

Lully and Weir's operas,

Armide

and

Armida

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Rinaldo and Armida, by Carl Ferdinand Sohn (1805-1867)

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Motivation for research study

I am fascinated by the connection between music and society, thus how music influences society and how society influences music. Whether intentionally or not, these concepts, music and society, are always interrelated. I am from South-Africa, and in a subject called *Music and Social Sciences* that I studied during the study period of my Bachelor degree in music, I did case studies on the music and social attributes of different indigenous tribes around the world. It was always amazing to see that the connections are so distinct.

One of the examples of these studies was about the Javanese people and their *Gamelan* music. In the Javanese culture time is defined by cycles. It includes not just one cycle, but a number of cycles that play off simultaneously. Examples of these cycles include the five-day week and five-week that are presented in a circular form. Similarly, in their *Gamelan* music the concept of melody is interdependent on the concept of form. The process in which the melody is formed is dependent on cyclic divisions (Spiller, 2004:85-86).

My bachelor degree thesis dealt with the Orpheus myth and how it was frequently, from the Renaissance to Baroque period, used for the topics of operas. This was also, fundamentally, a case study and I found many connections between the essence of the Orpheus myth and the essence of society, politics and philosophical thought of the coinciding periods. Subsequently, this study pricked my interest in mythology and initially, as a topic for my master thesis, I thought to elaborate on the use of the Orpheus myth or on the connections between mythology and music.

While I was doing more research on these topics I stumbled upon the title *Gerusalemme Liberata*. This titled called for further reading. This was an epic poem set in the time of the First Crusade and it included bloodshed, seduction, love, religion and magic. Over time many composers had used this poem as a topic for their operas. Most of them were written in the Baroque period...but one of these operas was by a still-living British composer who made a televised version in 2005 in a modern, topical context. This was then the process of how my research study started.

My motivation for conducting this research study was to: i) explore the musico-historical contexts of two different composers, Jean-Baptiste Lully and Judith Weir, while composing their eponymous operas, *Armide* and *Armida*, ii) to see what subsequent connections there are between their interpretations and their contexts, and iii) to discover what consequences there would be for me as a performer after I am enriched with this new information.

Jerrold Levinson, a renowned Professor of Philosophy with a particular interest in the aesthetics of music and meaning in art, refers in his book, *Music, Art and Metaphysics*, to a concept called the “musico-historical context” of a work of art:

The reason for this is that certain attributes of musical works are dependent on more than the sound structures contained. In particular, the aesthetic and artistic attributes of a piece of music are partly a function of, and must be gauged with reference to, the total musico-historical context in which the composer is situated while composing the piece. Since the musico-historical contexts of composing individuals are invariably different, then even if their works are identical in sound structure, they will differ widely in aesthetic and artistic attributes.

(Levinson, 2011:68-69)

Levinson says earlier in the same text that the total musico-historical context of a certain composer at a certain time consists of the cultural, political and social history preceding the work of art, the development of music up to that certain time, the dominant musical styles at that time, the musical activity of the composer’s contemporaries at that time, and the composer’s own style and influences at that time.

I believe that it is important for an artist to know and understand the history and background surrounding the composition of an artwork and that this will influence the performance of it dramatically. I am not saying that the best performance would then be the one that is more authentic, but that, through this new knowledge, the artist

has more resources to work from for his/her own interpretation and thus performance.

Central concepts

Opera

According to The Harvard Dictionary of Music (Randel, 2003:584), opera is a drama in which the actors sing and are accompanied by instruments on a stage, represented with dramatic aspects. These dramatic aspects include décor, costumes, singing and drama. Because the libretti are primarily sung, it can be distinguished from dramatic works where the music is incidental or additional to the drama.

Context

The context can be seen as the circumstances which form the background to an event or idea, wherein the event or idea can be fully understood (Pearsal, 2002:307).

French Baroque

The French Baroque is a term that is used to describe a European style, music style or period that extended approximately from 1600 to 1750. New terminologies like basso continuo, monody and recitative came into use in this period. The music style is characterised by unprepared dissonances, a big focus on the solo voice or instrument, and idiomatic performance. French Baroque music tends to be more homophonic and periodic, with cadence points that are defined through clear vocal endings, metric articulations of harmony (the *plié* and *élevé* which are inherent in dance music – ballet) and jumps in the bass voice. The opera genre also emerged in this period. The special characteristics of French Baroque music was formed through the core of dance and the role of the arts in an absolute monarchy. This music articulates the personality and policy of King Louis XIV who changed the culture of Europe during his seven decade rule (Palisca, 2001:749; Grout & Palisca, 2006:288, 354; Christensen, 2004:114).

Chapter 1: Introduction, research question and objectives

Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) was an Italian poet and dramatist of the Renaissance period. The very first version of his most famous epic poem, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, was completed in 1575. The historical subject of Tasso's epic poem is the First Crusade; the 11th century campaign of Godfrey of Boulogne (c.1060-1100) to free Jerusalem of pagan control. The thematic subject, though, is the spiritual progress of Christian man in his quest to the other Jerusalem (Bondanella, 1984:10; Fichter, 1978:265).

Godfrey's knights goes after the smaller, seductive goals of their own selfishness where their progress lacks moral leadership. The story of Rinaldo and Armida which features in *Gerusalemme Liberata*, is an example of this. Armida, a pagan princess and sorceress, uses her magic powers to kidnap Rinaldo, a Christian knight, to bring him to her secret garden and seduce him. However, she falls in love with him. He is later able to break away from her magic through the help of his fellow knights. Armida, on the other hand, is furious and destroys her magic garden (Bondanella, 1984:10; Fichter, 1978:265).

Tasso's poem *Gerusalemme Liberata*, suggests a combination of literary genres that are in many ways opposites, namely the classical epic and knightly romance. Tasso wrote a selection of books in which he clarifies his poetry: *Discorsi del poema eroico*¹ (1594). In these books he defines epic as a work of great formal integrity with a high moral goal. Romance on the other side is, according to Tasso, an incoherent, popular narrative where the biggest goal is to provide pleasure, as opposed to teaching people morality. In a poem where order is meant as a manifestation of moral values, the disorder of romance becomes a metaphor for spiritual deprivation, selfishness and heresy. Images of imprisonment and isolation that are displayed in the romance genre, portray the hero's narcissism or his incapability to look away from himself in a poem that plays to the background of the history of humanity (Fichter, 1978:265).

¹ It is also a theoretic arrangement of antique theories about poetry.

From another viewpoint romance portrays the incapability of man to fulfil his epic (Christian) quest, in other words, his incapability to go far enough in search of truth. The result of the romance is thus essentially incoherent with that of the epic, where the outcome is the fulfilment of the quest (Fichter, 1978:265).

According to Margaret Ferguson², (Stephans, 1991:217-218) Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* can be seen as a comment on the Contra Reformation. The Contra Reformation, also known as the Catholic Reformation, was an epoch of Catholic restoration that lasted from 1545-1648. After 1521 agreement between the Protestant followers of Martin Luther and the Catholic Church became difficult. Consequently, a war emerged between these two parties that lasted until the end of the Thirty Years' War. The Catholic Reformation was brought upon by the large moral upsurge that was initiated by Protestantism. Furthermore, the Protestants aspired to reform the Catholics. Thus, throughout the 15th century an increasing number of people called upon the renewal of Christian life and this movement effected in a revival of mysticism and asceticism³. In 1545 the Council of Trent was initiated by Paul III where new rules were set about to standardise worship and the law of the church, as well as papal rule and religious orders (Lange, 1947:227-228).

In his epic poem Tasso acts as a spokesperson for the ideology of the Contra Reformation in the sense that it doesn't only represent the fight between the Christians and Pagans, but also the fight between the Catholics and Protestants (Fichter, 1978:265,272-273; Carlton, 2004:144; Hayes, 1982:408-409; Buch, 2008:6).

The poem of Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, served as inspiration for the libretti of about 40 operas. Composers like Handel (1685-1759), Vivaldi (1678-1741), Salieri (1750-1825), Gluck (1714-1787), Haydn (1732-1809), Rossini (1792-1868) and Dvorak (1841-1904) are of the well-known composers that used his poem as

² She is a renowned Professor of English and has a large interest in Renaissance literature, literacy studies and feminist theory. Among her publications is the renowned book, *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defences of Poetry*.

³ It is a doctrine stating that through the elimination of worldly pleasures, man can achieve a great spiritual or intellectual well-being.

inspiration for their operas. The earliest opera that is based on the poem of Tasso was composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) in 1686, and the latest was composed by Judith Weir (1954-) in 2005.

Jean-Baptiste Lully was in the service of Louis XIV and he was also his favourite court musician. Opera was a new addition to French music in the late seventeenth century. It was an object of both magic and distaste. At the beginning of 1672 Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) and the librettist, Philippe Quinault (1635-1688), wrote the first French operas as *tragédies en musique* with the support of the king. Spectators were carried away, but the theorists were sceptical. They thought that the seductiveness of music could add nothing of importance to the intellectual power of the existing dramatic French tragedy (Grout & Palisca, 2006:359; Thomas, 1997:168).

For a lot of people, opera was but another example of the destructive Italian influence. In France where the performance of music frequently had political overtones⁴, Lully carefully attempted to distinguish the *tragédies en musique* from the Italian influence. He generated a musical score that was almost a continuing line of *air* and *recit* and thus detached himself from the subtle interchange between *aria* and *recitative* that defined Italian opera. Consequently, he made the voice a continuing entity. Thus, by reducing the difference between *air* and *recit*, there was a bigger focus on the development of a character, than the virtuosity of the voice, as was common in Italian opera (Thomas, 1997:168).

The libretti of Quinault combined themes of antique mythology and knightly tales with repeating *divertissements*, long interludes of dance and choir singing. On an intellectual level he mixed episodes of adventure and romance with the flattery of the king, exaltation of the king and moral reflection. His libretti were openly and secretly propagandistic – in line with Louis's use of the arts (Grout & Palisca, 2006:359; Thomas, 1997:168).

⁴ The music served as propaganda for the power of the king and thus displayed French identity.

The *tragédie en musique* was the most important form of French opera in the time from Lully to Rameau (1673–1764). It can be distinguished from other genres of opera, like the *pastorale-héroïque*, in its five-act-structure and a bigger, dramatic intensity and seriousness in the music. Later in the eighteenth century the *tragédie en musique* greatly influenced the opera reformations of Jommeli (1714–1774), Traetta (1727–1779) and Gluck (Sadler, 2001:682).

According to Claude-François Menestrier (1631-1705), French professor of heraldry and member of the Jesuit society⁵, the overture of these operas served three different functions: 1) to disclose the theme of an opera, 2) to credit and applause the attending King, and 3) to make a reference to topical political events in an allegorical display (Powell, 2000:264).

The *merveilleux* was an important aspect of the *tragédies en musique* and can be directly translated as “miraculous”. According to Downing A. Thomas⁶ it was traditionally associated with the poetic genres that included epic, dramatic and eulogy⁷. The *merveilleux* refers to supernatural or godly powers, creatures or events. However, there exists a paradox: tragedies could exist without the supernatural where opera was dependent on it. Thus, the *tragédies en musique* made the *merveilleux* its fundamental ingredient and captured the focus and attention of the audience (Thomas, 1997:172).

Jean-Baptiste Lully composed *Armide* in 1686 in cooperation with the librettist, Philippe Quinault. The subject of *Armide* fits perfectly into the genre of opera and the requirements of the *merveilleux*. The moral message that is portrayed in this opera is similar to the original message that Tasso meant with his poem, also alluding to the conflict between two religious groups. It also displays a large reflection of the conflicting forces in the Baroque period: classical Church beliefs and self-expression⁸. Besides the moral message, the operas were also used as propaganda

⁵ He is also known for his book: *Des représentations en musique anciennes et modernes*.

⁶ He is the International Programs Professor at the University of Iowa. He gives courses in French language, literature, eighteenth century studies and Enlightenment fiction. His publications focus largely on French music and opera in 1600-1800 France.

⁷ A text or speech that applauds someone or something highly, usually someone that had just died.

⁸ This will be explained in the third chapter.

for the king, Louis XIV. The overtures always served as a tribute to the king (Duggan, 2004:311-312; Grout & Palisca, 2006:359; Thomas, 1997:172; Fichter, 1978:265).

Although the story of Armida was more popularly used in the Baroque era, it was also used by composers in the Classical, Romantic and Modern eras⁹. In 2005 Judith Weir (1954), a British composer, composed the opera (she was also the librettist), *Armida*, that is based on the same poem of Tasso for television. She, however, actualised it in a different milieu. In her milieu, Armida is a television news reporter and Rinaldo a soldier. They place their differences aside during a nameless contemporary desert war and fall in love (Jeffries, 2005).

This opera was composed during the Iraq-war and Weir says that she wrote about all the wars that has taken place in the years that she have lived, not only specifically the Iraq-war. The Iraq-war did, however, challenge the conventional wisdom of international politics, strategy, war and warfare in many aspects. The reason why Weir chose television as the medium of her opera was to look at how the television comments on wars. Another contextual change is the use of two black singers in the primary roles, and a half-classical, half-jazz ensemble for the accompaniment of the opera. Attention is thus given to many political and transcultural aspects (Jeffries, 2005; Angstrom, 2005:1).

Postmodern opera is characterized by the integration of minimalism and atonality within the melody. It is also characterized by the higher aspirations of pre-classical, quasi-baroque and pseudo-liturgical music with cosmic celebrations¹⁰ of scientific imagery, world views and alterations. The postmodern character of music is a reaction to the reappearance of the religious in the absence of faith (Babich, 2004:258).

Thus, Lully and Weir based their operas that come from the context of the Baroque era and the Postmodern era, both on the theme of “Rinaldo and Armida” from

⁹ For example: Salieri, Dvorak and Rossini.

¹⁰ Cosmic celebrations have to do with nature and frequently have religious origins. The creation of humankind on earth can be classified as a cosmic celebration.

Tasso's poem, *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Because of the different eras and backgrounds wherein the operas were composed, there are accordingly differences in the way each composer interpreted the story.

Research question

The question that should be asked, is then: How has the different contexts in which the composers, Lully and Weir, lived/lives, influenced the way in which they interpreted Tasso's poem and thus composed their operas, *Armide* and *Armida*, and what consequences will there be for the performer?

Sub-questions

- What is the story of Armida in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* and what significance did it have in the time it was written?
- What was the contextual background in which Lully composed his *Armide*?
- How was the performance practice of opera in Lully's time?
- How does Lully treat Tasso's story and what significance did it have in his time?
- What was the contextual background in which Weir composed her *Armida*?
- How is the performance practice of opera in Weir's time?
- How does Weir treat Tasso's story and what significance does it have in her time?
- What connections are there between Lully and Weir's treatment of Tasso's story and their coinciding contexts?
- What consequences are there for the performer?

General objective

The general objective of this thesis is to explain and analyse how the different contexts in which the composers, Lully and Weir, composed their operas, *Armide* and *Armida*, influenced the way in which they interpreted Tasso's poem, and to discover what consequences there are for the performer.

Boundaries of study field

When referring to contextual background in my central theoretical questions and – aims, I will focus on the following contextual aspects:

- Central historical events
- Religious aspects
- Social and political aspects
- Philosophical and ideological aspects
- View on men and woman in the specific time
- The performance practice of opera

All of these aspects are interrelated and will be explained simultaneously.

Method of study

I have given a **literature** overview of the tale of Rinaldo and Armida in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. A study has been made of the story of *Armida* in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* to show the significance it had in the time in which it was written. Subsequently, I have explained the context surrounding the composition of Lully's *Armide*, his interpretation of the original story and the significance it had in its time. Similarly, I have explained the contextual background of Weir's *Armida*, her interpretation and the significance it has in her time.

Thus, a **comparison** has been made between the contextual background in which both Lully and Weir's operas were written and their eponymous interpretations of *Gerusalemme Liberata*. This was to see whether there is a **correlation** between their contexts and their interpretations. Furthermore, a study has been made to see what consequences there are for the musical performer, because of this correlation, and, consequently, how this performer can create something **new** after being enriched with this **correlation**. The research methods that have been used are **literary study**, **correlational research** and partly **creative research**.

A **literature study** or **literature review** is a critical outline and evaluation of the variety of prevailing resources that alludes to the information and understanding in a certain field. Commonly, its purpose is to pinpoint the research theme, to create the context or setting, and to offer new understandings into previous literature (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006:123).

A **correlational research designs** refers to research where the main purpose is to find and define interrelations between two or more entities. In a correlational design the hypothesis is that there is an assumed interrelation between two entities (Stangor, 2004:44-45).

Creative research alludes to the advance of new models, new measures and new discoveries. Creative research consists of both practical and theoretical research. Practical creative research has to do with the design of physical objects and the advance of real-life measures. Theoretical creative research alludes to the creation or detection of new methods or theorems (Goddard & Melville, 2007:8-9).

Chapter 2: Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*

ARGUMENT.

**THE spacious palace of th' enchanting Dame
The warriors tread, where lost Rinaldo lies;
And speed so well, that, full of wrath and shame,
He bursts his bonds, and with them quickly flies:
She, to retain her loved deserter, tries
All powers of language and of tears—in vain,—
He parts; t' avenge her wrongs, on Dis she cries,
Destroys her palace, and, in high disdain,
Flies through the stormy skies in her aerial wain.**

(Wiffen, 1868:458)

This is part of a translation of *Gerusalemme Liberata* by Jeremiah Holmes Wiffen (1792-1836). Wiffen was raised as a Quaker¹¹ and obtained his education from the poet William Howitt (1792-1879) at the Friends' academy at Ackworth, Yorkshire. Afterwards he reached the position of schoolmaster when he was fourteen years old. In 1821, Wiffen translated *Gerusalemme Liberata* in English Spenserian¹² verse (Radcliffe & Tech, n.d.).

A more notable translator of *Gerusalemme Liberata* was Edward Fairfax (c.1580-1635) and this translation appeared in 1600. Fairfax was the second son of Sir Thomas Fairfax of Denton, Yorkshire. His whole family was soldiers, but Fairfax enjoyed his interest in letters at home. He had a curiosity for religious dispute and

¹¹ A member of the Religious Society of Friends. It was a Christian movement created by George Fox around 1650 and it was dedicated to diplomatic principles.

¹² A Spenserian verse or stanza is a fixed verse form that was invented by Edmund Spenser for his epic poem *The Faerie Queene*. Each stanza has 9 lines in total. The rhyme framework for these lines is ababbcbcc.

witchcraft, and it has been said about him: “Prevailing poet, whose undoubting mind believed the magic wonders which it sung.” (Campbell, 1819:58).

I am well aware that although these are translations, they are also subjectively interpreted to some extent and I will take this into consideration.

2.1. *Gerusalemme Liberata* and the Contra Reformation

Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575) is a strophic and epic poem that originates from the period in which the Contra Reformation took place. Tasso restricted religion to external convoys, preaching and acts of repentance. In *Gerusalemme Liberata* though, Tasso takes a step further. The conflicts in his poem articulate the battles of the Turks, and the conflicts between the Roman Catholic and Protestants, thus referring to religious wars. For Tasso the crusades of the Middle Ages served as a parallel to the Contra Reformation. Thus Tasso’s poem is more theological than Ariosto’s romantic epic, *Orlando Furioso*¹³ (Buch, 2008:6).

Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533) was a contemporary of Tasso and also an Italian poet. In Ariosto’s epic there is also a battle between the Christians and Saracens and a Christian soldier who falls in love with a pagan princess, but it doesn’t allude to the Contra Reformation. Unlike Tasso’s poem, it is also not concerned with historical and geographical accuracies. In *Orlando Furioso* the heroes tries to distinguish falsehood and illusion from (theological) truth (Slavitt, 2009; Buch, 2008:6).

The events of the First Crusade, as they are described by Tasso in terms of the Contra Reformation, can be seen as the reunification of the Church. The Christians that are in battle with the Pagans in the Holy Land can be seen as the *ecclesia militans*¹⁴ that are in battle with the heretics. Thus Tasso’s epic follows the classical pattern of colonial discourse or orientalism: the creation of a unique identity and the victory over internal conflicts and differences through the construction of a violent Other. This notion was an important part of the idea of crusades that were in their

¹³ *Orlando Furioso* also inspired a number of operas, which are not mentioned here.

¹⁴ *Ecclesia Militans* refers, in terms of the Catholic theology, to the Christians that stay on earth. It could also refer to the Christian militia that labours against sin, the devil and “...every spirit that rules over this sinful world, against every evil spirit in the sky.” (Ephesians 6:12)

origin directed towards the internal and external enemies of the church. Through the historical narrative of the liberation of Jerusalem, Tasso converts the battle of the Roman Catholic Church against the apostates into a battle against the pagans (Froemmer, 2010:124).

2.2. The central events of *Gerusalemme Liberata*

The poem is set in the time of the First Crusade (1096-1099) as Roman Catholic Christians tried to free Christ's grave from the Islamic rule. The First Crusade stands as one of the most outstanding events in the history of Europe. Ten thousands of people went on an expedition spanning 3000 km towards the Holy Land, in order to take back Jerusalem from Islam in the name of Christ. In spite of extreme exhaustion, disease and starvation, the soldiers showed their devotion and dedication towards their religion, but also their immense brutality (Asbridge, 2004:ix).

Pope Urban II delivered a stirring speech to a group of people outside the city, Clermont, in southern France on the last Tuesday of November 1095. According to him, Christians living in the east were enduring immense suffering and abuse because of their *savage* Muslim rulers. The core of Christian belief, Jerusalem, similarly lay in the hands of the Islam. Pope Urban II summoned Catholic Europe to revolt and revenge their enemies in the form of a holy war, in order to purify the partakers of their sin. This is how the First Crusade began (Asbridge, 2004:2).

Tasso interwove his epic with exciting, fictional elements. Ismeno, a fallen Christian and apostate, becomes a sorcerer. He starts working for the Saracens and it seems that he has a treaty with the devil as well. His duties consist of summoning and ordaining spirits. Ismeno steals the statue of the Holy Virgin and puts it into a mosque to assure the Muslim status of Jerusalem. In the midst of these events and with many battles in progress, Satan sends his demons to handicap the Christian troops (Frangos, 2008:136; Buch, 2008:6).

One of these demons goes to the Syrian sorcerer and ruler of Damascus, Idrate, and suggests that he sends his beautiful cousin, Armida, to seduce the knights with

her magic powers. Idraote is a user of dark magic and represented as Pluto's¹⁵ priest. Armida is a Syrian enchantress with as much feminine art as magic art. Armida comes to a group of Christian soldiers with the sole purpose of taking them away from their control base and seducing them to her prison. Although her uncle, Idraote, has agreed that she has outshined him in demonic arts, she relies almost solely on her female wiles. As a matter of fact, she believes that she will achieve more with her flirting and beauty, than with her magic arts. Armida is also a good actress and aspires to provoke pity and attraction by making up a false story which makes her the *damsel in distress*. She spins a miserable account of her banishment and an unwanted and ugly spouse, and asks for the aid of the soldiers (Gariolo, 2005:79; Cavallo, 1999:88; Esolen, 2000).

The Syrian enchantress succeeds to seduce the knights that don't belong to a certain feudal lord and keeps them captive in her castle. Ismeno creates a magic forest that is inhabited by screeching devils. Nobody except Rinaldo can penetrate the forest without going into a horrible state of fear. Rinaldo is one of the bravest knights of the Christian army and the victory of the crusade depends on his participation (Buch, 2008:6; Cavallo, 1999:87).

*Sorge non lunge a le cristiane tende
Tra solitarie valli alta foresta,
Foltissima di piante antiche, orrende,
Che spargon d'ogni intorno ombra funesta.
Qui ne l'ora che '1 sol piu chiaro splende,
E luce incerta e scolorita e mesta,
Quale in nubilo ciel dubbia si vede,
Se '1 di a la notte, o s'ella a lui succeed*

*From Godfrey's camp a grove a little way,
Amid the valleys deep, grows out of sight,*

¹⁵ Pluto was the god of the underworld according to classical Greek mythology. In contemporary times he would be considered as the devil.

*Thick with old trees, whose horrid arms display
An ugly shade, like everlasting night:
There, when the sun spreads forth his clearest ray,
Dim, thick, uncertain, gloomy seems the light;
As when, in ev'ning, day and darkness strive
Which should his foe from our horizon drive* (Fichter, 1978:266)

Fairfax's translation of this part of the poem creates, with reference to the "everlasting night", an explicit metaphor in Tasso's idea of romance. The environment of the romantic is cut off from the visual and spiritually clear light of the sun. The light that does exist there is the internally reflected light of the enchantress, Armida: "her burning face" or the "burning thoughts". Her smile is like sunlight, but it is a false parallel (Fichter, 1978:266).

Armida has set a trap for Rinaldo by putting him to sleep with a beautiful song at the side of the Orontes River. She approaches the sleeping Rinaldo in an attempt to kill him, but she is touched by his beauty and desire overwhelms her. At the beginning of the poem Tasso describes Rinaldo as Mars¹⁶ when he has his helmet on and as Eros¹⁷ when he takes it off. He thus represents two overwhelming aspects of masculinity – the fighter that embodies strength and the lover that embodies beauty and desire (Cochrane, 1995:305; Hyde & Ledbury, 2006:168-169).

Armida removes Rinaldo to a far-off place called the *Fortunate Isles*. Rinaldo becomes her love-slave and Armida, his idol. Without his arms and weapons, Rinaldo loses his identity and becomes wholly enslaved by Armida's victorious beauty. Yet, this overwhelming passion is largely narcissistic, because each of them only love the other as his or her own reflection – Armida looks at herself through a crystal glass and Rinaldo looks at his reflection in Armida's eyes. He glories in his service and she glories in her empire. Armida's biggest threat is not her sexuality, *per se*, but that she becomes Rinaldo's idol. Rinaldo's duty towards Goffredo also

¹⁶ In Roman mythology he is the god of war.

¹⁷ In Greek mythology he was the god of love.

represents his duty to God, and thus by abandoning Goffredo, he is also abandoning his duty towards God (Yavneh, 1995:147).

Ascalona is a wise Christian sorcerer who follows orders directly from the Christian God. He informs the Christian knights, Carlo and Ubaldo, about Rinaldo's location – he is being held captive at Armida's garden of pleasure. Carlo and Ubaldo go on a journey to rescue him. They have to pass through a number of traps in Armida's garden before they reach Rinaldo. Before Rinaldo leaves with them, he makes a promise to Armida:

*Fra le care memorie ed onorate,
mi sarai ne le gioie e ne gli affanni,
Saró tuo cavalier, quanto concede
La guerra d'Asie e con l'onor la fede (16.54).*

(In joy and in sorrow you will be among my dear and cherished memories; I shall be your knight, as far as the war with Asia permits, and fealty with honour.) (Cavallo, 1999:94; Cavallo, 2004:194-195; Zatti, 2006:109).

After Rinaldo leaves, Armida destroys her magic garden and flies away on a chariot. Carlo and Ubaldo lead Rinaldo to an indefinable location where a sword and suit of armour is waiting for him. By means of a magic shield, his own family and history is shown to him. The pride of his family awakens his military drives and stirs his yearning to match the bravery of his ancestors. He arms himself with sudden haste and returns to the battle (Cavallo, 1999:93).

After the deliverance of Jerusalem, Rinaldo becomes the new leader of the knights mission and remembers his promise to Armida. He returns to her just before she commits suicide and as she sees him she faints and falls into his arms. This scene is in contrast with the scene in which they first met, where Armida was eyeing the sleeping Rinaldo. The poem ends with Armida converting to Christianity. Her conversion is symbolic of a pledge and sacrifice that she makes to her lover (Buch, 2008:6; Cavallo, 1999:94).

2.3. The danger of beauty in Renaissance arts

The potential danger of beauty was a general theme in Renaissance literature and art, especially in the time of the Contra Reformation. This idea had its roots in the Jewish and Christian traditions, with stories of seductresses like Eve and Delilah that brought men to ruin. In Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* Armida is being punished for her destructive sexuality at her act of conversion to Christianity (Siena, 2005:222, 223).

Beautiful seductresses were generic in appearance – all of them had the same combination of long, golden hair, black eyes and an ivory skin, that are described in Renaissance treatises. An ideal beautiful woman could never be found in nature; she had to be created from a lot of different woman, each of them having some perfect part or feature. The idea that extreme or perfect beauty rarely existed in nature and thus was almost described as a deformity, explains the sixteenth century parallel between perfect beauty and immoral deeds (Siena, 2005:222, 223).

Renaissance aesthetics accentuated the importance of balance, harmony and moderation. The Italian humanist and poet, Firenzuola (1493- c.1545), describes ideal feminine beauty as 'organised congruence' that is related to the existence of harmony through the combination, creation and union of different parts. Beauty and purity was thus interrelated elements in Renaissance thought (Siena, 2005:222, 223).

Extreme beauty could disturb the fragile balance between symmetry and proportion. Beauty was a sign of God's favour, but extreme beauty had parallels with immorality, according to the Italian humanist and scientist, Giambattista della Porta¹⁸ (c.1535-1615). Extremes of beauty were coherent with extremes of purity and an extreme proportion of immorality, because nature gave gifts in proportion. An extremely beautiful male could be selfish and lead his army on ill-advised missions. Extremely

¹⁸ He is famous for his book, *Magiae Naturalis* (Natural Magic), in which he covers the following topics: occult philosophy, astrology, alchemy, mathematics, meteorology and natural philosophy. He was known as the "professor of secrets".

beautiful females, on the other side, all suffered from the same immoral quality: sexual excess (Siena, 2005:222).

2.4. The combination of epic and romance

According to Tasso love is just as heroic a theme as war¹⁹. He defended this statement through writings of Aristotle and Plato. Besides the evidence in these writings of Aristotle and Plato, Tasso's idea about love and war also emerges in *Gerusalemme Liberata*. On a poetic level the fight (war) is articulated through the interplay between epic and romance, the two competing narratives in Renaissance poetics. Tasso tried to unify these models conferring with his poetical treatises in *Discorsi*. The conflict of the Western project of the crusade, with the chaotic, but brilliant world of the East, is represented in the merging of the anarchic, a-theological structures of romance with the linear theme of the epic (Cavallo, 1999:106; Froemmer, 2010:124).

This unification of epic and romance is simultaneously also a unification of man and woman which is represented through the union of the brave Christian knight, Rinaldo, with the pagan sorceress, Armida. Armida's seduction of Rinaldo in her magic garden represents the ideological and literary project of the crusade. Armida's appearance is like the typical Eastern heroines. Her seduction is much more dangerous than the military weapons of the east. Through the use of female magic Armida not only weakens the Christian camp by taking its bravest knight, her romance also disrupts the unity and core of the crusade where the narrative goal is the conquest of Jerusalem (Froemmer, 2010:124-125).

The world of romance is temporarily indefinable, as well as visually vague – timeless in a certain sense, but not in an eschatological²⁰ sense. Romance is an endless continuum of flight, pursuit and traps – war orders where goal and direction are withdrawn. Tasso withstands in his *Discorsi* the idea to accept romance as a new, separate genre. He chooses rather to pull romance into the shadow of the epic

¹⁹ Relationship between epic and romance.

²⁰ A division of theology that has to do with the end of the world or of humankind. It also has to do with doctrines about the ultimate or final things, like death, the fate of humankind, the second coming or the last judgement.

genre. Romance, in reality, is defined as an integral part of the Christian epic (Fichter, 1978:266-267).

Rinaldo is distinguished from other Christian fighters through the depth of his involvement in the magic of romance, as well as the degree to which he triumphs over it. Both extremes are included in the Christian journey of the Christian hero: he needs to lose himself in order to find himself. In the end the impulse of romance, its desire and emotions of wonder, is absorbed by Christianity. In Tasso's poem the distinctive poles of the experience of romance – enchantment and release, deception and discovery, loss and recovery, exile and return – is explained through a rhythm of greater scope, the progress of the Fall towards Salvation (Fichter, 1978:266-267).

The powerful love story of Rinaldo and Armida is interwoven with the thread of the First Crusade and well integrated into Tasso's epic. Different from his epic predecessors, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, ends with the integration of a female Eastern Other in the Christian community, while political narratives tend to avoid this in the process to keep a clear identity (Froemmer, 2010:125).

2.5. The military progress of the crusaders

Gerusalemme Liberata places both the poetical and moral emphasis on the military progress of the crusaders. The military progress provides the dominant narrative form of the poem – this form was created by Tasso according to the rules of Aristotle's *Poetics* where the poem forms a unity; consisting of a beginning, middle and end. The military progress is also the primary moral message of the poem. The progression towards Jerusalem is also the progression towards the New Jerusalem (Mukherji & Lyne, 2007:33).

2.6. The equalisation of God and poet

At the beginning of the fifteenth century Neo-Platonists, Renaissance poets and critics often defended poetry by making people conscious of the similarities between God's creation of the world and process in which poets create or write poems. Tasso displays this Neo-platonic idea in his *Discorsi*: the truly magnificent poet "is called godly for no other reason than that when he displays the great Creator in his works, he also shares in his godliness" (Benfell, 1999:173-174).

Throughout *Gerusalemme Liberata* Tasso aspires to level God and poet in a different way and for another goal than what is displayed in the Neo-platonic ideas. Rather than taking on a godly status as creator of an alternative reality, Tasso tries to confuse his identity as creator of the epic, with that of the character of God in the poem. Tasso executes, in other words, a poem that tells about how God 'executed' the events of the First Crusade. Tasso produces a deliberate confusion about who actually 'executes' or 'writes' the events in this epic (Benfell, 1999:173-174).

2.7. Summary

Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* was written in the time of the Contra Reformation and articulates the religious wars that were linked to that. It also is related to the reunification of the church. The church identities sorted out their conflicts through the creation of a violent Other.

The character of Armida in Tasso's epic poem represents darkness, danger, an excess of beauty and sexuality, and sinfulness. Rinaldo is described as the image of Mars and Eros, which shows that he has extremely good looks too, and he represents order, duty (to God), honour and virtue. This links to the idea of excessive beauty that was considered dangerous in the Renaissance and went hand in hand with immoral deeds. Renaissance aesthetics accentuated the importance of balance, harmony and moderation.

Tasso joins two conflicting genres in his poem: epic and romance. In the poem the two genres are articulated through the battle between east and west, as well as the love affair between Armida and Rinaldo.

The central part in the poem is the progression of the crusaders. This is also the primal moral of the poem. It articulates the progression towards the New Jerusalem, in other words, life eternal in heaven.

At the beginning of the 15th century poets defended their poetry by making people conscious of the similarities between God's creation of the world and the process in which poets create or write poems. Tasso levelled himself, as the poet, to God in a

different way – he created confusion between the character of God in the poem and himself, as the author of the poem.

Chapter 3: Lully's *Armide*

It is difficult to overrate the importance of the theme of Rinaldo and Armide in the 17th and 18th century French culture. The story was loved in the court, the *ruelles*²¹ and on the stage: it was displayed in paintings, book illustrations and operas (Hyde & Ledbury, 2006:168).

3.1. Transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque period

Renaissance Humanism came in conflict with its opposition, the established Christian church. The Catholic Church agreed that the truth about humankind, in relationship with God and the universe, was revealed and organized in the Bible and the Christian doctrines, although some allowances were made to the idea that the truth could have been partly expressed by the philosophers of Antique Greece and Rome (Drummond, 1980:138).

Renaissance Humanism, on the other side, saw the writings of the Classical past less as a reinforcement of the Orthodox Christian religion. They saw it rather as a sequence of examples about how mankind explained things to himself through rational investigation and discussion. Accordingly the idea grew that the results of rational investigation, because it could be 'proved', should be true, even if it doesn't correspond with the orthodox faith (Drummond, 1980:138).

These concepts went hand in hand with the ideas of the French philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650). Descartes had his education at a Jesuit academy but found that the old-fashioned theological thinking was inadequate for him. He began to explore science and mathematics for a method on how to separate truth from falsehood. His key objective in this was to create measures for defining what is real. The first objective in his search for truth, was to let go of all that could not be resolutely proven to be true. Consequently it made him doubt all of his previously firm beliefs. By letting go of all these former beliefs, he came to one unquestionable truth: he existed. The fact that he doubted his former beliefs proved that he was a

²¹ A private company or meeting at a private house.

reflective being. To quote his famous words: “I think, therefore I am” (Cunningham & Reich, 2010:385).

He took this objective to exploring the character of physical objects. Guided by the thought that if he can perceive something clearly it must exist, he also realized that humans can be wrong about an object from the way they perceived it. For example, when we look at the sun, we perceive it as a small circle, where in reality it is much larger than that. Human perspective of an existing object can thus be faulty.

Descartes carried this example of the sun towards the existence of God. Descartes made the deduction that if humans, as sceptical and faulty beings, can consider the idea of a perfect God, then that God must exist. Thus, at the core of Cartesian philosophy lay the idea that a perfect entity (not necessarily the God of the Old- and New Testament) had made a world infused with perfect, scientific values (Cunningham & Reich, 2010:385).

In the field of astronomy the church accepted the Ptolemaic idea that the Earth is at the centre of the universe. In 1543 Copernicus revealed the theory that the Earth and its sister planets actually rotates around the sun. This theory didn't only challenge the church's idea about the universe, it also attacked the idea that humankind, as God's special creation, was the centre of the universe. This issue emerged again in 1633. Galileo Galilei succeeded to prove, through research with a new telescope, that Copernicus's theory was correct, and in 1632 he published his *Dialogue on the Great World Systems*. Galileo still had to appear in court, though. The court created a false document wherein it was stated that Galileo took it onto himself in 1616 not to support Copernicus's ideas (Drummond, 1980:138).

Galileo's trials sums up the dilemma behind the approaches towards life and art in the Baroque period. It is a dilemma between order and self-expression. The Renaissance rediscovered these two ideas in the art and philosophy of Antique Greece and developed them into aesthetic and scientific principles. The idea of order is coherent with the Christian idea of a planned universe: God's plan could be detected in everything. When humans imitated the godly in artworks 'to create beauty', it was important for them to aspire for a clear, definite and ordered form. The idea of self-expression originates from the way in which Greek scientists and

philosophers explained things to themselves and from the corresponding accent in Greek politics, history and art on the freedom of the individual. In an aesthetic manner it became an approach that emphasizes the individual, human aspects of an artwork (Drummond, 1980:138-139).

Germain Bazin²² (Drummond, 1980:140) suggests that Baroque art, like the rhetoric, was an art of conviction. While Renaissance art strived towards absolute truth (that could be observed objectively), the Baroque artist represented the truth subjectively, which encouraged a subjective reaction from the audience – truth was represented from a human perspective which bound the audience in a human reaction. The Baroque artwork was not a method to articulate beautiful order, but a way to trigger reaction. Bazin creates a connection between Baroque art and Cicero's definition of eloquence: that it informs the audience by enchanting them and carrying them into ecstasy.

3.2. Gender inequality in the French Baroque

In the French Baroque period women were regarded as the weaker sex in both body and mind. Even the good attributes that were connected to women such as sympathy, affection and tenderness, were regarded as representations of physical weakness and subsequently had connotations of distrust, fear and sluggishness. Virtue was regarded as a masculine attribute, and at its polar opposite was the lusciousness of women (Coward, 1994:205).

3.3. Rule of Louis XIV

Louis XIV (1643-1715) of France assumed the position of ruler in 1661 as successor of his mother, Anna of Austria. The reign of foreigners caused residents to revolt. When Louis overtook the throne, he remembered the years of revolt and decided to assume absolute authority. In attempt to keep his power, Louis projected an image of himself as one in the highest position of power (Grout & Palisca, 2006:355).

He used the arts as his propaganda tools. Louis XIV presented himself as the “Sun king”, an ideal symbol of Louis as the giver of light. Furthermore he identified himself

²² Art historian.

with Apollo, the Greek god of the sun. Apollo was also the god of music, teaching, science and the arts – Louis wanted to be seen as the primary protector of all these fields. Louis XIV centralised the sciences and arts and established excellent academies for every field. The academy for opera was established in 1669 (Grout & Palisca, 2006:355).

Louis XIV thus was the big protector of the arts, which he saw as an articulation of his own glory. Lully became in 1673 the head of the *Académie Royale de Musique* because he enjoyed the favour of the king as his dance master and –composer. Lully's own operas were also articulations of the king's glory – extravagance was a key ingredient. Ceremony dominated the story in the same way as ceremony in court dominated the process of ruling France – Louis XIV robbed the land in order to celebrate the glory of his position (Drummond, 1980:146-147).

3.4. The French Classical Tragedy

The French Classical Tragedy was a product of its time. The issues and dilemmas in art themes had its roots in the conflict of classical and baroque ideas. The characters are trapped in the conflict between personal emotion and duty, between baroque self-expression and a classical dedication to order. With sympathy towards the absolutism of the French court, the characters could only reach a hero-status through the subjection of their personal passions – this was the path of purity that lead towards glory. The truly noble hero was able to manifest reconciliation between the two poles of the dilemma – in the end the hero had to prove that he is able to love the honourable and to choose the virtuous ways. This may lead to death or apparent dishonour, but it didn't matter. In this lies the tragedy – the aspiration towards better things despite the circumstances (Drummond, 1980:147).

The French Classical Tragedy is fundamentally concerned with inner action. The conflicts and solutions happen inside the characters and are expressed in their dialogue. It is a drama of human character wherein the events are human decisions and the motives are moral qualities. In French Classical Tragedy this narrative of decisions are organised according to the strong ideas of the classical framework. The rigid structure of French Classical Tragedy provided a ceremonial framework for

the story, and the tension between the two poles helped to create dramatic climaxes through which tragic catharsis is achieved (Drummond, 1980:147-148).

3.5. The performance practice of opera in the Baroque period

Lully had absolute, organizational control over the staging of his operas.²³ He coached the performers in person as for entries and exits, behaviour and moves, and sometimes even showed the performer each motion of his or her character (Savage, 2001:455).

Early opera was much praised for its exceptional settings and special effects, for example fire, earthquakes and floods. Consequently, the magical change of structures and landscapes inspired composers, directors and librettists. Particularly in France, in the baroque period, it was common to have performances where scenic effects were created by noisy machinery and fireworks (Carlton, 2004:142; J.A.S., 1990:91).

Often in French Baroque operas, for example, those of Lully, the composer and librettist required the instrumentalists to be represented on stage as part of the dramatic action (Harris-Warrick, 1994:189).

Original baroque-opera performance practice required opera singers to sing their arias with different decorations in each performance. It was also very common and accepted that different music by completely different composers could be substituted into the opera at any point (Sadie, 1990:436).

3.6. Lully's interpretation of *Gerusalemme Liberata*

Lully and Quinault's²⁴ 18th century masterpiece was considered a joint attempt where there is a deep focus on the continual psychological development of an individual character (Armide). According to Le Cerf de la Viéville²⁵ (1674-1707) their work was known as *the ladies opera* – most likely an indication of Armide's internal conflict. The fact that it was Quinault's last libretto gives an indication as to the circumstances

²³ Link to Louis XIV's absolute authority over France.

²⁴ The librettist of Lully's opera, *Armide*.

²⁵ French author and amateur musician.

in the creation of *Armide*. At this point, the king was slowly losing his interest in opera, and Quinault's suggestion of this subject out of the history of Christianity, could not be refused by Louis XIV. The story about a man who, after a distracting love affair returns to his duty, can be symbolic of Quinault returning to his religion and family, and Louis XIV, after unfaithfulness and lavishness, returning to his duty as husband and political leader (Rosow, 2001:200-201; Norman, 2001:329).

The characters in *Armide* are as follows:

Glory – Soprano

Wisdom – Soprano

Armide (magician and niece of Hidraot) – Soprano

Renaud (French name for Rinaldo; a knight) – Haute-contre

Phénice and Sidonie (confidantes of Armide) – Soprano

Hidraot (king of Damascus) – Baritone

Aronte (guard of Armide's captive knights) – Tenor

Artemidore (a knight) – Tenor

Hatred – Tenor

Ubalde (a knight) – Baritone

The Danish Knight (companion of Ubalde) – Haute-contre

A demon in the form of a water nymph – Soprano

A demon in the form of Lucinde, the Danish Knight's beloved – Soprano

A demon in the form of Mélisse, Ubalde's beloved – Soprano (Rosow, 2001:200)

In the prologue (which was always a celebration of and propaganda for King Louis XIV), Glory and Wisdom are supported by their followers in celebrating their power over an unknown hero (Louis XIV). In wartime Glory rules and in peacetime Wisdom rules. Glory and Wisdom are invited by their hero to watch Renaud follow Glory away from the palace to where he has a love affair with Armide. The mention of a "monster" that the hero has conquered is considered to refer to the Edict of Nantes (revoked in 1685) (Rosow, 2001:201).

The Edict of Nantes (1598)²⁶ was an effort by Henry IV to level the catholic and protestant religions in France, in an attempt to reduce violence between the two opposing parties. It failed though to completely equalize Protestantism to the ruling Catholicism and legally Catholicism was confirmed as the dominant religion in France. In 1685 Louis XIV issued the *Edict of Fontainebleau*²⁷ to practice an anti-Protestant rule and in an attempt to convert the Huguenots to Catholicism. This new edict supported the demolition of the Huguenots' churches and the closing of their schools (Mentzer, 2003:98-99; Spielvogel, 2011:322).

In the first act Phénice and Sidonie congratulate Armide on her capturing of almost all of the crusaders in Godefroy's army. Renaud, the best known knight from Godefroy's army, has escaped Armide's seduction. She confides in Phénice and Sidonie about a dream she had where she falls in love with Renaud as he is about to kill her. Hidraot requests that his niece marries, but she only cares about the 'conqueror of Renaud, if someone can be that' (Rosow, 2001:201).

According to Rameau (1683-1764)²⁸, Lully's setting of the incidental phrase in the subdominant key (representing weakness) expressed Armide's fluctuating thoughts. If the conqueror of Rinaldo does not exist, Armide has a good reason for not marrying. Secretly, Armide herself wishes to be the conqueror of Renaud. If she can grasp this goal, she will be able to remain independent and dangerous – only she will be worthy of herself. If she cannot conquer him, she will be more than just independent – no relationship will be successful and no man could be worthy of her – she would be alone with her magic (Rosow, 2001:201; Norman, 2001:332).

These fluctuating thoughts of Armide are grasped towards the end when Armide tries to conquer Renaud by her magic. Her personal charms have no effect on him, though, and he forsakes her easily when her spell is broken. Tasso's original poem neither contains the comment that Renaud is undefeatable nor the nightmare. At the

²⁶ An edict refers to an official order or proclamation. Nantes is a city in France.

²⁷ Fontainebleau is the metropolitan area in Paris, France.

²⁸ Well-known French composer and music theorist. He wrote a commentary on Lully's *Armide: Observations sur notre instinct pour la musique*.

end of act one Aronte brings news that Renaud has freed all the captive knights and all Armide's followers swear vengeance (Rosow, 2001:201; Norman, 2001:332).

In act two which is situated in the countryside, Renaud vows to Artemidore who has been freed by him, that he can't fall under Armide's spell and sends him away. Demons sent by Armide and Hidraot, disguised as nymphs, shepherds and shepherdesses, make Renaud fall sleep. In the recitative monologue, "Elfin il est en ma puissance", Armide is standing over the sleeping Renaud with a dagger in her hand (thus prepared to kill him), but she is overcome by love for him. Demons disguised as zephyrs transport both Armide and Renaud to a distant desert where Armide can hide her embarrassment (Rosow, 2001:201).

In the third act Armide confirms that she cannot hate Renaud. She tells Phénice and Sidonie that she cannot enjoy Renaud's love, because she had used magic to receive it. Armide summons Hate and his followers (which are all males) to help her overcome love. In an attempt to break cupid's bows and arrows, Armide stops Hate. Hate informs Armide never to ask for her help again and disappears (Rosow, 2001:201).

In act four Ubalde and the Danish Knight are searching for Renaud in the desert. Armide has set traps in the desert, and the knights are challenged by monsters and open gorges and then (after the desert changes into a pleasing countryside) by seduction. A demon disguised as the Danish Knight's beloved, Lucinde, attempts to seduce him, but Ubalde uses magic to make the demon disappear. In the same way a demon disguised as Ubalde's beloved, Melisse, attempts to seduce him, but the Danish Knight uses the same kind of magic to defeat the demon (Rosow, 2001:201).

The only love scene in the opera is in act five in Armide's enchanted palace. Armide's troubled feelings are answered by Renaud with affectionate rhetorical questions, but they do not reassure her. She goes to seek advice from the underworld and leaves Pleasures and happy lovers to entertain Renaud while she is away (Rosow, 2001:201-202).

The great *passacaglia* that underlies the *divertissement* shows that the tale will not end in a love story and prepares the listener for the impending tragedy. The beautiful melodies and harmonies above a basso ostinato imply the clash between the sensual bliss of love and the straight line of duty, which will triumph in the next scene when Renaud is freed from Armide's spell. In Armide's absence Ubalde and the Danish Knight find Renaud and breaks Armide's magic spell over him. When she returns, Renaud pities her and affirms that Glory requires love to yield to duty. He leaves on a boat with Glory. This is the only one of Lully's operas to have a small, intimate ending. Armide flies into a fury and then descends into desolation. While the demons are destroying her magical palace and lethal love (as she ordered), Armide leaves on a flying chariot (Rosow, 2001:201-202; Norman, 2001:336).

Armide is considered to be the most mature of Lully and Quinault's works. Lully's music is subtly matched together with Quinault's investigation in the character's innermost conflict. The recitatives contained a bigger scope of rhythmic and tonal intricacy than previous operas and *Armide* was praised by 18th century viewers as a model of expressive text declamation (Rosow, 2001:202).

It is suggested by Françoise Karro²⁹ that through the choice of Tasso's story, Louis XIV created parallels between the political (and religious) events of 1685-1686 in the *Edict of Fontainebleau*, and the events of the First Crusade recounted by Tasso. Karro says that the opera brings to mind "the reconquest of a Roman Empire united by faith, a veritable universal monarchy." Armide and Hidraot are ambiguous characters and represent not only the seventeenth century's Turks and Louis XIV's wish to conquer them, but also the Protestants. Karro suggests that Hidraot represents the Protestant leader, Calvin, and that the enchantress, Armide, represents heresy (Thomas, 2002:122).

One of the more complex and sensitive characteristics of the *tragédies en musique* in the context of seventeenth century French theatre, accentuates the question of visual presentation. Seventeenth century dramatic theory was concerned with the way in which something could, must or shouldn't be placed in front of the audience.

²⁹ French author in the Baroque period.

The *tragédies en musique* accentuated the visual *merveilleux*³⁰ or supernatural events and special effects to a bigger degree than any other dramatic dialect. All the operas of this period generally fitted in with the idea of importance of presentation in opera. *Armide* of Lully reveals though that the question of presentation in early seventeenth century opera is a more complex idea. Although French opera is defined through the *merveilleux* in relation to its spoken counterpart (French Classic Tragedy), the single scene of *Armide* that is universally acknowledged by seventeenth- and eighteenth century commentators as the most touching scene³¹ of all *tragédies en musique*, is the one in which the visual importance is suspended (Thomas, 1997:170).

In that regard it is easy then to refer to the music. This reaction would not have corresponded with the ideas of the late 1680's, though. Music brought on more problems than solutions for Lully and Quinault's peers, as there was the notion to see the notability of opera's function in lyrical theatre through its use of music. The tragedy was viewed as the core of the *tragédies en musique*; the music carefully held a subjective and additional status. In a time where music was seen as additional to drama and frequently rejected as dangerously sensual because of the unclear meaning which is linked to it, in *Armide* a self-conscious attempt is made to define opera as something else than a second-hand imitation or a mere play of sound and embellishment (Thomas, 1997:170).

The visual abundance of the spectacle is brought deliberately in focus in *Armide*, then deliberately pulled back, in an attempt to lead the audience to observe that which escapes the visual, that which cannot be presented on stage. Attention is drawn to passion and the voice which gives expression to it at precisely the moments where the visual is suspended. In *Armide* Lully and Quinault not only made a dramatic entity of the voice, but by linking it to an aesthetic of the sublime, they attempted to define early French opera as in contrast to its spoken counterpart (Thomas, 1997:171).

³⁰ See chapter one for definition.

³¹ This is where *Armide* is bending over the sleeping Rinaldo in an attempt to kill him, but ironically falls in love with him.

Gerusalemme Liberata, the poem on which *Armide* is based, puts a lot of weight on the visual. From the start of the first scene the focus is on the effects of to see and being seen. Witchcraft, an apparent metaphor for “female slyness”, adds to the spectacle’s visual importance, which obviously supports the *merveilleux*. The woman as sorceress or seductress is frequently punished because she exerts power over men. This notion frequently occurred in the history of opera, from Lully’s *Atys* and Charpentier’s *Médée* to Massenet’s *Manon* and Strauss’s *Salome*. In Lully’s opera *Armide*’s punishment is Rinaldo’s abandonment at the end. (Thomas, 1997:172, 174).

Since it is about power, specifically arbitrary or supernatural power, it can be said that the *merveilleux* has a gender dimension in many operas; the supernatural powers of the goddess or sorceress that manifests the assumed “natural” abundance of her power as a woman. Thus, when *Armide* calls upon magic powers, she only uses it as additional to the chosen weapon of her beauty and, more specifically, that of her eyes. The explicitness of Quinault’s emphasis on the power of *Armide*’s eyes (which is not so different from Tasso), represents a focus of the poem’s extravagant descriptions of the sorceress’ physical beauty (Thomas, 1997:172, 174).

3.7. Summary

At the transition from the Renaissance to Baroque period there was a conflict, as well as a merging between rational thought from Renaissance Humanism and the existence of God as believed in the Christian Church. Accordingly the idea grew that the results of rational investigation, because it could be ‘proved’, should be true, even if it does not correspond with the orthodox faith. Similarly, Descartes believed in the theory that if an object could be clearly perceived, it must exist.

In 1543 Copernicus’s new theory about Earth and its sister planets, didn’t only challenge the church’s idea about the universe, it also attacked the idea that humankind, as God’s special creation, was the centre of the universe. The trail of Galileo was also expressed in the arts. In the Baroque period there was a dilemma between order and self-expression. The idea of order is coherent with the Christian idea of a planned universe. The idea of self-expression had to do with the way in

which Greek scientists and philosophers explained things to themselves and the emphasis on the freedom of the individual.

Louis XIV took over the rule of France in 1661. He took absolute authority and portrayed an image of himself as the sun-king, Apollo. Louis XIV's primary court music composer, Lully, wrote operas that served as propaganda for the king and which glorified him.

The issues and dilemmas in these operas had their roots in the conflict of classical and baroque ideas. The characters are trapped in the conflict between personal emotion and duty, between baroque self-expression and a classical dedication to order.

In regards to the production of operas, Lully took complete authoritative control over the staging of his operas. These operas usually had exceptional settings and special effects. The instrumentalists were also sometimes used as part of the dramatic action. Singers were required to sing with different decorations at each new performance. Musical works of completely different composers could be substituted or placed in the opera at any time.

In the Baroque times women were viewed as the weaker and voluptuous gender (immoral deeds) where men were associated with virtue. This idea is also strongly reflected in Lully's *Armide* where Armide is punished for her power over men and where her sexuality destroys her. Lully's story also focuses a lot on the main character Armide's psychological development and her dealing with her inner conflicts.

Again, similar to Tasso's original story, Quinault engages with the idea of religious wars. In many ways, Lully and Quinault's *Armide* articulates the Edict of Nantes and the Edict of Fontainebleau where the different kings at that time tried to convert the Huguenots (Protestants) to Catholicism.

Representation and the visual was a very important aspect in Lully's *Armide*. It was important how things were represented in front of the eye of the audience. Also, in the story, there is an emphasis on Armide's eyes as her most dangerous weapon.

This is interesting when referring back to the Baroque philosophy which held the theory that if something could be clearly perceived, it existed. The eyes are powerful tools, because they can distinguish between that which exists and that which doesn't exist.

The most famous scene in *Armide*, though, is when the visual is suspended, and where the drama is expressed through Armide's voice. A link is then also made to music as an aesthetic sublime. This consequently gives an interpretational conflict between the visual that represents that which exists and the supernatural which is expressed through the visual. Also, when the visual is removed, it can be an illustration of non-existence or mystery, but at the same time it can be an aesthetic sublime. This may refer to the existence of a God-like entity that is not perceivable through the eye.

Chapter 4: Judith Weir's *Armida*

4.1. The transition from Modern to Postmodern times

The term Postmodernism literally means “after modernism” and therefore, to understand Postmodernism, one needs to understand modernism. The Modern era stretched from 1910 to just before the Second World War started. In this Modern era there was an increasing development of technology and the belief that science would help to make the world a better place (O'Donnel, 2003:9, 12, 16).

A key element of the modern era was people attempting to find new ways to explore *how* we see the world as opposed to *what* we see in it. This was a break with realist traditions. There was also an increasing focus on seemingly scientific ways of externalising and organising. This focus was an articulation of rationalist and progressive thought. The use of collages and intentionally discontinuous narratives reflected the division and break from earlier beliefs and ideas. There was also an awareness of self-reflexivity where the product or artwork explored its own contents, for example, a story that comments on narrative forms or paintings where an image is left unfinished. Popular and élite culture had clear divisions between them, for example, clear distinguishes between ‘pop’ and rock. A gradual interest in non-Western societies and culture also developed, for example, Picasso's interest in African masks (Woods, 1999:7-8).

Judith Weir's composition of her *Armida* falls into the postmodern timeframe. Postmodernism is the term given to a series of philosophical and aesthetical ideas that developed after the Second World War. Postmodernism questions the objectives of Modernism, for example absolute truth, the development of faith, strict forms and genres, and the rejection of art having any clear social function. Key features of this movement include the belief that all human knowledge is restricted and culture specific and that each age has different thoughts. As a result of this, truth and absolutes are relative, and consequently there are doubts about the future of religion. As a social and economic condition, Postmodernism may refer to the flow of capitalism and mass media into everyday life. This condition demoralizes faith in

numerous religious and historical metanarratives³² (O'Donnel, 2003:6-9; Pasler, 2001:213).

These ideas were also articulated in philosophy and the arts. As an artistic concept Postmodernism represents the idea that the world consists of numerous perceptions, all of which have some legitimacy. This belief broke down the margins between popular and élite culture that was so clear in the modern era. Thus, practically, artists didn't restrict themselves to one dominant style and saw all previous styles as acceptable (O'Donnel, 2003:6-9; Pasler, 2001:213).

Postmodernism was similarly expressed in cultural politics. At the end of the twentieth century there was a focus on the position of differences in culture and society, especially differences in class, race and gender. There came a focus on groups or individuals whose cultural background made them aware of opposition and also taught them to embrace the vitality of diversity. This focus was brought upon by the increasing interrelations around the world and the need to respect rather than dominate non-Western societies. Music of sub-societies like post-colonialists, immigrants, and poor- and discriminated societies were acknowledged as a key form of subculture and national identity. These musics also communicated feelings of identity and displacement (Pasler, 2001:213).

4.2. Gender equality in the 21st century

There has been a vast 'paradigm shift' in gender relations since the dawn of the 21st century. The welfare state in post-war Britain was launched on the supposition that the man was the breadwinner and that the woman stayed at home, preparing food and caring for the children. The structure of both work and benefits was subjected to the model of the man as the breadwinner. In the 1960's and 70's this model was subject to change, partly, because of the equality problems expressed by members of the Woman's Movement. It was also stimulated by the changing labour market prospects and families needing both parents' wages to support them (Scott, Crompton & Lyonette, 2010:1).

³² Self-explaining narratives; a narrative about a narrative.

4.3. Beauty ideals in the 21st century

Beauty ideals signify suggested qualities of the human face and body that express the ideals for physical attraction. In 21st century western civilization, women deem themselves attractive when they have sizeable breasts and muscle, but with no body fat. This body is almost impossible to achieve without surgical operations. Thus the current standards of beauty are dangerous and the women's body image is predominantly weak (Calogero & Thompson, 2010:159).

4.4. The war on terrorism and religion

In 1997 the New Labour Party won the election and Tony Blair was elected prime minister of Britain. The government of Britain under Tony Blair had a major influence on British identity. He has presented different strategies to help Britain with the challenges of the 21st century (Lever, 2001:39, 47).

President George Bush of the U.S. and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the U.K. initiated the 'war on terror' by invading Afghanistan. This attack was initiated because of the 9/11 events when there was an attack on the World Trade Centre in the U.S. Osama bin Laden was found guilty of this attack. Saddam Hussein³³ possessed biological and chemical weapons that were a hazard to the security of U.S. citizens and general stability in the world. Thus, on March 20 2003, soldiers from both the U.K. and U.S. led by the U.S., invaded Iraq (Milne, 2012:23, 27; Cutler, 2011; Center for American progress, 2004).

It was said that President Bush appealed to a *higher father* for advice about the war. Bush told Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas³⁴ that "God told me to strike at Al-Qaeda and I struck them, and then he instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did, and now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East." According to Richard Land, who was a leading supporter of the war, the only way to solve *Islamic jihadism* was innovation and demonstrative governments. The traditional evangelicals supported the idea that religious freedom provided the best circumstances for

³³ He was the president of Iraq at that time.

³⁴ He served as the Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority from March to October 2003. He was of the Sunni-Muslim faith.

spreading the Word of God. For the evangelicals, religious freedom represented the permission to evangelise within seemingly Muslim countries. The war in Iraq stimulated a large amount of missionary activity and this wish to better democracy and evangelization in Iraq had parallels with the crusades, an association Bush was keen on to avoid (Marsden, 2009:81).

In the years of the Iraq war 50% of the military chaplaincy posts, as part of the U.S. army, were taken by traditional evangelicals. Soldiers received DVDs containing church services in their home towns and they attended bible classes and prayer meetings. This reflected a U.S. military group made up largely of evangelicals who saw themselves as a Christian army (Marsden, 2009:83).

During the period of the 19th century Britain was largely a Protestant country. Today only 68% of the Britons identify themselves as Christians. In the last fifty years Britain has developed into a multi-ethnic nation (Lever, 2001:46).

4.5. British opera in the 21st century

British opera was not prominent enough to get international recognition before the 20th century. According to W.J. Turner³⁵ (1884-1946) a true renaissance of music took place from the beginning of the twentieth century. The music of this *first British renaissance* relied on the literature to empower the national worth of its musical aesthetics. This practice grew at the middle of the twentieth century to recognise the increasing interaction and interdependence of the arts, and to incorporate a self-conscious literary modernity. Authors of the first British renaissance, like Woolf, Huxley and Forster, aspired to imitate musical effect through the structure of their narratives and reference to musical works and composers from earlier times. In doing so the authors deprived the contemporary composers of their achievements and considered themselves able enough to create musically and to outline musical success. The consequent *second renaissance* encouraged an addition of British literary figures (Morra, 2007:1, 7-8).

³⁵ He was a writer and art critic, born in Australia but resided in England.

Opera music from the *second renaissance* was defined by a more collective partnership between composer and author. This more collective interaction between composer and author resulted in more distinct tensions. The composer composed within a musical language that was defined by literary aesthetics and the librettist worked with possibly conflicting, traditional musical principles. These tensions were further expanded by the fact that most opera libretti were based on a pre-existing literary source. These literary works were then re-written by the librettist and composer in order to outline and clarify social and artistic concerns. Frequently, the treatment of these literary works signified very diverse artistic frameworks and approaches towards opera, literature, music and cultural success (Morra, 2007:9).

The involvement of literary figures in the definition and creation of modern British opera provides a look at the aesthetic fear and plans of modern authors and composers. Cooperation between artists like English composer Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) and English novelist E.M. Forster (1879-1970),³⁶ contributed to the “literature of libretti” and portrays an increasing synthetic movement between music and literature. This cooperation redefined the genres of opera and libretti in modern Britain. The libretto is both a literary and musical form and its development requires a reconsideration of traditional critical narratives about dramatic, poetic and narrative aesthetics in the twentieth century (Morra, 2007:1).

The majority of modern British operas articulate their intellectual aspirations through their subject or libretto, and provides a thematic regard for the position of the individual in a society that is defined by various political, social, sexual and artistic establishments. At the same time there are attempts in these operas to universalise the situation of their protagonists, as opposed to limiting themselves to too specific narrative contexts. Such a thematic focus requires a complex musical language, and a subject and libretto to provide an appropriate structure and dramatic context. British composers frequently used librettists with significant literary abilities to create a drama in that way, usually from a pre-existing literary source (Morra, 2007:7).

³⁶ Benjamin Britten and E.M. Forster collaborated for the opera, *Billy Budd*.

4.6. The performance practice of music and opera in the 21st century

In the 21st century there has been a fixation on reception in opera. This fixation refers to the way in which the audience receives the music and the meaning they derive from it. In this era a political image structure might suggest in equal terms meaning as well as meaninglessness, and, similarly, both comedy and melancholy. This notion gave rise to reflection on subjectivity as multifaceted, opposing and enactive. In the world of today where there are a large number of conflicting forces, the way in which music is received, is also socially defined (Pasler, 2001:214).

Thus, the meaning of a piece of music is not only the responsibility of the composer or librettist, but can be determined individually in different ways by the performer and audience as well. For example, American composer John Cage's (1912-1992) renowned piece, *4'33*,³⁷ gave listeners unspecified possibility in which they could explore their idea of what music really is. Additionally, there has been experimentation with blurring the boundaries between different genres, such as merging classical and jazz. Consequently, classical performances have received new audiences and listeners' expectations have been largely altered (Pasler, 2001:214).

In contemporary times, the opera director also has increasing significance. This was brought upon by diminishing the idea of the diva, and, questionably, the uniqueness of expression in singers. Opera was also unsuccessful in the 20th century in redeveloping its customs and repertory so that it resembles the needs of the era, thus it was necessary to renew it in relation to staging (Millington, 2001:466).

From after the Second World War onwards the "interventionist" opera emerged. This type of opera could have political aims, but not necessarily. Aside from political aims, psychological angles as well as emotional bluntness have also been used to "intervene". For example, contemporary settings and props have been used to underline the pervasive and enduring relevance of works (Millington, 2001:466).

³⁷ John Cage's piece *4'33* consists of three movements in which the instrumentalist is instructed in the score to play nothing for the whole duration of the piece all the way through the three movements. All the sounds and noises that fill up this time becomes the piece of music or art.

By questioning former conventions, such as the position that the author has with regard to the creation of the text, the root of the text's meaning, and the primary authority for the interpretation of the text, has provoked a transformation in the way both modern and classic operas can be portrayed. You could for example, instead of stressing the organic harmony of a work, focus on its incoherence and conflicts. There are possibilities to apply and invent incoherence between text and music, and to, similarly, create friction between what the stage instructions specify and the action as being portrayed on stage (Millington, 2001:466).

In this postmodern age where all the art forms are defined by uncertainty, conventionality and non-conformity exists side by side. This creates the possibility to have a large variety of stylistic advances towards an art piece (Millington, 2001:467).

4.7. Weir's interpretation of *Gerusalemme Liberata*

Judith Weir is a British composer, born in Cambridge on 11 May 1954. She started her education in composition at North London Collegiate School where she received lessons from Tavener³⁸. Further education includes studies at King's College with Holloway, and at Tanglewood with Schuller³⁹. After her education she was a composer at many academic institutions, including the Southern Arts Association, Glasgow University, Trinity College, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and Oxford University. She also received an honorary D.Mus. from the University of Aberdeen. In 1991 she received first prize at the international Opera Screen Festival in Helsinki for a dance-opera that she wrote in collaboration with the dance company Second Stride. The opera is called *Heaven Ablaze in His Breast* and is based on E.T.A. Hoffman's (1776-1822)⁴⁰ *Der Sandman* (Wright, 2001:246).

Weir adopted different sources for her composition style, which she obtained through the rejection of the formations and materials of the *avant garde*⁴¹. One of the most insightful influences on her compositional style, musically and philosophically, was

³⁸ British composer born in 1944. He is best known for his religious, minimal works.

³⁹ American composer born in 1925.

⁴⁰ German Romantic author of horror and fantasy.

⁴¹ Avant-garde is a term that defines music that is thought to be ahead of its time. Examples of this include original and unique elements in the music and unfamiliar combinations of different genres. It also refers to a musical trend that flourished after 1945 and was defined by the rejection of tonality.

folk musics from different folk groups. According to Weir, a composer has a very important part to play in society, both by being sensitive when communicating with the performers and the audience, and in his/her work at educational institutes. The openness of expression and recognition of a sense of community, in other words identity, in folk music emphasize this importance of the composer. Folk music that she has used includes both Chinese and Scottish folk music. Weir's compositional medium is fixed in a type of expanded tonality, but her individuality is revealed in her nonconformist harmonies and textures (Wright, 2001:246; Armida DVD).

Most of Weir's music, with no exception in regard to the type of composition, is defined by a narrative feature and a facet of storytelling. She also uses graphic titles to explain the action or scene in the case of instrumental pieces. Weir also regularly takes advantage of music's ability to *paint* a scene or to operate as a descriptive or expressive backdrop. Thus the music in itself becomes part of the dramatic action. Notable works of her include the operas *A Night at the Chinese Opera* (1987), *The Vanishing Bridegroom* (1990), and more recently *Miss Fortune* (2011) (Wright, 2001:246).

There is not much literature available on Judith Weir's *Armida* and the score of her opera and a DVD of her opera are not commercially available. After a lot of searching and contacting I made contact with Judith Weir via Ivor Flint and Laura Hollands from the ISM⁴² in the U.K. and had the privilege to do an interview with Judith Weir via e-mail. I was also able to obtain a DVD of the opera via Victoria Small of Chester music sales and to obtain the score from the G. Schirmer Rental Library⁴³.

Weir wrote both the music and libretto of her *Armida*. She started writing it in 2002. At that time the whole world was focused on the war in Iraq. Weir read a lot of news reports and was amazed to find a large amount of blogs written by people who were directly involved in the war. This information formed a *library* in her mind and was a source for the libretto, which she wrote herself. As in *Gerusalemme Liberata* where

⁴² Incorporated Society of Musicians

⁴³ See acknowledgements.

the Christians and pagans are at war, Weir's *Armida* plays off during a modern-day, yet unspecified war. It can be interpreted that this war refers to the Iraq war, but Weir says that she wrote about all the wars that she has seen being reported about on TV. Weir (2013) says that the fortunate part of society only see war as it is portrayed through the media and are actually far away from the real action. This is at the core of her *Armida*. Thus she chose television as the medium for her opera. She wanted to explore the idea of how the media comments on war. More specifically, she wanted to engage with the way in which (war) news are received and also the feelings and opinions of the news reporters behind the camera (Jeffries, 2005).

Judith Weir used a half-classical, half-jazz ensemble as accompaniment for the opera and this setting also served the dramatic action well. A large part of the story is about the soldiers waiting in the long preamble period before the war starts and how they get distracted by other things in this time. Thus the idea of war is more playing in the background and the characters do not yet comprehend the seriousness of it. Consequently, the music is quite lively and sometimes even "bland", to quote Judith Weir's (2013) own word.

Weir's interpretation of *Gerusalemme Liberata* is placed in the world of today. The opera is through-composed, in other words there are no defined arias or recitatives. Consequently, the opera is more conversational and topical. Furthermore, it is more understandable because it is not in a strange language. Subsequently Weir (2013) also purposefully wanted Armida to be a more realistic and believable character than the pagan sorceress that have been portrayed in previous versions of the story. In a lot of operas, especially those from the *verismo* era, the prima-donna of the opera dies as the end as some sort of punishment for her sins. Weir wanted a modern real-life Armida that the audience could believe in. Armida is a TV-news reporter with a natural beauty⁴⁴ and glowing eyes. By referring back to the beauty ideals of the 21st century, Armida's natural beauty in Weir's production can serve as a medium to moralise the unrealistic ideas of beauty in Postmodern times. Rinaldo is a down-to-earth, thoughtful soldier with a naturally fit body.

⁴⁴ Not an extreme, out-of-balance beauty like the original Armida in *Gerusalemme Liberata*.

Another way the opera was actualized in a more realistic way was the race of the two lead singers portraying Armida and Rinaldo. Both are black and this has links to the contemporary multi-racial society in which they live. By having both lead singers from the same race also gives the feeling that the two opposing parties in the opera, thus those who are at war with each other, are not really so different from one another (Weir, 2013).

The characters in Judith Weir's *Armida* are as follows:

Armida (a news reporter for Metropolis TV) – Soprano

Idraote (Armida's colleague at Metropolis TV, the producer)

Ms. Pescado (Armida's colleague at Metropolis TV, a weather reporter) - Soprano

Rinaldo (a soldier of the "International Peacekeeping Force") - Tenor

Goffredo (the chief-of-staff)

Ubaldo (a soldier)

Carlo (a soldier)

(G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011)

The opera begins with an overture (scene one) where images of war are shown: men in army uniforms are breaching supposedly unoccupied houses, showing their hostile power over terrorists; soldiers are running down alleyways in the so-called "occupied" town; there are explosions on a hillside (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011; *Armida* DVD).

Scene two is at the army camp of the "Lingua Franca of the southern Sahara" (in Hausa) or "International Peacekeeping Force". Typical army life scenes are shown: soldiers are washing and ironing their clothes and polishing their musical instruments and guns. Goffredo is motivating the soldiers (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:2).

In other places in the camp, soldiers are busy with their own activities. Carlo is busy writing a letter home. He says that it is not too bad, but that there is not much to do. He misses the comfort of home and asks that they send him boots. The soldiers

received the kind that you wear in the Falklands which are for cold weather. Ubalde is sending a message to the headquarters using modern day technology. He is talking about the problems that they have with charts, co-ordinates and satellites. At a remote place in the camp, Rinaldo is writing poetry in his journal. He writes about the desert and compares it to the sea, waves, a pond and a cloud (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:3-5).

Scene three is at the broadcasting studio of Metropolis TV. Armida, Idraote and Ms. Pescado are busy with various activities in the studio, including preparing for a news bulletin. They have been watching fragments of the scene in the army camp through monitors. Armida is absorbed in Rinaldo's poetry and sings his last line. Ms. Pescado and Armida share a smile and glance that suggest that they think Rinaldo is attractive. Idraote is displeased and wants the army to leave his country. Armida does a news bulletin on the civil war and the subsequent violence and disarray. Afterwards, Ms. Pescado is preparing for her weather forecast and comments on how weather changes lives. When she gets to the weather forecast, it is: "Clear skies and sunshine all next week and the week after that" (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:6-8).

Scene four is back at the army headquarters. Goffredo, Ubaldo and Carlo are getting ready to record a video of Rinaldo, a message to the Occupied Zone, that will be disseminated into the city. Goffredo, Ubaldo and Carlo are all giving opposing advice to Rinaldo about how he should talk and handle himself while he is giving the message. At first Rinaldo reads the message and then starts speaking in his own words. He says that he would like to see the people of the Occupied Zone and hear their opinion. He says that together they could do something great. At this point Armida and Idraote is seen in their studio, showing that they are hearing this message as well. Goffredo, Ubalde and Carlo shut down the broadcast (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:9-10)

In the fifth scene Armida and Idraote are driving in the Metropolis TV van towards the army camp. Armida is reading the road directions on how to get to the camp and Idraote is complaining about the video that the International Peacekeeping force

sent. Armida disagrees with him and says that Rinaldo might have a point. They arrive at their destination (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:11-12).

The sixth scene is at dusk at the army camp. The soldiers are lighting fires and starting to prepare food. Armida and Idraote arrive at the camp unexpectedly and Carlo, Ubaldo and Goffredo greet them nervously. Goffredo introduces the rest of his soldiers to Armida while Idraote is secretly making some “technical adjustments” to the army camp in the background. Armida is audio or video recording the soldiers while having interviews with them. Ubaldo is keeping his cool and giving confident answers while, Carlo is, contrastingly, complaining about the extremely hot weather and their boots that are actually made for extreme snow and rain (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:11-15).

Armida glimpses Rinaldo, who has joined the group, and starts a deep conversation with him, forgetting about the other soldiers. Rinaldo is giving her honest answers about his thoughts on the futility of the war. According to my own interpretation Armida was attracted to Rinaldo because of his sensitivity and, at the same time, his honesty. These attributes made him stand out from all the other soldiers. Rinaldo found a confidante in Armida with whom he could share his honest feelings about the war.

Idraote finishes his “preparations” and two children traces a detonator and they begin to press down the handle. A massive explosion occurs. Goffredo, Ubaldo, Carlo, Idraote and the children are still alive but shaken and Armida and Rinaldo are nowhere to be seen. This is the end of act one and when it was broadcasted on Channel 4, there was a commercial break at the end of the act (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:15-16).

At the beginning of act two, scene 7, the Metropolis TV van is seen driving away from the camp. Armida and Rinaldo are the only passengers and it is suggested that Armida has whisked him away. The radio is on and the voice of Ms. Pescado is

heard. She is quoting words from the Tao te Ching⁴⁵ and Rinaldo joins her in the quotation (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:3).

In scene 8 the soldiers are recovering from the explosion and restoring their communication lines. Idraote awakes and appears from the debris. He seems confused and dazed, not questioning his surroundings, and joins the soldiers. Carlo and Ubalde speak of the comfortable life that they dream of. It is grasped in camp that Rinaldo is missing and Idraote suggest that they turn the TV on. The identification tune of Metropolis News is heard (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:3-5).

Scene 9 is set at a rooftop restaurant that overlooks a harbour. Armida is interviewing Rinaldo and they are both in holiday clothes at a pleasant site removed from the army camp. This interview is being broadcasted and the soldiers in the camp are listening to it. Armida is asking him why he left his camp. He answers that the (occupied) city and the camp is one, that they should live at peace. Armida asks when the hostility will end and Rinaldo answers: "When something good replaces it" (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:5-6).

Ubaldo and Carlo has went in search of Rinaldo in Scene 10. They think they are disguised as locals, wearing holiday clothes and having surf boards, but truthfully they stand out from the crowd (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:6-7).

In scene 11 Armida and Rinaldo are seen sitting in each other's arms on a balcony that overlooks the sea. Occasionally Ms. Pescado is shown on tall buildings observing the weather. The weather bulletins that she gives are interconnected with the activities of the characters. Armida and Rinaldo are treasuring their time together and promises each other that they will never forget this specific time. Ms. Pescado notices Carlo and Ubaldo as they are approaching and coming nearer to Armida and Rinaldo's location (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:7-8).

⁴⁵ A Chinese classic text that is central to both religious and philosophic Taoism. Taoism refers to a tradition that emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with the "Tao" (Chinese: way, path, principle).

In the 12th scene Carlo and Ubaldo are asking for directions from locals and realizing the futility of their technical aids. By chance they meet Rinaldo and Armida as they are entering a courtyard. Carlo and Ubaldo ask Rinaldo what he is wearing and where his uniform is, trying to bring him to his senses. Rinaldo makes a comment on their outfits as well. Armida tries to speak up for Rinaldo, but Carlo and Ubaldo tells Rinaldo he should speak up for himself. As he starts to answer, Ms. Pescado emerges with cocktail-looking drinks and they are distracted from their quarrel (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:9-10).

In scene 13, at the army camp, the surroundings are starting to change for the better. Recycled soft drink cans have been used to build shower cubicles and goal posts for playing football. Goffredo is trying to contact Carlo and Ubaldo, but without any success. Idraote and other soldiers have started a garden and are already producing good fruits and vegetables (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:10-12).

In the 14th scene Armida and Ms. Pescado are giving a news broadcast. Armida tells the people of the previously “occupied zone” that the war is over and that no one was victorious, but that everyone found better things to spend their time on. Ms. Pescado gives a weather report where there is finally the expectation of revitalizing rain showers (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:12-14).

The last scene is instrumental and scenes of happy life are shown. Idraote began a garden centre at the former army camp. Carlo and Ubaldo have stayed on in the town and are still wearing their strange clothes. Armida and Rinaldo’s relationship is developing. The instrumental music is seemingly folk-like and people are dancing to it (G. Schirmer Rental Library, 2011:14-15).

The opera ends with an anti-war message. Instead of fighting, the soldiers have started to plant vegetables and lavender bushes in the army camp. Instead of commenting on the war, Metropolis TV has started with gardening shows and connected weather reports. Journalism and war is replaced by, to quote Weir’s libretto, “cultivation and repose” (Jeffries, 2005).

Where the original (and Lully's interpretation) had a strong religious message, Weir's *Armida* is completely neutral with regards to that. Judith Weir (2013) explains that she has been sceptical about the "religious" wars happening since the time of the crusades. The values of charity that should be portrayed by Christians are forsaken when religious wars are fought. Weir deliberately composed the opera in such a manner that there is no way of telling the religion and ethnicity of the characters. Weir sends out a message of non-discrimination and respect to all through her opera. This goes further to abolish the idea of euro-centrism⁴⁶ in Tasso's poem and also Lully's interpretation. However, even though there is no referral to religion in Weir's *Armida*, her opera was inspired by the preamble to the Iraq war, which was largely a religious war (Jeffries, 2005).

Similarly to Tasso's original message through *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Weir's *Armida* also comments on the conflict between love and duty. Both *Armida* and *Rinaldo* have different and, actually, opposing duties, but chooses love over duty (different to previous interpretations). Consequently, Weir's *Armida* is both a story about love and about politics, but not only in the conventional way. She also explores the on-going affair between the media and war process and also the war in love (Jeffries, 2005).

4.8. The performance medium of Weir's *Armida*

The contemporary *Armida* was a combined project by the composer Judith Weir and TV director, Margaret Ferguson. According to Judith Weir (2013) both of them watched a lot of TV news reports, and in this period, 2002-2003, the main subject on TV was the advance to the Iraq war. Their point of interest was journalists who introduced the war while they were surrounded by the troops, and these people made for good characters. The story of *Armida* and *Rinaldo* in *Gerusalemme Liberata* also took place during a battle in the desert, and functioned as a good story to build on.

According to Weir (*Armida* DVD) it is not suitable anymore in the postmodern age to use the traditional set-up of opera that takes place in an enormous hall and where

⁴⁶ Euro-centrism refers to the tradition of viewing the world from a European perspective.

the singers are doing gigantic gestures. As a result of using television as medium, the production and its needs will be different from the normal characteristics of performing an opera on stage. In a normal opera that is performed on stage, the actors, singers and dancers play for the audience, which may be seated far away, and thus they need to project their voices and use big movements. In Weir's televised opera production the singers or actors are not communicating to an immediate audience while filming. Thus more natural gestures would be enough for this kind of production. Another shifting factor is timespan. Classical music is frequently recognized for its long time frames, whereas TV programs or films display the opposite of that. In films or TV programs the scenes change very fast.

4.9. Summary

Judith Weir's *Armida* was written in postmodern times. Key features of this movement include the belief that all human knowledge is restricted and culture specific. Truth and absolutes are relative, and therefore there are doubts about religion. Capitalism and mass media flows into the action of everyday life.

With regards to postmodern music, the margins between popular and elite culture were broken down. Musicians or composers didn't restrict themselves to one genre, but found all genres from previous eras acceptable.

The view on women, gender equality and racism and religion also radically changed in the 21st century. With more and more emphasis on the rights of women, women are regarded as equal to men, and in some societies the traditional roles of men and women have been interchanged. There was an increasing focus on groups or individuals who grew up being aware of conflict and who were also taught how to embrace differences. This focus stemmed from interrelations around the world and the principle that non-western societies should be respected and not dominated. This also gave rise to the importance of music from sub-societies, like post-colonialism and immigrants. With regards to religion only 68% of the Britons identify themselves as Christians in today's time. In the last fifty years Britain has developed into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation. These notions were also widely articulated in Weir's *Armida*.

At the beginning of the 21st century George Bush became president of the United States of America and together with Tony Blair, the prime minister of Britain, they launched the attack on Iraq at the beginning of the war against terror. Originally, the Iraq war was largely a religious war, because of the motives behind the war, which was to evangelise Iraq. It was also said that the Iraq war had parallels with the religious wars in the crusades.

British opera in the 21st century used literature to empower their identity. There came forth an increasing interaction and interdependence between composers and authors.

The majority of modern British operas have a thematic regard for the position of the individual in a society that is defined by various political, social, sexual and artistic authorities. At the same time there are attempts to universalise the situation of their protagonist, to make it applicable to all times. Libretti were often inspired by a pre-existing literary source.

In the 21st century there has been a fixation on reception in music and opera. Art could have conflicting meanings at the same time. In the world of today where there is a large number of conflicting forces, the way in which music is received, is also socially defined. Meaning in an artwork could thus be determined differently and by anyone. Additionally, boundaries between strict music genres were broken down and this attracted new audience and reception.

As to the performance of opera in the 21st century, there came an increasing focus on the director of an opera. New ideas were brought upon by directors, like using contemporary settings and props to underline the widespread and enduring relevance of works. Directors also applied and invented incoherence between text and music, to, similarly, create friction between what the stage instructions specify and the action as being portrayed on stage.

Judith Weir started to write her *Armida* in the prelude to the Iraq war. She used television as her medium and was interested on how war was portrayed in the media by journalists. She used a half-classical, half-jazz ensemble to support the dramatic

action, which had a lot to do with the preamble to the Iraq war. In this period the soldiers were waiting and not really aware of the seriousness of war. Thus the music was lighter and almost “bland”, underlining this waiting-period.

She tried to create a more contemporary and believable story out of *Armida* by placing the characters in a contemporary setting - a desert war similar to the Iraq war – and as normal people, a journalist and a soldier. The two leading characters were also both black which links to the multi-cultural society of today.

Where the original (and Lully’s interpretation) had a strong religious message, Weir intended for her *Armida* to be completely neutral with regards to that. Judith Weir (2013) explains that she has been sceptical about the “religious” wars. This also has links to the state of religion in Britain now. However, even though Weir intended for her *Armida* to be neutral with regards to religion, her opera was inspired by the preamble to the Iraq war, which was largely a religious war.

Similarly to Tasso’s original message through *Gerusalemme Liberata*, Weir’s *Armida* also comments on the conflict between love and duty. Both *Armida* and *Rinaldo* have different, opposing duties, but they choose love over duty (different to previous interpretations).

Chapter 5: Conclusions and summary

5.1. Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*

Tasso's poem, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, is set in the time of the first crusades and follows the story of Christian knights fighting to free Jerusalem from pagan control. In this process Armida intervenes, seducing the Christian knights in order to break their progression. The brave knight, Rinaldo, frees her captives and Armida sets out to kill him, but falls in love with him, instead. She uses her magic powers to make him fall in love with her too. Two of Rinaldo's comrades come to rescue him and show his appearance to him through a magic shield. Tasso's poem ends with Armida converting to Christianity after Rinaldo stopped her from committing suicide.

The view on women and the danger of beauty in the Renaissance is articulated in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Extremely beautiful women were regarded as dangerous and voluptuous and they suggested immorality. Armida is extremely beautiful and has an excess of sexuality. Renaissance thought accentuated the importance of balance, harmony and moderation. This idea of order and virtue is articulated not only in the soldier, Rinaldo, but also in the progress of the crusaders, as well as the epic literary form and its high moral goal. Disorder and immoral deeds are linked to the character of Armida as well as the romance literary form where the prime goal is to provide pleasure. The environment of the romantic is also cut off from the visual and spiritually clear light of the sun. As the poem ends with Armida converting to Christianity, virtue triumphs over immorality.

Tasso's poem was written by combining these two opposing literary genres, epic and romance. The conflict between these genres is articulated in both the war between East and West as well as the complicated relationship that develops between Armida and Rinaldo in Tasso's poem. Additionally, for Tasso the religious wars in his poem are at the same time the wars between the Catholics and Protestants as well as the pagans in the Contra Reformation.

Having neo-platonic ideas himself, Tasso also created tension and uncertainty between the character of God in his poem, and himself as the author of the poem. Thus he is levelling himself with God. This alludes to Renaissance Humanism that

focused on the value and action of humans. It preferred rational investigation to faith or doctrines. From this research it is clear that there are recognizable interrelations between Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the Contra Reformation, Renaissance thought (danger of beauty) and Humanism, and the two opposing literary genres, romance and epic.

5.2. Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Armide*

The whole of Lully's *Armide* alludes to the tension and fusion between self-expression and order that was articulated in Baroque philosophy. The characters, Armide and Rinaldo, were trapped in the conflict between personal emotion, more specifically love (self-expression), and duty (order). Armide is a pagan sorceress and duty calls her to kill Rinaldo. By falling in love with him, she is going against her duty and beliefs. Rinaldo's duty was to his mission in the Christian army and God. By falling in love with Armide he also goes against his duty and faith. Thus, both of them lose their own identity as they fall in love with each other. At the end, as Rinaldo leaves Armide, duty triumphs over love.

Women were regarded as the weaker gender in the time of the French Baroque. They displayed distrust, fear and sluggishness. In Lully's opera, Armide exerts power over men, who had a higher status in society and who displayed virtue and intelligence. The act of exerting power over men was regarded as a sin and Armide gets punished for it when Rinaldo leaves her at the end.

The authoritative reign of Louis XIV is also articulated in Lully's *Armide*. Lully similarly took authoritative control over the staging of his production and, furthermore, all of his operas served as propaganda to glorify Louis XIV. It can also be said that Louis XIV is represented in the story through the character of Rinaldo – after a love affair he returns to his duties.

Lully's *Armide* has a strong religious and political tone as well, similar to the original tale by Tasso. The fight between the Catholics and Protestants still continues and this time the battle in Lully's *Armide* alludes to the Edict of Nantes where Louis IV tried to equalise the Protestant and Catholic faith, and to the Edict of Fontainebleau where Louis XIV tried to convert the Huguenots (Protestants) to Catholicism by

destroying their churches and closing their schools. This is interesting when referring back to the ending of Lully's *Armide*. Instead, of Armide converting to Christianity as in Tasso's original tale, Rinaldo leaves her and she orders demons to destroy her magic garden.

Lully's *Armide* accentuated the importance of the visual and how this was portrayed in front of the audience. There was also a focus on Armide's eyes as her most dangerous weapon and the core of her beauty. The power of the eyes is a strong image. According to Descartes the eyes can differentiate between that which exists and that which doesn't. Furthermore, there is also an emphasis on the faultiness of human perception in Lully's *Armide* where demons are disguised as nymphs and as loved ones in order to deceive the Christian knights. This alludes to Descartes's ideas about the measures how to define reality through clear visual perception, but also his ideas about the faultiness in the way humans perceive.

Paradoxically, though, the most famous moment in Lully's *Armide* is where the visual is toned down and the drama is expressed through Armide's voice and the music. Music is then connected to the aesthetic sublime. This creates a multitude of different interpretations of what the visual represents in Lully's *Armide* and what the character of Armide represents. Even more inner conflicts, besides the inner conflict of Armide, are discovered. There are, for example, conflicts between visual perception as defining reality and the supernatural that is represented through the visual in Lully's *Armide*. Another example is when the visual is toned done and expression is given through music alone. At the same time diminishing the visual can refer to non-existence as well as something dangerously sensual and at the same time transcendental.

From this research it is clear that there are connections between Lully's *Armide*, Baroque philosophy, the reign of Louis XIV, the regard of women in the French Baroque, the battle between Catholics and Protestants in the *Edicts of Nantes and Fontainebleau*, and the fixation with visual observation in the Baroque period.

5.3. Judith Weir's *Armida*

The philosophical ideas surrounding the 21st century and also its coinciding contextual background is clearly articulated in Judith Weir's *Armida*. The postmodern ideas of relativism, restrictive and culture specific understanding of human knowledge, doubts about faith, capitalism and mass media, and the break of boundaries between elite and popular culture are articulated in Weir's *Armida*.

Relativism was infused into the arts by the acceptance of all previous genres as acceptable and also the merging of these genres. This is exactly what Weir does when she decides on a half-classical, half-jazz ensemble for her opera. The culture specific and restrictive understanding of human knowledge is articulated in Weir's thoughts on the interpretation of her opera. Although she knows that many operas have moral messages, she doesn't want to restrict the audience in a certain interpretation, but rather wants them to question the happenings (Weir, 2013).

The doubts about faith and an increasing non-religious society (as given in previous stated statistics⁴⁷) are articulated in Weir's *Armida* by completely breaking with the religious message as given in previous interpretations of *Gerusalemme Liberata*. This is a clear distinction between Lully and Weir's operas: one was largely concerned with religion where in the other the composer aspired to discard religion.

The view on women, gender equality and racism also radically changed in the 21st century and are similarly articulated in Weir's *Armida*. *Armida* is a very strong character and sometimes even speaks up for Rinaldo when he doesn't say anything. This alludes to the equality of and, sometimes even, paradigm shift in gender roles in the 21st century. An increasing respect for non-Western societies, globalization and a multi-ethnic society is articulated in the two black singers used in Weir's *Armida*.

The large number of differences between Lully and Weir's operas is a result of Weir's setting. Weir opted for a more realistic approach and placed the characters as normal people in a contemporary time and setting. *Armida* is not a supernatural

⁴⁷ See subheading 4.5.

pagan princess, but a TV journalist in the “occupied zone” of a war against, supposedly, terrorism and there is no referral to her religion. Rinaldo is a considerate soldier, but a member of the Peacekeeping force in this contemporary war setting. He also has a weaker and more sensitive character than that of Lully’s Rinaldo. It is Armida who takes him away from the camp and it is she who speaks up for him when his comrades are interrogating him.

Weir started writing her opera in the preamble to the Iraq war and was inspired by news broadcasts which included journalists interviewing the soldiers. Although she wanted to keep her opera neutral with regards to religion, the Iraq war was largely a religious war and was even said to have parallels with the crusades. In this way the types of war displayed in both Lully and Weir’s operas have religious connotations and are linked to evangelization.

There are some similarities in Lully and Weir’s forms of their operas. Both Lully and Weir created a *liquid* musical material where there aren’t distinctions between *aria* and *recitative*. The Armidas in both Lully and Weir’s productions are very strong characters and have beautiful eyes. There are some plots in Weir’s *Armida* that also appear in Lully’s *Armide*, and that are even similar to the original plots in the epic poem of Tasso. Lully’s Armide seduces the Christian knights to stop their progression, and similarly, Weir’s Armida interviews the soldiers to, secretly, undermine their cause. In both interpretations Rinaldo is carried away by Armide/a to an idyllic destination where the relationship between the two develops. In both interpretations Rinaldo’s comrades come to rescue him. Weir’s Armida differs in that Rinaldo doesn’t come to his senses and renounces his duty and cause. Thus, he chooses love over duty, clashing largely with Lully’s *Armide* where Rinaldo chooses duty over love. Weir’s ending is also not tragic, like Lully’s, but instead ends light-heartedly with an anti-war message. Generally, Weir’s *Armida* is less serious and has a lighter tone than Lully’s *Armide*.

5.4. Consequences for the performer

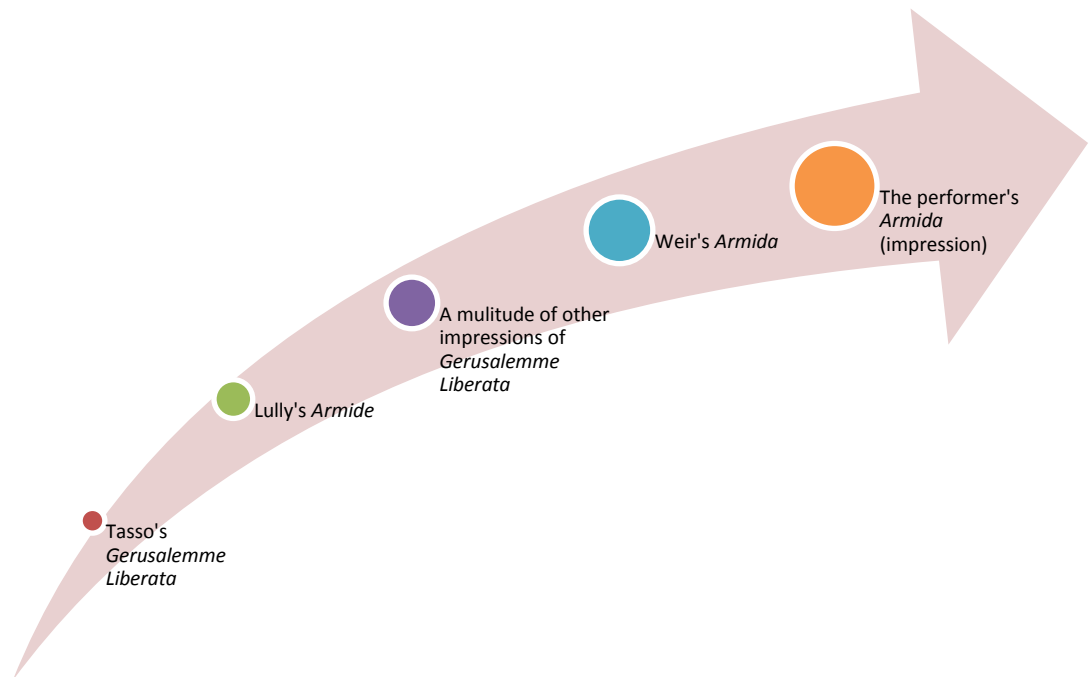
The results of the study of comparing these different interpretations and their interrelated contexts have large influences for me as a classical performer. I will start by explaining a project called *Art in context* that I was involved in and which was one

of the external projects of the subject, *Musikk i perspektiv*. At the beginning of the project we were asked to choose one artwork out of the exhibition at the National Gallery in Oslo that spoke to us in some way. Afterwards we were given twenty minutes in which we had to paint an *impression*, thus our own interpretation, of that artwork. After these twenty minutes we had to display our paintings and reflect on them. In the rest of the week we were given similar tasks of making impressions and associations of the original artwork through the use of different art mediums.

After the week I reflected a lot about the connections between this project and musical performance. As we had to choose one piece from the exhibition, so in musical performance we also choose a piece of music that communicates something to us. Throughout the project week we created quite a few impressions of the original artwork by using different mediums. Similarly, in musical performance we can create new impressions of an original piece of music by using different methods and by displaying our own uniqueness and values through the musical performance.

I was inspired by this project to use a framework of four art canvasses to explain the practical effect of my research. The first canvas is the original painting from which all other artworks have been inspired. This refers to the original poem, *Gerusalemme Liberata* as written by Torquato Tasso. The second canvas is by another artist, who lived in another time, who was inspired by the first canvas, and decided to make an impression of it. This is Jean-Baptiste Lully's opera, *Armide*, which was written in the French Baroque period. The third canvas is also by another artist, who lived in another time, who was inspired by the original canvas, but also all the other canvasses (operas) that came after the original and took their inspiration from the original. This is Judith Weir's *Armida* which was written in the postmodern era.

The fourth canvas is the performer's canvas. This canvas is inspired by all three canvasses, and this new artist has the possibility to use elements and mediums from the previous artworks to build on his/her impression (performance). It is interesting for this performer to look at the contexts of these artworks from both traditional and fresh perspectives, and to understand why these artworks differ from each other. This gives the performer more colours on his/her palette, or rather in plain terms, more resources and mediums for his/her performance.



The reason why I chose to study Lully's *Armide* and Judith Weir's *Armida* was because of the time gap between them. Weir's *Armida* was written in contemporary times, which is the same time that I, as the performer, live in today. Thus, the way operas are performed in her time, is also applicable to me.

As a performer I now have the possibility to engage with elements from both Lully's *Armide* and Judith Weir's *Armida* in my new *impression* of *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Thus, for me it is important to, in my concert, engage with the **results** of this research, rather than just use elements of these pieces that I was already aware of at the beginning of my research.

Thus, as a result of gaining information from the contexts in which Lully and Weir composed their operas, I can now experiment, for example, with gender inequality or focus my performance on dangerous beauty, which were all part of the **context** of Lully's *Armide*. I can engage or disengage with the religious, by including, for example, elements of religious wars, as was portrayed in the **contexts** of both Lully and Weir's operas. In terms of performance, I can experiment by making instrumentalists part of the dramatic context or by incorporating conflicting compositions into my performance, as in the Baroque era. I could work with incorporating conflicts between music and text and dramatic action, as is common in

postmodern opera productions. To give it a political meaning, as it had in both Lully and Weir's operas, I could transfer it to a more topical setting, like the apartheid era⁴⁸ in South-Africa. In such a production Rinaldo could be a black political activist and Armida could be a girl from a very conservative Caucasian family in South-Africa. I could also use a contemporary setting with more realistic and topical characters.

Thus, Weir's contemporary setting in her *Armida* can also be applied to a contemporary performance of Lully's *Armide*. In fact, a performance of Lully's *Armide* in the Postmodern world of today, could be made more understandable perhaps, by making the lead characters a TV-journalist and soldier. Thus, Judith Weir's *Armida* serves as yet another example of what can be done with an old 'canvas'.

5.5. Impressions

I will now make a direct link between my thesis and how it inspired my master concert. I had difficulty to find distinct arias in both Lully and Weir's operas, because as I have explained in my research, both Lully and Weir's operas don't have distinctions between *aria* and *recitative*. Consequently, I decided to in addition include music from other Armida operas in my concert in addition. Likewise, I liked the **Baroque convention** of putting different compositions by different composers in between relevant music⁴⁹, so I decided to include some non-Armida music as well. This also fitted well with the Postmodern music convention of collages.⁵⁰

Furthermore, a large part of this research was about context and therefore I wanted to engage with the idea of taking a piece of music out of its original **context** and putting it in a new **context**, thus giving it a new meaning. Consequently, I came with the idea to make a collage mini-opera, which included different music by different composers, and which together formed the storyline of my own impression of the Armida story. This also alludes to the postmodern idea of **relativism** which accepts all former genres and in which new genres are merged.

⁴⁸ Apartheid was a system of racial segregation enforced by the National Party in South-Africa and it lasted 1948-1994. In this era the rights of the majority of black inhabitants were subjugated and white supremacy and rule was retained.

⁴⁹ This was explained in subheading 3.5. of this thesis.

⁵⁰ Subheading 4.1.

I liked the Asian ethnicity of Armida as portrayed in Lully's *Armide* which alludes to Orientalism in the context of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*⁵¹. I also liked the more realistic Armida that is portrayed in Judith Weir's composition. Consequently, for my concert Armida is a **beautiful** and **powerful** Asian spy that always gets what she wants and Rinaldo is a member of a Caucasian secret service. The theme of opposing duties and forbidden love, more distinctly the **conflict between love and duty** as portrayed in both Lully and Weir's compositions, will also be articulated in my impression, as well as the idea of a **multi-racial society** and **gender equality**, as portrayed in Judith Weir's **context**.

I reflected about the fixation with the **visual**⁵² and the **power of the eyes** that was a focus in the **context** of Lully's *Armide*, and how I could concretize it in contemporary times. I have a large fascination with colours and thought about the similarities between music and colour. Colour is also directly linked to that which we observe visually and this alludes to Descartes's reality theory⁵³. There has also been much discussion about the interrelationship between colour and music. The matter of the relationship between music and colour also includes the link between form and colour, music and light, music intervals and colour, sound and colour, and thus, in general, music and visual art. Furthermore, the combination of visual art and music also alludes to the postmodern idea of blurring the genres between different art forms (Jewanski, 2001.156).

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), the Austrian composer and painter, (Jewanski, 2001:159) chose in his opera, *Die glückliche Hand* (1913), to articulate emotions led by the dramatic action in other ways than just by the music alone:

...it should be evident that movement, colours and light are to be treated in the same way as notes are usually handled: they must make music. Figures and structures are to be formed, as it were, from various light

⁵¹ Subheading 2.1.

⁵² Refer back to Chapter 2.

⁵³ Subheading 3.1.

values and shades of colour, resembling the structures, figures and motifs of the music...

Thus colour becomes another **instrument** that can be used as part of the dramatic action. I decided to incorporate the use of colour as a visual expression mode in my concert. Throughout history colour symbolism has been used in religion, armour, medieval science, literature, art and psychology to convey meanings. There exist two poles of colours. The first pole consists of the warm, progressing colours that are associated with integration, action and power. These colours consist of white, yellow, orange and red. The second pole of colours refers to the cold, receding colours that are associated with disconnection, inactiveness and affliction. These colours are comprised of black, violet, indigo and blue. Green exists as the intermediary, connecting colour between the two pools of colours (Cirlot, 2002: 52).

There is an ordered similarity between the arrangement of the six or seven colours, the series of seven vowels that exists in the Greek language and the seven notes in a musical scale. The similarities between these three orders are connected to the splitting of the heavens into seven parts, conferring to ancient astro-biological⁵⁴ ideas. Colour symbolism generally originates from one of these three main sources: i) the built-in attributes of a colour, perceived naturally as an impartial fact; ii) the connection between a colour and the planetary sign originally associated with it; and iii) the connection that is perceived by basic, primeval logic. The third source is more preferred in modern psychology and psycho-analysis. It is also evidently true that cultures and societies differ in the meanings that they associate with different colours⁵⁵ (Cirlot, 2002: 52-53).

The symbolical meanings of colours that have the most significance will be briefly explained. The colour blue is associated with spiritual emotion, heaven, truth, dedication, faithfulness, and innocence. It can also refer to grief, hopelessness and shyness. Green refers to growth, fertility, youth, rejuvenation, empathy, serenity,

⁵⁴ Astro-biology is the study of the source, development, migration, multiplication and prospect of life in the universe.

⁵⁵ Similar to music.

peace and acclimation. It can also have connotations to toxins, jealousy, naivety, creepiness and vomiting. The colour violet brings forth nostalgia and memories, consisting of blue (dedication) and red (urging). Yellow signifies generosity, hope, happiness, optimism, warmth, awareness and intelligence. Negatively, it can suggest caution, illness, unfaithfulness, treachery and ageing (Cirlot, 2002: 54; Feisner, 2006:121-122).

The colour orange is connected to glowing, joyfulness, dignity and avidity, or on the other side presumptuousness. The colour red suggests a lot of energy and is associated with love, luck, status, bravery, desire, emotion, power and the life-giving source. On the other hand it also refers to combat, the devil, hazards and fire. Brown has connotations to comfort, safety, despair and monotony (Cirlot, 2002: 54; Feisner, 2006:121-122).

Grey is not negative or positive. It suggests misunderstanding, loss of division ('grey area'), intellect and glooms. It refers to neutralization, self-absorption, dejection, apathy and unresponsiveness. Purple signifies supremacy, mysticism and sublimation. The colour pink, which is also the colour of skin, is associated with sexuality and the sentiment (Cirlot, 2002: 54; Feisner, 2006:121).

The colour black has connotations to superiority, esteem, infinity, death, misery, hollowness, gloominess and mystery. White signifies all the colours combined and at the same time colourlessness. It has references to pureness, virtue, peace, birth and authorization. On the other side white can also refer to submission, cowardliness and falsification of justice (Feisner, 2006:120-121).

By means of costumes and lighting I will use colour to convey certain moods, emotions and themes that are expressed in the different scenes. After being inspired by the idea of incorporation colour as an expressive medium, I decided on a title for the concert: *50 shades of Armida*. It is a contemporary title, and has references to

the popular novels by E.L. James⁵⁶. I think it will be eye-catching and attract curiosity.

This is the new *impression* of the original Armida story occurred to me and that I will portray in my concert:

The concert will start with an aria out of George Frideric Handel's *Rinaldo* (1711), called *Furie terribili*. The translation of this aria is as follows: "Fearful furies, encircle me, trail flames of terror behind me." (Chalmers, 2010:9) This is Armida's entrance aria in Handel's *Rinaldo*, where she appears on a chariot drawn by dragons. I thought it would serve well for the beginning of the concert. In its original **context** Armida comes to help Argante, the Saracen king, to destroy the crusader army in this aria (Hicks, 1992:1342). In my *impression*, Armida shows her fury about the spy, Rinaldo, who has freed a large number of his allies from a military prison in Asia. The colours that can be used in this scene are red, orange and black, referring to the anger, **power** and esteem of Armida and the danger and *fire* of her **beauty** and **duties**.

After this, Armida reflects about her **duty** as a spy and the actual violence and murder that it endeavours. She knows that it is a bad profession, but it is impossible to stop now. This I will represent through an extract out of Judith Weir's *Armida*. It is out of scene 3 where Armida, Ms. Pescado and Idraote are in the Metropolis TV studio⁵⁷. They have been watching fragments of the scene in the army camp through monitors. The extract that I will use is Armida's TV-broadcast about the war: "Let's see...the civil war..." She coldly states facts about violence, religion, ethnicity, chaos, "the last resort", "the collapse of social unity" and the ways of attack. Colours to complement this scene can include green, suggesting the *sickness* of war, and grey, suggesting Armida's cold apathy towards the violence. At the same time there is a paradox or conflict in Armida's thoughts about the gruesome violence and simultaneously, her apathy towards it. This has links to the themes of **war**, **religion**,

⁵⁶ *Fifty shades of Grey*.

⁵⁷ Subheading 4.7.

duty, personal emotion, inner conflicts and **orientalism** that are displayed in the contexts of both Lully and Weir's operas.

The third aria is from Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito* (1791), called *Deh se piacer mi vuoi*. In its original **context** this aria is sung by the character Vitellia who is trying to take the throne and uses her lover, Sesto, to accomplish her goals. In this aria she is assuring Sesto of her love and her plans (The Metropolitan Opera, 2013). In my *impression* of the aria, Armida is dealing with her own inner conflicts. This is taken from the **inner conflicts** that Armide had in Lully's composition, and also of the conflicts between **love and duty, romance and epic**, and the conflict between the **Catholics and Protestants**⁵⁸. Instead of talking to someone this is an aria where Armida is talking to herself and reassuring herself that she is able to capture Rinaldo all by herself and put an end to his life, as a sequel to the previous aria. The colours that can be used in this scene are yellow, grey, and blue, signifying caution, uncertainty (inner conflict) and dedication (duty).

Dove son io is a love duet between Armida and Rinaldo in Gioachino Rossini's *Armida* (1817). In the original **context** of Rossini's opera Rinaldo kills one of his fellow knights, Gernando, and flees with Armida to a forest inhabited by demons where the duet is then sung (The Metropolitan Opera, 2013). In my *impression* of the duet, Armida is searching for Rinaldo and when both of them see each other, they instantly fall in love. The colours that can support the atmosphere in this duet can include red, pink and white. The love and attraction between Armida and Rinaldo are expressed in red and pink, and their opposing duties and virtues can be expressed with the colour white. Thus again the conflict between and merging of love and duty are expressed in this scene. This also has connotations with Armida and Rinaldo **losing their own identities** as they fall in love⁵⁹.

The first act ends with an aria from Lully's *Armide*, *Venez, venez Haine implacable*. In the original **context** Armide and Renaud (Rinaldo) have been transported to a distant desert after Armide placed a spell on Renaud to make him fall in love with

⁵⁸ Refer back to Chapter 2.

⁵⁹ First paragraph of subheading 5.2.

her. Armida is struggling to enjoy Renaud's love, because she knows it's because of the spell. She summons Hate (a female) and his followers (which are all males) to help her overcome love. In Hate's attempt to break cupid's bows and arrows, Armide stops her. Hatred informs Armide never to ask for her help again and disappears (Rosow, 2001:201). In my *impression* of the aria Armida is trying to remember her goal and **duty**, which was to kill Rinaldo, in order to restore her hate for him, but she fails completely. The colours that can be used in this scene are white, orange and pink, connoting to **duty** and fire that will be overcome by **love**.

The second act begins with Maurice Ravel's *Sheherazade* cycle (1903). Scheherazade is a queen or storyteller of Arabian Nights according to Persian folklore. The king, Shahryar, marries a new wife every day and sends her to be beheaded the next day. Scheherazade spends one night with the king, and starts telling him a story. Since she does not finish it, the king decides to spare her life. Every night for a 1001 nights she continues telling him stories (Woodside, 2008). This idea of storytelling alludes to Weir's fixation with the **narrative**⁶⁰ in her music. In the first song of Ravel's cycle Asia is described in a dream-like manner. The second song is about an enchanted flute heard by Scheherazade and which she associates with her love. The third is about a stranger with a feminine-like **beauty** who walks past and whom she invites in, but he passes on (Johnson & Stokes, 2000:402-403).

In my *impression*, it should be distinctively clear at the start of the second act that Armida and Rinaldo have fled together to an exotic and mysterious Asian destination. The first song symbolizes the ups and downs in their relationship. It should also be noticeably clear that they quarrel and fight a lot, and that this is a challenge for their relationship. Armida wants **authoritative**⁶¹ control in their relationship and this causes problems. At the end of the first song Rinaldo has left their dwelling after a serious quarrel. The colours complementing this song can be black, purple, red and blue. Black and purple refers to the mystery and gloominess of their relationship, Armida's superiority and the exotic destination; red signifies their

⁶⁰ Third paragraph of subheading 4.7.

⁶¹ Louis XIV of France's authoritative rule.

love, but also their **quarrels**⁶² ending in sorrow, which is represented in the colour blue.

In the second song Armida is sleeping inside and awakes at the sound of a flute, which she **associates** with Rinaldo⁶³. Blue can be used to refer to the calm in Armida's sleep, and yellow and red, showing her excitement and desire (**love**) at hearing Rinaldo. In the third song she goes outside to look for him. He tells her that he has had enough and he leaves her. I thought that this could be a more realistic way for him to leave her, since she is not a sorceress in this **impression** of the story. The colours to be used in this scene can include first yellow and orange in Armida's prolonged excitement, and then a dark blue, black and grey, signifying loss, depression and dejection as Rinaldo leaves.

After Rinaldo leaves, Armida experiences a turmoil of emotions. This is concretized in an aria out of Haydn's *Armida* (1784), *Vedi, se t'amo... Odio furor dispetto*. In its original **context** Rinaldo has just gone away from Armida's enchanted garden with Ubaldo, and Armida expresses her misery and anger. A direct translation of the words in the first line of the aria, *Odio furor dispetto*, is as follows: hate, rage, resentment, sorrow, regret, anger (Hunter, 1992:199). In an attempt to show this turmoil of emotions, a number of colours can be used, like blue (sadness), orange (fire), red (passion and anger), green (nausea), and yellow (treachery). This again alludes to Armida's **inner conflicts** as explained in Chapter 3.

After this Armida is grave and despairs. In Chinese culture white is a colour used in association with mourning and funerals (Vidamor, 2000:81). This graveness and despair can be expressed with a white, grey (unresponsive), green (sickness) and very gloomy atmosphere. Armida then struggles to choose between her desires for love and revenge. This again coincides with the theme of choosing between **love and duty**, as portrayed in both Lully and Weir's operas. In the original final scene out

⁶² This alludes to the theme of opposing ideas and conflicts.

⁶³ The idea of association also appears in the prologue of Lully's *Armide* (which was always a celebration of and propaganda for King Louis XIV): Glory and Wisdom is supported by their followers in celebrating their power over an unknown hero which they associate with Louis XIV. Refer to subheading 3.6.

of Rossini's *Armida*, *Dove son io? Fuggi!*, love and revenge are personified (Osborne, 1992:199). Instead of personification, these emotions can be portrayed by means of colours. There can be interplay between pink (love) and orange (revenge), with splashes of yellow suggesting dedication. In the end *Armida* chooses revenge. This can be portrayed with orange, red and black. This marks the end of the collage opera.

Hence, I did research on the **contexts** which inspired Lully and Weir's operas, *Armide* and *Armida*. I recognised certain **themes** out of these contexts and will include them in my final exam concert. The themes that I shall include in my concert which allude to the contexts of Lully's and Weir's operas, are: Baroque philosophy on reality theories; Baroque opera convention; beauty and the power of the eyes; the conflict between love (personal emotion) and duty (order); visual fixation in French Baroque operas; Orientalism; religious wars; inner conflicts; loss of identity; association; contextualization in Postmodern opera productions; relativism in Postmodern thought; multi-racial society; gender equality; narrative form.

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