**Abstract**

This paper explores, through a multi-disciplinary approach, two significant topics associated with Bellini’s Norma: the complexity of its literary sources and its dialectic concept. These aspects and their possible interconnection have escaped the focus of the research literature. The paper also explores the structural and thematic affinities between Norma and Greek Tragedy. Felice Romani’s libretto is much more complex than it is usually considered to be. The cultural differences between the background and character of its sources may contribute to explain the complex dialectics of this opera, which reflect *inter alia* on the one hand the clash between Neo-classicism and Romanticism in 19th-century culture, on the other hand the tension between paganism and Christianity. Many of *Norma’*s topics are of particular relevance today: e.g. the male-female balance of power; the clash of civilizations, the flexibility of ‘nationalist,’ religious and cultural identities. In many respects *Norma*’s world, strikingly similar to that of Greek tragedy, is desperately foreign and yet profoundly familiar to us. Despite recent adaptations to modernized contexts in the spirit of *Regioper*, I believe that this duality is most efficiently expressed by paying due respect to the text, subtext and historical context of the libretto.

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