

A Multimodal Approach  
to the Study of Opera in  
Aribert Reimann's *Medea*

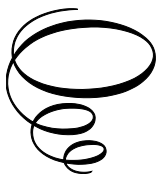


# A Multimodal Approach to the Study of Opera in Aribert Reimann's *Medea*

By

Stamatia Gerothanasi

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*To my mother, Angeliki*

*Wenn keine Moral mehr gelehrt wird, keine Religion mehr Glauben findet,  
wenn kein Gesetz mehr vorhanden ist, wird uns Medea noch anschauern,  
wenn sie die Treppen des Palastes herunter wankt, und der Kindermord  
jetzt geschehen ist.*

Friedrich Schiller

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## FOREWORD

My studies in musicology, my doctoral studies in musical dramaturgy, but also my long-term engagement as an opera singer in theaters in Germany has motivated this work in my postdoctoral research. The embodied knowledge gained through the performance of numerous operas of various composers made me realise the synergy of the three central modes in an operatic work: the verbal, musical and visual modes. With their special characteristics and special components, they are, to a large extent, systematically employed by composers in order to create but also facilitate the comprehension of the multifaceted genre of opera.

The common thread that seems to link all three modes is the employment of conceptual mechanisms and conceptual tools. The work of scholars from music cognition on conceptual mechanisms like metaphor and metonymy and conceptual tools like image schemas together with embodied cognition intrigued me to initiate research into particular operas and into the ways these conceptual mechanisms and conceptual tools pervade the three modes of the operatic work.

Since cultural concepts are inherent in our identities, they are, undoubtedly, deeply entrenched in our conceptualisation. They also remain, more or less, intact through time and they largely contribute to the creation of an operatic work. Central cultural themes and motifs, some of which can be more or less universal, like the opposition of central frames and concepts, are repeated again and again in operas, particularly those drawn from Ancient Greek dramas.

This monograph starts from the assumption that opera is a multimodal piece of art. It adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines methods and tools from Cognitive Linguistics, music cognition, theatrical studies, and discourse studies in order to explore and unfold the richness and the complexity of the meanings involved in an opera. Given the richness and the complexity of operatic works across their manifestations, I hope the monograph will ignite a debate amongst readers interested in the field. Driven by the need to fill a gap in current scholarship in multimodal studies, I hope my work will make a contribution in this respect.

I am very much indebted to Professor E. Nika-Sampson, my supervisor through my undergraduate, doctoral and postdoctoral studies,

for her wholehearted and unceasing support, her guidance and her insightful feedback. I would also like to extend my thanks to Philipp Werner for his help in my musical examples, my partner, Karel Pajer, for his support and understanding during the long period of late-night studying, as well as my colleagues and friends in Pforzheim Theater, Germany. Finally, I owe my greatest debt of gratitude to my mother who offered me an example in my personal, professional, and academic life. Dedicating the present work to her is a small token for her continuous support in my life.

Stamatia Gerothanasi  
August 2021



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The opera *Medea* by the German composer Aribert Reimann (4<sup>th</sup> of March 1936-) was first performed in the Vienna State Opera on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Reimann is one of many composers of music theatre to have been inspired by the ancient myth of Medea.<sup>1</sup> The work enjoyed great success and productions followed in the Frankfurt Opera (05.09.2010), the Nissay Theatre (Tokyo 09.11.2012), the Komische Oper (Berlin 21.5.2017), and the Aalto-Musiktheater (Essen 23.03.2019).<sup>2</sup> Reimann based the libretto of his opera on the Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872) trilogy *Das Goldene Vlies* (first performed on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of March 1821, at the Burgtheater in Vienna). In particular, he based his libretto on sections of *Medea's* drama (the third part of the trilogy), supplemented by passages from the other two parts: *Der Gastfreund* (first part) and *Die Argonauten* (second part). For the composition of his trilogy, Grillparzer had looked to *Medea* by Euripides, *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica* by Valerius Flaccus and *Medea* by Lucius Annaeus Seneca.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Methodology

The research concerns the analysis of the opera *Medea* by Aribert Reimann and it involves the study of multimodal mechanisms in the libretto (verbal mode), the music (music mode) and the scenical directions (visual mode). The aim is to provide a novel perspective towards research

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of creative variations on the myth of Medea, after 1900, in drama, non-dramatic literature, and in the visual and performing arts, including opera, see Anthony J. Boyle, *Seneca Medea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), cxxxiv-cxli and Johnston, Sarah I. "Introduction". In *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art*, ed. James J. Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> The dates in the brackets refer to the first performance of the piece.

<sup>3</sup> See Lu Mingjun, *Wahnsinn der Medea* (Heidelberg: Mattes Verlag, 2013), 1.

on musical dramaturgy that might define the study of opera as a multimodal piece of art with a focus on the interaction of the three modes.

My analysis of the libretto (verbal mode) by Reimann is based on the methodological framework of Cognitive Linguistics and, in particular, the identification and the analysis of the cognitive mechanisms in the libretto for the opera *Medea*. The aim is to identify the meanings the composer had in mind concerning the myth which are reflected in the language of the libretto. The methodology of the musical analysis (music mode) of the opera relies on the field of music cognition, which aims at the assignment of meaning in music. The methodology for the analysis of the scenical directions (visual mode) relies on work carried out by scholars of cognitive science, for instance on the way the image schematic experience is evoked, and on the way gestures or aspects of space (e.g. being static or moving) are expressed in order to convey meaning. The combined methodology of drama analysis, analysis of musical dramaturgy and the contribution of cognitive science for the analysis of the three modes aims at offering new perspectives on the evocation of meaning in the opera. It should be noted that my research aims at revealing the composer's point of view, how he conceptualises and expresses the synergy of language, scenical directions and music in order to render elements of the ancient myth.

In particular, for the analysis of the drama, my research draws from the analysis of Grillparzer's drama and the sources that he based his work on, namely *Medea* by Euripides, *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, *Medea* by Seneca and *Argonautica* by Valerius Flaccus. I won't delve into a comparative analysis of the sources Grillparzer's work was based on and the creation of his own version of the myth. My focus is on specifying the dramaturgical motifs that traverse the ancient sources and are detectable in the drama of Grillparzer. Special focus will be given to (a) the core theme of the drama which, according to Grillparzer, is the generation of evil from evil;<sup>4</sup> and (b) the motor of the dramatic action which, as defined by the author himself, is the clash of the *civilised* and the *barbaric*.<sup>5</sup> The central theme and the motor of the dramatic action will be treated within the cognitive framework, taking into account the mechanisms of conceptual metaphor and conceptual metonymy.

Moreover, I inquire into the ways the myth of Medea and the symbol of the Golden Fleece express cultural concepts deeply rooted in

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<sup>4</sup> See W. Edgar Yates, *Grillparzer: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 84.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael Holzinger, ed., *Franz Grillparzer: Selbstbiographie* (Berliner Ausgabe, 2015), 67, 87-88.



our cognition and are employed by Grillparzer and Reimann. These cultural concepts are manifested through the cognitive mechanisms of conceptual metaphor and conceptual metonymy. Accordingly, I investigate the ways the myth of Medea and the symbol of the Golden Fleece are treated by Euripides, Apollonius of Rhodes, Seneca and Valerius Flaccus. This will give a deeper understanding of Grillparzer's version of the myth and Reimann's adaptation of Grillparzer's drama for his libretto.

Concerning the analysis of musical dramaturgy, the central part of the research occupies the transformation of the dramatic text into a libretto for the opera: (a) the way the plot is structured, (b) the selection of important dramaturgical motifs and themes, (c) the effacement of parts of the drama that are not included in the musicalisation and the reason why they are not suitable to be included in the libretto, and (d) the choice of a particular voice type for the dramatic characters. This process will enlighten even more the way the composer conceptualises musically the dramatic text and makes specific choices in the transformation of the dramatic text to a libretto. It should be emphasised that the libretto of *Medea* by Reimann is not an original libretto, namely a libretto originally created for the opera, but it is an adaptation of the drama *Medea* by Grillparzer.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more information concerning the term *original libretto* (Originallibretto), see Alexander Rudolph, "Für und Wider die Librettologie. Zu Geschichte und Kritik einer Librettoforschung des Gesangstheaters" (Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Bayreuth, 2015), 3: "Ein Blick in die Operngeschichte offenbart jedoch, dass diese Limitierung insofern unbegründet ist, als nur eine geringe Anzahl *Originallibretti* (dieser Terminus hat sich für die Bezeichnung eigens für das Musiktheater konzipierter Vorlagen etabliert) existiert: Die überwiegende Mehrheit aller Libretti besteht aus Bearbeitungen bereits existierender Vorlagen. Ausnahmen, also Originallibretti, »[...] sind z.B. die Libretti zu Mozarts *Così fan tutte*, zu Wagners *Meistersingern* oder zu Strauss' *Rosenkavalier*.« (Plachta 2003, S. 17). Der Librettist Claus H. Henneberg nennt noch *Elegy for Young Lovers* (Hans Werner Henze und W. A. Auden/Chester Kallman) sowie *Palestrina* (Hans Pfitzner) (vgl. Henneberg 1985, S. 261). Allerdings wird– vereinzelt–eine abweichende Begriffsauffassung vertreten: Gabriele Buschmeier etwa versteht unter dem Terminus »Originallibretto« nicht eigens für das *Musiktheater* konzipierte Texte, sondern speziell für einen bestimmten *Komponisten* angefertigte Libretti–nach ihrer Definition wäre das Libretto *Iphigénie en Aulide*, vom Librettisten du Roulet nach der Tragödie von Jean Racine für Christoph Willibald Gluck geschaffen (UA 1774), ein Originallibretto, während es dagegen aus der Sicht der Mehrheit (nur) eine Adaption darstellt (siehe dazu Buschmeier 1998, S. 159ff.)."

My concern is on the analysis of musical dramaturgy and its focus on the combined interaction of the libretto, the music and the scenical directions in the opera *Medea* by Aribert Reimann: i.e., how the main theme—the central dramaturgical motif of the libretto—as well as the elements of the drama in general are reflected through music. In particular, the analysis of the libretto, the music and the scenical directions focuses on the ways in which the central musical motif and theme, the music-dramaturgical structure of the vocal lines, and the orchestration indicate how music highlights the emerging dichotomy between *civilised* and *barbaric*, which is the main dramaturgical motif in *Medea* by Reimann. Moreover, the analysis focuses on the ways music expresses elements of the drama, of the dramatic structure, and of the characters, and how music foreshadows future events of the plot.

For the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the study of multimodal mechanisms, my approach is qualitative in that it aims at applying an inventory of cognitive tools that enable the evocation of the opposition between the frames of the civilised and the barbaric as well as elements of the drama, including (a) image schemas (such as the VERTICALITY and the NEAR-FAR image schema), (b) metaphors for LIGHT and DARK, and (c) the metonymies structuring the main characters of the myth: MEDEA FOR BARBARIC and JASON FOR CIVILISED. By identifying the points in the opera in which each cognitive mechanism emerges (and whether this happens at the level of libretto, music or scenical directions), I will attempt to show the extent to which each one of these cognitive tools contributes to the evocation of the central bipolar opposition of *civilised* versus *barbaric*, as mentioned above.

The study is organised as follows:

In the present chapter (Chapter One), the *Stoff*, the theme and the central motifs in Grillparzer's drama which also traverse Reimann's libretto are discussed. The contribution of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to the study of music and opera as well as the application of multimodal mechanisms in the analysis of the opera are highlighted. Moreover, the issue of intermediality is discussed, focusing on the areas of convergence and divergence with the issue of multimodality, in order to argue in favour of the issue of multimodality as the most adequate framework for the study of opera.

In Chapter Two, general information is provided concerning the ancient myth of Medea. Then I delve into the ways the myth is expressed in the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca but also in the epics of Apollonius

and Flaccus. The study of the ancient sources is central for the understanding of the creation of Grillparzer's drama. Special focus is given to *Medea* by Euripides, which constitutes the first dramatisation of the myth and is the main source of inspiration for later dramatisations. Moreover, the main dramaturgical motifs of the ancient text are discussed, such as the concept of *catharsis* and Chimonas' translation, thus offering an insight into the reasons in favour of the specific interlingual translation. Then I discuss the elements of the myth of Medea as presented in the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes, in the *Argonautica* by Valerius Flaccus, and in the study of *Medea* by Seneca, focusing on the central events of the plot.

In Chapter Three, my focus is on the analysis of Grillparzer's *Medea*. The analysis includes three stages. The first stage refers to the presentation of the characters, the plot, and the structure and form of the drama. The second stage refers to the analysis of the characters, the analysis of the structure and form of the drama, and a fragmentary comparison between Grillparzer's drama and the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca. The third stage focuses on the main dramaturgical motifs of the drama on the basis of conceptual mechanisms. This stage of the research is important for defining the main theme, namely the Golden Fleece and the generation of evil from evil, and the central dramaturgical motifs that Reimann chooses for his libretto, namely the opposition of *barbaric* and *civilised*, the barbaric woman, and Medea's identity. Moreover, information is provided on the difference in the language employed for the civilised and the barbaric frame as expressed in the different metrical schemes.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the analysis of the opera *Medea* by Reimann. The analysis of the opera by Reimann includes three stages. The first stage concerns the presentation of the characters, the plot, and the structure and form of the opera. At the second stage, a comparative analysis of selective parts of Reimann's libretto with Grillparzer's text is built. The third stage focuses on the musical rendering of Grillparzer's drama by Reimann: identification and discussion of the central motif and theme in the three modalities, analysis of the music-dramaturgical structure of the vocal lines, as an expression of the characters' psychology with emphasis on Medea's borderline personality disorder, and orchestration.

In the concluding section, a brief overview is presented of the study's advantages and its limitations, together with some ideas for future research.

## 2. *Stoff*, theme and central motifs in Grillparzer's drama and Reimann's libretto

The *Stoff* of Grillparzer's drama *Medea* is the myth of Medea.<sup>7</sup> The German term *Stoff* (source-material or subject matter or material) refers to the backbone of the action.<sup>8</sup> It is a coherent preexisting story separated from the drama or the literary text.<sup>9</sup> The recruitment of the *Stoff* is characterised by adaptations that give birth to new versions of the myth. The *Stoff* of Medea, as a preexisting myth, stands for Medea (MEDEA'S MYTH STANDS FOR MEDEA, a conceptual metonymy as will be discussed in the next section, Section 3). Medea (Medea's myth) has been the source of inspiration for various adaptations, a fact that indicates the existence of an unchangeable and consistent quality in its own core. The unchangeable core of Medea is the essence of the *Stoff* in contrast to the qualities that give

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<sup>7</sup> An interesting study on this topic is provided by Corina Herr, *Medeas Zorn. Eine "starke Frau" in Opern des 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Herbolzheim: Centaurus Verlag & Media, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> The term *Stoff* comes from the German literary tradition and tends to become international. It could be defined as a narrative core (based on historical or mythological events) which, through time, appears in narrative or theatrical works. It is in contrast to the issue of the motif while it may overlap with the issue of theme. For the definition of the term *Stoff*, I used Schulz, Armin, "Stoff" in *Reallexicon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft: Neubearbeitung des Reallexikons der deutschen Literaturgeschichte Vol. 3*, ed. Georg Braungart, Harald Fricke, Klaus Grubmüller, Jan-Dirk Müller, Friedrich Vollhardt and Klaus Weimar (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 521-522. For the translation of the term *Stoff* in English as 'source-material', I looked to its discussion under *Intertextuality* in Peter Childs and Roger Flower, eds., *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Routledge, 2006), 122. For the translation of the term *Stoff* in English as 'subject matter' or 'material', I used Horst S. Daemrich, "Themes and Motifs in Literature: Approaches: Trends: Definition," *The German Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (1985): 568. For the application of the term *Stoff* to the study of libretto, see Reinhard Strohm, "Ignaz Holzbauers "Hypermmestra" (1741): "Zur Geschichte und Interpretation des Librettos," *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*, 58. Bd. (2014): 133-170; Wolfram Schottler, *Die Bassariden von Hans-Werner Henze. Der Weg eines Mythos von der antiken Tragödie zur modernen Oper: Eine Analyse von Stoff, Libretto und Musik* (WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1992); Aribert Reimann, "Ich kann nur einen Stoff vertonen, der etwas mit unserer Zeit zu tun hat»: SIEMENS-PREISTRÄGER ARIBERT REIMANN IM GESPRACH ÜBER SEIN OPERNSCHAFFEN," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Vol. 172, No. 3 (2011b): 10-13.

<sup>9</sup> See Elisabeth Frenzel, *Stoffe der Weltliteratur. Ein Lexikon dichtungsgeschichtlicher Längsschnitte* (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1992), v.

rise to variations.<sup>10</sup> The configuration of Medea's myth in the Greek tragedy, especially by Euripides, exerted influence in the structure of the myth and stabilised those ingredients of the myth that are most familiar. According to Mastronarde (Mastronarde, 2002, 52), it was Euripides who introduced the deliberate killing of the children by Medea and it thus became the canonical version of the myth. Medea's *strangeness/otherness*<sup>11</sup> and her decision to kill her children constitute the unchangeable qualities of Medea's *Stoff*.

For Grillparzer the generation of evil from evil constitutes the core theme of his trilogy. It should be mentioned that the terms *theme* and *Stoff* are not clearly differentiated. The term *theme* refers to an abstract central idea of a literary text (Zymner and Hölter, 2013, 126).<sup>12</sup> In this respect, Grillparzer pursues the core theme as an abstract idea based on the myth (*Stoff*) of the Golden Fleece and Medea's myth accordingly. This abstract idea includes Medea's decision to kill her children. Moreover, in Grillparzer's drama, her decision to return the fleece to Delphi marks the end of the generation of evil from evil. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the return of the Golden Fleece to Delphi by Medea is regarded by Reimann as a symbolic action against corruption. This symbolic action is also valid in our days.

According to Frenzel (Frenzel, 1978, 29), the dramaturgical motif is the smallest unit of the *Stoff* that contributes to the composition of the plot. The motif is a narrative unit of the *Stoff*.<sup>13</sup> It is connected to a dramatic situation but it can also dispose inner tension and, therefore, it functions as a trigger for the action.<sup>14</sup> A motif can be characterised as central, recurrent or leitmotif,<sup>15</sup> or as secondary with limited importance to

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<sup>10</sup> See Frenzel, Elisabeth. "Stoff- und Motivgeschichte". In *Reallexicon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte Vol. 4*, ed. Klaus Kanzog und Achim Masser (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1984), 213.

<sup>11</sup> By the terms *strangeness* and *otherness*, I refer to the foreign, idiosyncratic, and uncommon characteristics of Medea that are due to her barbaric identity.

<sup>12</sup> See also the term *theme* in Peter Childs and Roger Flower, eds., *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary terms* (Routledge, 2006), 239-240, and in Chris Baldick, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 258.

<sup>13</sup> For a comparison of the terms *motif* and *Stoff*, see Angelika Corbineau-Hoffmann, *Einführung in die Komparatistik* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2004), 140.

<sup>14</sup> See also the term *motif* in Childs and Flower, *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary terms*, 92, 146, 239, and in Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 162.

<sup>15</sup> According to Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 138, "leitmotif or leitmotiv, a frequently repeated phrase, image, symbol, or situation in

the construction of the plot. Grillparzer refers to the motor of the dramatic action in his drama *Medea* which is the clash/opposition of *civilised* and *barbaric*. He refers to the opposition of *civilised* and *barbaric* as the central motif of his drama connected with the strangeness/otherness of Medea and her decision to kill her children.

The main dramaturgical motifs of the drama *Medea*, namely the strangeness of Medea and her decision to kill her children, derive from the overarching opposition of *barbaric* and *civilised*. This opposition generates evil which is the abstract idea of the trilogy as a whole.<sup>16</sup> In Chapter Four, Section 2, it will be discussed how Reimann expresses musically the main dramaturgical motif and elements of the characters with a focus on Medea's psychological development throughout the events of the drama plot.

As mentioned, my research is based on music cognition and specifically on multimodal mechanisms, namely multimodal metaphor and metonymy and their application in the analysis of opera. The next section deals with Conceptual Metaphor Theory and will be followed by the discussion of multimodality in opera (Section 4). The opposition of *barbaric* and *civilised* that constitutes the central overarching dramaturgical motif of the plot gives rise to central motifs such as Medea's strangeness and her decision to kill her children. These central motifs are reinforced through cognitive mechanisms present in all three modalities (libretto, music and scenical directions).

### 3. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the study of libretto

My research, in part, draws from Cognitive Linguistics (CL) and its cooperation with music cognition. A central area of CL involves the study of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) who offered a new view of metaphor and metonymy, as conceptual mechanisms. They conceived the *cognitive linguistic view of metaphor*, and revealed that metaphor is pervasive in everyday thought and language. In the CL view, metaphor is conceptual in nature and not just an ornamental and rhetorical device. It refers to the understanding of a conceptual domain in terms of another. In Lakoff and Johnson's view, metaphor is not simply a matter of words or linguistic expressions but of concepts, of thinking of one thing in terms of another.

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a literary work, the recurrence of which usually indicates or supports a theme".

<sup>16</sup> See W. Edgar Yates, *Grillparzer: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 84-85.

This understanding is achieved by finding a set of systematic correspondences between two domains of experience. Conceptual metaphors are noted by the formula A IS B, where A and B are two different conceptual domains.<sup>17</sup>

Metonymy, just like metaphor, is not just a matter of names of things, but a conceptual phenomenon. According to Lakoff and Johnson, metonymy, like metaphor, is part of our everyday way of thinking.<sup>18</sup> According to Radden and Kövecses,<sup>19</sup> metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealised cognitive model.<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that, whereas in metaphor we have the transfer from one domain of experience to another, in metonymy both the vehicle entity and the target entity belong to one and the same conceptual domain. Conceptual metonymy can be given by means of the formula A STANDS FOR B.

For Kövecses (Kövecses, 2002, 245),

the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor [...] works on three levels: the supraindividual level corresponding to how a given language and culture reflects metaphorical patterns, the individual level corresponding to the metaphorical cognitive system as used by individual speakers of a language, and the subindividual level corresponding to universal aspects of various kinds of embodiment.

It will be attempted, here, to discuss how language, culture, thought, and embodied cognition all come together and play an equally crucial role in the study of metaphor and metonymy.

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<sup>17</sup> See Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4.

<sup>18</sup> See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), ch. 8.

<sup>19</sup> See Radden, Günter and Kövecses, Zoltán. "Towards a Theory of Metonymy". In *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 21.

<sup>20</sup> According to Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden, eds., *Metonymy in Language and Thought* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1999), 2, "The conceptual framework within which metonymy is understood [...] is that of scenes, frames, scenarios, domains or idealized cognitive models (ICMs). Within these models, a metonymic link may be established between two conceptual entities in the broadest sense."

From the mid-1990s, musicologists started to investigate ways in which music theory can profit from the theoretical and methodological tools of Cognitive Linguistics.<sup>21</sup> It was made clear that language may share a lot of structural, conceptual, and communicative properties with other types of cognition like music. In particular, the cross-domain mappings between the domains of music and language open new ways of understanding the different functions of language and music in human culture and the ways they construct meaning. According to Zbikowski,

language gives us the means to represent symbolically objects and relations, and through these representations we can direct the attention of another person to things within a shared referential frame. Music, by contrast, provides us with sonic analogs for dynamic processes, processes that include movement through space [...], physical gestures [...], and emotional states [...]. A place to begin understanding how we understand music is with such sonic analogs.<sup>22</sup>

In the analysis of works with music and text, language can structure our understanding of music but music can also structure the understanding of language. This means that music either serves as a more concrete domain of information (source domain) or a more abstract one (target domain).<sup>23</sup>

#### **4. Multimodal metaphor and metonymy and the study of opera**

Since Forceville and Urios-Aparisi's (2009) edited volume on multimodality, there has been an increasing amount of research focusing on multimodal mechanisms and, in particular, metaphor that is a metaphor whose source and target domains are exclusively or predominantly represented in different modes (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, 4). According to

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<sup>21</sup> For a presentation of the foundational notions such as *schematicity*, *embodiment*, *conceptualisation*, *metaphor*, etc., and their application to the analysis of music, see Antović, Mihailo. "The Role of Movement in Musical Signification: From Cognitive to Conceptual Semantics of Music". In *Musica Movet: Affectus, Ludus, Corpus*, ed. Milena Medić (Belgrade: Faculty of Music, 2019), 257-282.

<sup>22</sup> Zbikowski, Lawrence M. "Music, language, and multimodal metaphor". In *Multimodal metaphor*, ed. Charles J. Forceville and Eduardo Urios-Aparisi (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009), 376.

<sup>23</sup> Mappings from music to language are a possibility especially when language is ambiguous. See Zbikowski, "Music, language, and multimodal metaphor", 375.



Forceville, in his chapter to the edited volume with Urios-Aparisi (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, 23),

it is impossible to give either a satisfactory definition of “mode,” or compile an exhaustive list of modes. However, this is no obstacle for postulating that there are different modes and that these include, at least, the following: (1) pictorial signs; (2) written signs; (3) spoken signs; (4) gestures; (5) sounds; (6) music; (7) smells; (8) tastes; (9) touch.

The majority of research on metaphor, since then, has focused on relationships between image and text (mainly in the context of advertising—see Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, and Pérez-Sobrino, 2017). Alternative modes, such as music, are still understudied and in need of analysis.<sup>24</sup> Earlier studies on multimodal metaphors in music focus on cross-domain mappings between language and music, and are analysed in terms of conceptual blending theory (Zbikowski, 2009) and verbo-musical metaphors analysed in terms of the dynamic approach to metaphor also in the framework of conceptual blending theory (Górska, 2018).

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<sup>24</sup> To the best of my knowledge, the following studies involve multimodal metaphors in music and language: Zbikowski, Lawrence M. “Music, language, and multimodal metaphor”. In *Multimodal metaphor*, ed. Charles J. Forceville and Eduardo Urios-Aparisi (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009), 359-381; Elżbieta Górska, “From Music to Language and Back,” *LaMiCuS* 2, (2018): 82-100; Górska, Elżbieta. “Why are multimodal metaphors interesting? The perspective of verbo-visual and verbo-musical modalities”. In *From Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Cognitive Ethnolinguistics: Patterns of Imagery in Language*, ed. Marek Kuźniak, Agnieszka Libura and Michał Szawerna (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014a), 17-36. The following study involves multimodal metaphors in expressive movements in speech, gesture and feature film: Hermann Kappellhoff and Cornelia Müller, “Embodied meaning construction: Multimodal metaphor and expressive movement in speech, gesture, and feature film,” *Metaphor and the Social World*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2011): 121-153. For multimodal metaphors in movement and speech, see Kolter, Astrid, Ladewig, Silva, Summa, Michela, Müller, Cornelia, *et al.* “Body memory and the emergence of metaphor in movement and speech: An interdisciplinary case study”. In *Body Memory, Metaphor and Movement*, ed. Sabine C. Koch, Thomas Fuchs, Michela Summa and Cornelia Müller (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2012), 201-226. For multimodal metaphors in speech and gesture in dance, see Müller, Cornelia and Ladewig, Silva H. “Metaphors for sensorimotor experiences. Gestures as embodied and dynamic conceptualizations of balance in dance lessons”. In *Language and the Creative Mind*, ed. Barbara Dancygier, Jennifer Hinnell and Mike Borkrent (Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2013), 295-324.

In opera, we have three modalities, the verbal mode, the music mode and the visual mode. For my analysis, opera is a multimodal piece of art comprising these three modalities: the written libretto (written signs that reflect spoken signs all thought of as verbal mode), the music in the full score (written music signs that concern the music mode) and the staging, which in the case of this research is based on the scenical directions provided in the libretto (written signs that refer to pictorial signs and gestures all making reference to the visual mode). Therefore, my analysis of the opera deals with the analysis of the libretto by Reimann, of the music score by Reimann (in order to support the libretto analysis) and of the scenical directions cited in the libretto by Reimann (to support libretto and music analysis). It should be emphasised once more that my research centres on the composer's perspective concerning the cooperation of the three modalities. This contributes to the emergence of the overall meaning of the operatic work.

The focus on the composer's perspective has implications on how figurative meaning is evoked in the three modalities and also the way modalities resonate with each other. Aribert Reimann, consciously or subconsciously, draws correspondences between the figurative language of the libretto and the scenical directions, and his music. It is not coincidental that the main musical motif or theme that traverses the opera (Medea's motif and Medea's theme) represents the protagonist of the opera, namely Medea. Moreover, the name of Medea, as mentioned in Chapter One, Section 2, represents the myth and its transformation through the centuries. In Grillparzer, and accordingly in Reimann, Medea's name is in contiguity with the concepts of *barbaric* in opposition to *civilised*—the main dramaturgical motif of the opera. In Reimann's mind metonymic mappings are in operation between Medea (as a character) and the musical motif/theme: THE MAIN MUSICAL MOTIF/THEME STANDS FOR MEDEA. This conceptual metonymy works as a basis onto which the composer builds up the interaction of the three modes that license, in a consistent way, the evocation of metaphors for LIGHT and DARK from image schemas (such as the VERTICALITY and the NEAR-FAR image schema).

Where the research focuses on the receiver's perspective concerning the cooperation of the three modalities, this has implications on the way meaning is interpreted. The receiver is most probably unaware of the metonymic connection between Medea's motif/theme and Medea as a character (unless the receiver has read Reimann's interviews about his opera concerning specifically this motif/theme or has analysed the opera himself/herself). This motif/theme that opens the opera musically and through its constant repetition and variation in the music mode resonates

in the other modes too. The musical motif/theme mostly accompanies Medea's appearance on stage and occurs in important events of the plot. The receiver starts to create a connection between the musical motif/theme (music mode), Medea's appearance on stage (visual mode) and the reference to Medea (verbal mode). Therefore, the conceptual metonymy THE MAIN MUSICAL MOTIF/THEME STANDS FOR MEDEA is gradually evoked in the receiver's mind. Then, multimodal metaphors are evoked and music activates the scenario that is enriched by text and movements.

Thus, the aim of the research is to identify the extent of the contribution of the three modalities in the opera *Medea* by Aribert Reimann. It will be shown that the three modalities equally contribute in evoking the opposition of the civilised and the barbaric frame, the opera's main dramaturgical motif. The three modalities in the opera *Medea* develop dynamically and simultaneously confirming one another, and thus revealing that the cognitive mechanisms are consistent and that they are expressed linguistically, musically or through scenical directions. These three modalities define the opera in its totality.

From the structuralist point of view, Pfister (Pfister, 1988, 7-11) refers to the repertoire of codes and channels employed and activated by the dramatic texts. According to him (Pfister, 1988, 9), the five channels derive from the structure of human perception, that is the five senses. The codes that are used, based on semiotic relevance, are distinguished between verbal and non-verbal codes. The verbal codes are distinguished between linguistic and paralinguistic ones. Pfister refers to music, in the context of a drama, as a non-verbal acoustic code. According to Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, 3),

academic research in the humanities is beginning to shift from a focus on exclusively verbal text to discourses in which language is but one—albeit still highly important—communicative mode [...] Metaphor is not primarily a matter of language, but structures thought and action.<sup>25</sup>

As said before, for Lakoff (Lakoff, 1993, 210) “metaphor [is] not a figure of speech, but metaphor is a mode of thought”, and, following Forceville

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<sup>25</sup> According to Charles J. Forceville and Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, eds., *Multimodal metaphor* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009), 3, “This view was first systematically presented, at least in the English-speaking world, by two book-length studies: Andrew Ortony's (1979) edited volume *Metaphor and Thought*, which had its second life in a revised and expanded edition in 1993, and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's monograph *Metaphors We Live By* (1980; see also Lakoff and Johnson 2003).”

and Urios-Aparisi (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, 4), “it can occur in other modes than language alone.” According to Johnson (Johnson, 2007, 209), “the processes of embodied meaning in the arts are the very same ones that make linguistic meaning possible”. Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) do not focus on non-verbal metaphors but on multimodal metaphors, that is, on metaphors whose target and source are expressed in different modalities. Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, 4) define music as a distinguished mode and not merely a non-verbal acoustic code as does Pfister. Although the semiotic approach, rooted in the structuralism of the 1960s and 1970s, is the first discipline to conduct research into non-verbal communication, multimodal discourse offers new understandings on the musical and sonic contribution of multimodal metaphors concerning genres whose component is also music.

Pfister (Pfister, 1988, 18) wonders on the order of the codes, “whether the verbal and non-verbal codes are transmitted simultaneously, or whether one precedes the other.” In the cognitive framework, all modes acquire source or target characteristics depending on the genre and the type of meaning to be evoked. According to Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009, 5),

multimodal discourse is a vast territory, comprising a multitude of material carriers (paper, celluloid, videotape, bits and bytes, stone, cloth...), modes (written language, spoken language, visuals, sound, music, gesture, smell, touch), and genres (art, advertising, instruction manual; or at a more detailed level, say, “comedy,” “film noir,” “Western,” “science fiction”), many of these being further categorizable.

## **5. The issue of intermediality**

In this section, I offer a brief overview of the issue of intermediality, the concepts related to it and in which ways it is connected or differs with the issue of multimodality. I will attempt to present the advantages and the disadvantages of intermediality and thus argue that the issue of multimodality (following Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009, Górska 2014a and 2018, and Zbikowski 2009, among others) offers a strong framework for the study of opera.

First, some definitions of intermediality will be provided. According to Rajewsky (Rajewsky, 2010, 51-52),

‘intermediality’ refers to relations between media, to medial interactions and interferences. Hence, ‘intermediality’ can be said to serve first and foremost as a flexible generic term ‘that can be applied, in a broad sense,

to *any* phenomenon involving more than one medium' and thus to any phenomenon that—as indicated by the prefix *inter*—in some way take place *between* media. Accordingly, the crossing of media borders has been defined as a founding category of intermediality.<sup>26</sup>

According to Jensen (Jensen, 2016, 1),

as a term and as an explicit theoretical concept, intermediality has been most widely used with reference to multiple discourses and modalities of experience and representation, as examined in aesthetic and other humanistic traditions of communication research (Paech & Schröter, 2007). Crediting the British poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge with a use of “intermedium” as early as 1812, in 1965 Dick Higgins reintroduced “intermedia” to the field of art theory in order to account for the characteristics and practices of the Fluxus movement (Higgins, 1965/2001). In accordance with such an avant-garde orientation, the intermedia terminology has been employed to stress the innovative or transgressive potential of artworks that articulate their message in the interstices between two or more media forms.

Rajewsky mentions that intermediality has been the framework for media and literary studies, film studies, and art history. She, furthermore, adds the existence of terms like *multimediality*, *plurimediality*, *crossmediality*, *infra-mediality*, *media-convergence*, *media-integration*, *media-fusion*, and *hybridization* (Rajewsky, 2005, 44). She argues that intermedial analysis should apply to individual groups of phenomena, one of which is opera (Rajewsky, 2005, 50-51). Accordingly (Rajewsky, 2010, 55), the phenomenon of opera, just as other phenomena like film or theatre, involves media combination (*Medienkombination*).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> According to Rippl, Gabriele. “*Intermedialität: Text/Bild-Verhältnisse*”. In *Handbuch Literatur und Visuelle Kultur*, ed. by Claudia Benthien and Brigitte Weingart (Berlin, München, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 139, “In der Literatur-, Kultur- und Theaterwissenschaft, der Kunstgeschichte, der Bild- und Filmwissenschaft ist Intermedialität in den letzten Jahrzehnten zu einem zentralen theoretischen Konzept geworden. Allgemein gesprochen bezeichnet der Begriff ‚Intermedialität‘ Beziehungen zwischen verschiedenen Medien, beispielsweise die zwischen Texten und (statischen und beweglichen, analogen und digitalen) Bildern oder zwischen Texten und Musik. Der Erfolg der Intermedialitätsforschung hat mehrere Gründe, einer der wichtigsten ist die intermediale Qualität zahlreicher Artefakte und kultureller Phänomene der Gegenwartskultur, welche die Grenzen ihres eigenen Mediums thematisieren und auf vielfältige und innovative Weise überschreiten.”

<sup>27</sup> More discussion on various “types” of intermediality is provided, for instance, in Irina Rajewsky, “Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary

For Rajewsky (Rajewsky, 2005, 51-52),

The intermedial quality of this category is determined by the medial constellation constituting a given media product, which is to say the result or the very process of combining at least two conventionally distinct media or medial forms of articulation. These two media or medial forms of articulation are each present in their own materiality and contribute to the constitution and signification of the entire product in their own specific way. Thus, for this category, intermediality is a communicative-semiotic concept, based on the combination of at least two medial forms of articulation. The span of this category runs from a mere contiguity of two or more material manifestations of different media to a “genuine” integration, an integration which in its most pure form would privilege none of its constitutive elements.

If opera is characterised by the combination of at least two conventionally distinct media or medial forms, it should be specified what the different media are.<sup>28</sup> A central issue in the theory of intermediality is the difficulty in grasping and defining the concept of *medium* in the first place. Elleström (Elleström, 2010, 12) argues that “Medium is a term widely employed and it would be pointless to try to find a straightforward definition that covers all the various notions that lurk behind the different uses of the word.”<sup>29</sup> Elleström (2010 and 2020) tries to construct a model

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Perspective on Intermediality,” *Intermedialités*, No. 6 (2005): 43-64; and Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt, eds., *Intermediality in Theatre and Performance* (Amsterdam-New York: editions Rodopi, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> According to Ryan, Marie-Laure. “Narration in Various Media”. In *The living handbook of narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University, 2019), paragraph 3.1, “the opera, for instance, is intermedial through its use of gestures, language, music, and visual stage setting”.

<sup>29</sup> According to Rajewsky, Irina. “Border Talks: The Problematic Status of Media Borders in the Current Debate about Intermediality”. In *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, ed. Lars Elleström (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 54, “the question of how a medium should be defined and delimited from other media is of course always dependent on the historical and discursive contexts and the observing subject or system, taking into account technological change and relations between media within the overall media landscape at a given point in time.” According to Marie-Laure Ryan in Rippl, Gabriele. “*Intermedialität: Text/Bild-Verhältnisse*”. In *Literatur und Visuelle Kultur*, ed. by Claudia Benthien and Brigitte Weingart (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 142, “[They] are not hollow conduits for the transmission of messages but material supports of information whose materiality, precisely, ‘matters’ for the type of meanings that can be encoded” (Ryan 2004, 1-2).