**Abstract**

Applying a multidisciplinary approach, this paper explores two significant issues associated with Bellini’s *Norma*: the complexity of its literary sources and its dialectic concept. These subjects and their possible interconnection have been overlooked in the numerous studies of the opera undertaken over generations. The paper also explores the structural and thematic affinities between *Norma* and Greek tragedy. Close examination reveals that the opera’s libretto by Felice Romani is actually far more sophisticated than it is usually considered to be. Indeed, the cultural differences between the backgrounds and characters of its sources may contribute to explaining the complex dialectics of this opera, which reflect, *inter alia,* the clash between Neo-classicism and Romanticism in 19th-century culture, and the tension between paganism and Christianity. Many of *Norma’*s themes are of particular relevance today, such as the male-female balance of power, the clash of civilizations, and the flexibility of “nationalist,” religious and cultural identities. In many respects, *Norma*’s world, strikingly similar to that of Greek tragedy, is intensely foreign and yet profoundly familiar to us. Despite recent adaptations to modernized contexts in the spirit of *Regieoper*, this duality can be best understood by seriously delving into the text, subtext and historical context of the libretto.

Key-words: Medea, Romanticism, Neo-classicism, Greek tragedy, Christianity, paganism, eponymous heroine, dichotomies