Modern Music* 18 (1941): 71-75.
- _____. *Nocturne for Tenor Solo, Seven Obligato Instruments, and String Orchestra, Op. 60*. London: Boosey and Son Ltd, 1959.
- Brown, Maurice J.E. and Kenneth L. Hamilton. "Nocturne." *Grove Music Online*. ed. Laura Macy. <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed February 25, 2008).
- Carpenter, Humphrey. *Benjamin Britten: A Biography*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1993.
- Chew, Geoffrey. "Handel as Shepherd." *The Musical Times* 125 (1984): 498-500.
- _____. "Pastoral." *Grove Music Online*. ed. Laura Macy. <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed February 25, 2008).
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *The Complete Works*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1993.
- Cooke, Mervyn. "Britten and Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke, 129-146. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- _____. *Britten: War Requiem*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Elliott, Graham. *Benjamin Britten: The Spiritual Dimension*. London: J.M. Dent, 1989.
- Ford, Boris, ed. *Benjamin Britten's Poets: The Poetry He Set to Music*. Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1994.
- Forte, Allen. *The Structure of Atonal Music*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- Greenfield, John R. "Percy Bysshe Shelley." In *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 96: British Romantic Poets, 1789-1832, Second Series*, ed. John R. Greenfield (1990), UNT Electronic Resources <http://irservices.library.unt.edu> (accessed February 25, 2008).
- Hanslick, Eduard. *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music*, trans. Geoffrey Payzant. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986.
- Holst, Imogen. "Britten's Nocturne." *Tempo* 5 (1958-59): 14-22.
- Hoy, Cyrus. "Thomas Dekker." In *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 62: Elizabethan Dramatists*, ed. Fredson Bowers (1987), UNT Electronic Resources <http://irservices.library.unt.edu> (accessed February 25, 2008).
- Hughes, Meirion and Robert Stradling. *The English Musical Renaissance, 1840-1940: Constructing a National Music*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- Johnson, Graham. "Voice and Piano." In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 286-307. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.
- Kallberg, Jeffrey. "The Rhetoric of Genre: Chopin's Nocturne in G Minor." *Nineteenth-Century Music* 11 (1988): 238-261.
- Kerman, Joseph. "A Profile for American Musicology." *Journal for the American Musicological Society* 18 (1965): 61-69.
- King, A. Hyatt. "Mountains, Music, and Musicians." *The Musical Quarterly* 31 (1945): 395-419.
- Kipperman, Mark. "John Keats." In *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 96: British Romantic Poets, 1789-1832, Second Series*, ed. John R. Greenfield (1990), UNT Electronic Resources <http://irservices.library.unt.edu> (accessed February 25, 2008).

- Longobardi, Ruth Sara. "Reading Between the Lines: An Approach to the Musical and Sexual Ambiguities of Death in Venice." *The Journal of Musicology* 22 (2005): 327-364.
- McClatchie, Stephen. "Benjamin Britten, *Owen Wingrave*, and the Politics of the Closet; or, 'He Shall be Straightened Out at Paramore'." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8 (1996): 59-75.
- McDonald, Ellen. "Women in Benjamin Britten's Operas." *Opera Quarterly* 4 (1986): 83-101.
- McDowell, Margaret B. "Wilfred Owen." In *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, ed. Donald E. Stanford, vol. 20, *British Poets, 1914-1945*. Detroit, MI: Gale Group, 1983.
- Mellers, Wilfred. "The Truth of the *Dream*." In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 181-191. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.
- Mitchell, Donald. "'Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal': Britten's Other 'Serenade'." *The Horn Call – Journal of the International Horn Society* 22 (1991): 9-14.
- _____. "Violent Climates." In *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Britten*, ed. Mervyn Cooke, 129-146. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- _____. "What Do We Know About Britten Now?" In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 21-45. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.
- Palmer, Christopher. "The Orchestral Song-Cycles." In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 181-191. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.
- Porter, Peter. "Composer and Poet." In *The Britten Companion*, ed. Christopher Palmer, 271-285. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.
- Rosen, Charles. *The Romantic Generation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- "September Massacres." In *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2008.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts*. In *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904.
- Subotnik, Rose Rosengard. *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Temperley, Nicholas. "John Field and the First Nocturne." *Music & Letters* 56 (1975): 335-340.

- Tomlinson, Gary A. *Music in Renaissance Magic: Toward a Historiography of Others*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- _____. "The Web of Culture: A Context for Musicology." *Nineteenth-Century Music* 7 (1983-84): 350-62.
- Watson, F.R. "William Wordsworth." In *British Writers*, vol. 4, ed. Ian Scott-Kilvert. New York: Scribner, 1981.
- Whitesell, Lloyd. "Britten's Dubious Trysts." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56 (2003): 637-694.
- _____. "Images of Self in the Music of Benjamin Britten." PhD diss., State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1993.
- _____. "Translated Identities in Britten's *Nocturne*." *Repercussions* 6 (1997): 109-134.
- Whittall, Arnold. *The Music of Britten and Tippett: Studies in Themes and Techniques*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- _____. "The Signs of Genre: Britten's Version of Pastoral." In *Sundry Sorts of Music Books: Essays on the British Library Collections*, ed. Chris Banks, Arthur Searle, and Malcolm Turner, 363-374. London: The British Library, 1993.
- Youens, Susan. "Song cycle." *Grove Music Online*. ed. Laura Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed October 22, 2007).