Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate's *Dido and Aeneas*

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By

Edna Holywell

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PREFACE

In this book, I reinterpret the topoi represented in Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate's early modern English opera *Dido and Aeneas* (c. 1689) in order to evaluate the significance of the work to audiences today. Examining the rhetorical devices, literary as well as musical, together with those found in the performance texts provides an account of the underlying topoi that form the opera. Employing multi-disciplinary methodologies within the domains of education history, literary studies, historical musicology and production critique, I construct a theoretical argument about approaches toward reading and understanding works like *Dido*. In so doing, I argue that *Dido* is written in two languages—the spoken and the musical—contributing to wider knowledge because its amalgamation of textual and musical topoi has rarely if ever been discussed.

In chapter 1, I assess recent literature on topoi in musicological studies, outlining some questions—particularly the problematic synonymous use of topos and trope. First, I redefine what the topos denotes. Then, I expand on current arguments about topoi to contribute to the recent topic studies debate in musicology. In chapter 2, I propose (by means of intertextual interpretation) that principal personae Dido and Aeneas are politico-cultural constructs. I attribute differences in character portrayal to literary-historical conditions. I review humanist educational values which, following Erasmus, introduced the post-scholastic 'pagan text' curriculum. I investigate why Tate and Purcell chose to render their version of the Dido myth from a historico-pedagogical perspective. In chapter 3, I scrutinise the mechanism of musical rhetoric against the textual presentation of topoi. I compare the only six extant musical sources arguing that each is equally 'meaningful.' I survey 17th, 18th and 19th century changing perceptions of topoi. My interpretation is a paradigm shift away from the traditional source hierarchy. Previously, codicologists seeking to 'restore' Purcell's lost autograph (preserving his original intentions) viewed later sources as corrupt. In chapter 4, I appraise *Dido*'s

reception in the modern era incorporating the opera-film as one of three case studies and various *Regietheater* stagings. I reveal how topoi depiction has significantly changed further in recent years.

In conclusion, I argue that the representational methods and devices altered over time—deconstructed through various frames—enable the operatic topoi in *Dido* to retain their applicability and consequence to many generations.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A-Wn	Austria, Österrichische Nationalbibliotek, Vienna.
CDN-Ttfl	Canada, University of Toronto Library.
D-B	Germany, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.
D-FRu	Germany, Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg.
	E-Msi Spain, Universidad Complutense
	Biblioteca de San Isidoro, Madrid.
F-Pn	France, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.
GB-Cfm	Great Britain, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
GB-Ctc	Great Britain, Trinity College Library, Cambridge.
GB-Cu	Great Britain, Cambridge University Library.
GB-KNt	Great Britain, Tatton Park Library, Cheshire.
GB-Lam	Great Britain, Royal Academy of Music, London.
GB-Lbl	Great Britain, British Library, London.
GB-Lcm	Great Britain, Royal College of Music, London.
GB-Lwa	Great Britain, Westminster Abbey Library, London.
GB-Ob	Great Britain, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
I-Rn	Italy, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Rome.
J-WAkt	Japan, Nanki Music Library at the
	Wakayama Prefectural Library.
US-AAu	USA, University of Michigan Library.
US-NYj	USA, Lila Acheson Wallace Library at the
	Julliard School, New York.
US-NYp	USA, New York Public Library.
US-SM	USA, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
US-Ws	USA, Folgar Shakespeare Library, Washington DC.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This book explores the literary-textual and musico-rhetorical topoi in the early modern opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell (c. 1659–1695) set to a libretto by Nahum Tate (1652–1715). My methodologies are interdisciplinary building on protocol and procedures drawn from literary criticism, historical musicology, philosophy of education and theatre studies. I survey the earliest libretto and its literary source materials from antiquity to the late seventeenth century, all surviving musical sources, 17th-century educational systems and contemporary stagings.

Dido is based on the myth of the legendary meeting between Dido, Queen of Carthage and Aeneas, and is all-sung, unusual in English musical drama at that time. Whilst scholars have established that the opera was performed in Josias Priest's boarding school for young gentlewomen c. 1689, it has had greater cultural merit than that implied by its small-scale beginnings.[1] For instance, Dido's aria 'When I am laid in earth' has become an integral part of British national consciousness and a symbol of death and grief, performed by a brass band and broadcast from the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday every year, a practice which began in the early 1930s. In this book I ask why *Dido* is still so relevant, arguing that one answer is found in the many topoi presented in the work, which make possible the retention of its status and significance to many generations by the alteration, at times, of representational methods and devices.

What I call topoi here are chiefly the abstract nouns such as fate, destiny, love, death, grief, piety and others which dominate *Dido*'s text first set down by Tate and then characterised in Purcell's music. I broadly define these topoi as affecting and expressive thematic signifiers. Furthermore, I argue that topoi in *Dido* enable the identification of themes or motific triggers which do not directly evoke any of the five senses.[2] In other

words, topoi (to my mind) are overarching conceptual provocations that might directly engage an audience's emotional and/or intellectual faculties rather than appealing to sensory experience: sight; sound; smell; taste or touch. Topoi in *Dido* therefore operate on a non-figurative level by shaping the narrative, its representation and interpretation by means of ideas, patterns and conceptual elements which might resonate with an audience's imagination, thoughts and impressions rather than through direct sensory stimulation. Fate, destiny, love and death are *Dido*'s essential topoi because they explain the work's emotional depth, dramatic structure and character motivations. Fate creates the tragic tension. Although Dido and Aeneas are in love, their separation is inevitable. As I clarify later, Dido's destiny is to be abandoned. Aeneas' fate is to found Rome. Love is a fragile source of weakness destabilised by an external power. Death is both a result of fate's unbending strength and also the conclusion of lifeless love.

In modern literary criticism, the term topos has come to be used to identify a conventional or recurring theme or expression often in a pejorative sense to connote a 'cliché.'[3] In fact, *Dido* is often referred to using hyperbolic emotive or potentially clichéd expressions. For example, one critic pronounced a 2009 performance a tempestuous tale of passion and grief.[4] By resorting to familiar and overused expressions, the critic lost the opportunity to discover what was unique and innovative about the staging. Rather than offering a new or insightful account, the writer relied on a bank of clichéd interpretations of topoi repeating an oft-used formula that has been employed numerous times to describe the narrative and characters.

For my purposes, topoi are conventional (albeit sometimes stereotypical) theatrical, literary or musico-rhetorical devices epitomising standardised ideas or concepts.[5] My use of the term 'topos' ultimately derives from the persuasive aspect of classical rhetoric (see below) but has been adapted for my purpose. I aim to deconstruct how cultural practices, texts and ideologies enable readers/audiences to make 'meaning.' To this end, I incorporate the imperative literary-thematic aspect explicated above.[6]

Many critical theorists today follow Aristotle (384–322 BCE) in conceptualising/defining topoi as particular stereotypical arguments that an audience could comprehend without difficulty.[7] Aristotle first recorded the notion of the topos in *Topica* (350 BCE).[8] He convincingly uses topoi to locate the invention of an argument's proposition in ἔνδοξα/*endoxa* (opinions held by a consensus of people) deriving from δόξα/*doxa* (individual opinions). It is also my contention (after Aristotle) that the affective connotation of a topos (or an 'argument') is located in a shared premise which is why an abstract noun or an affective topos might be thought of as prototypical or archetypal. In this book, I maintain that a topos—which is fundamentally a thematic context—might be collectively understood as a commonplace or common sense but could also be perceived as formulaic or prosaic.

In the twentieth century the 'topos' label became widely associated with literary studies after German philologist ER Curtius published *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* in 1948. Curtius linked rhetorical forms to modern literary constructions in an attempt to bring back or re-invent the European Latin heritage. Curtius' innovation produced common modes of expression which both represented and had an impact or 'troped' on literary and for my purposes musico-rhetorical 'clichés.' Topoi in critical theory have a number of methodological applications for my study. As I argued above, I apply the term to refer to the thematic and/or conceptual rhetorical constructions by means of which I critique music, text, culture and discourse.

Fate, destiny, love and death (just four of the many topoi that *Dido* exhibits) are stock operatic topoi. But they are of central concern in the opera. Fate, destiny, love and death constitute *Dido*'s essential themes, principal components and/or key ideas. I argue in this book that those topoi were not only significant and relevant to the *Dido* mythos. They were reinvented by Tate and Purcell in their unique rendering. Those topoi and many others were contrived and refashioned by translators, writers, orchestrators, dramaturgs and directors in every embodiment of *Dido* up to the present day. Both the appeal and the significance of the work is perpetually reinstituted and re-enabled to interest contemporary audiences.

Topoi are valuable tools when employed for the purpose of textual interpretation. One discernible advantage of thematic analysis is that an effective understanding of the topoi present in the text helps persuasively to both identify textual questions and also to locate the text within the cultural and moral discourse at the time it was produced and beyond.[9] A topos might also provide an underlying coherence to a text that is not immediately obvious on the surface. My enquiry considers how topoi travel and mutate in both literary and musico-rhetorical history. Because when a topos surfaces in a specific historical situation, it is, according to Curtius, a sign of a change in the 'psychological state' of the culture producing the topos. Similarly, topoi emerge because of various historical phenomena that pervade a given culture.[10] I deploy topoi heuristically to enable the identification and exploration of hidden tenets or meanings. In this book, topoi serve a number of purposes including operating as scaffolding with which I construct my argument about how connotation and denotation are designed and reproduced. Additionally, topoi facilitate the deconstruction and communication of signification.

In this book, I use topoi critique and thematic investigation interchangeably to conduct a semiotic analysis. In practice this means that a topos (understood as thematic signification) might be successfully conveyed by a particular device (textual and/or musical 'sign') which necessitates the semiotic framework employed vis-à-vis signifier vs signified. I consider topoi to function more like themes than motifs because of their usage and repetition.[11]

Literary theory pragmatically defines a theme as the main topic of a text usually if not always reflecting large existential presumptions. However, a critique of topoi could also in principle be a simple inventory of co-present themes. Like any cultural product *Dido* is essentially made up of topoi at different systemic levels and different degrees of particularity/generality. Topoi, like themes, which are usually assumed to be governing beliefs or even universal constructions (sometimes clichés or stereotypes) can actually vary and/or transfigure. Whether a topos is a cliché or a universal concept depends largely on interpretation which might be counterposed to description. But to speak of 'interpretation' invites misunderstanding from

the outset. In order to examine this hypothesis more closely, I unpack some pertinent contemporary theories.[12]

Concerning the relevance and suitability of topoi to musical exegesis, I argue that musical rhetoric based on motifs, rhythmic and melodic figures or structural forms can operate aesthetically to give signification or 'meaning' by evoking 'passion' or emotion. Similarly, musico-rhetorical devices can influence dramatic characterisation and the reception thereof. Topic theory in musicology has focused mainly on musical figures and devices calling them topoi. But somewhat problematically, the discourse often applies the terms 'topos' and *tropus* [trope] synonymously. In this book I advocate Robert Hatten's line of reasoning that topoi have the potential to become tropes. For my purposes, a trope is an elaboration or explication of a predictable figure (which in rhetoric can serve as a device involving a change or transference of meaning working at a conceptual level) whilst a topos as a theme functions representationally.[13] In other words a topos is a tool of invention signifying thematic models which a *tropus* not only denotes but also expands upon and develops.[14]

Topic theory in musicology has so far been applied to music written from the eighteenth century onward. I explain below to what extent the theoretical archetype prevalent in the eighteenth century is germane to 17th-century music. In Danuta Mirka's introduction to *Topic Theory* published in 2014 she rightly suggests that by the eighteenth century the impression that all musical parameters had affective qualities was an established paradigm.[15] I argue that topic theories like earlier *Affekt* theories can be expediently deployed to Tate and Purcell's representations of fate, destiny, love and death in particular approaching the process as a hermeneutic philosophical problem. In so doing, I claim that text and music can express, or be expressive of, human emotions like joy or sorrow.

As I argued above, the current musicological debate has not yet extended back into the seventeenth century, but seems to be fixed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries principally engaging with instrumental or 'pure' music. Because 18th-century theory was to a large extent based on

conventions that were inaugurated or developing in 17th-century music, 18th-century theory might at times be appropriate to my argument.[16]

My research reveals that the amalgamation of textual and musical tropes in *Dido* has rarely if ever been discussed.[17] Both decoding and differentiating between topos and *tropus* is not straightforward. First the view that the creator/s has 'intentions' which a reading might uncover is contentious. Even if a 'fixed meaning' version were possible it would vary according to when the interpretation took place.[18] Second even if plausible, one explanation does not preclude another and third the 'meaning/s' and therefore the significance of a cultural product will inevitably change over time.[19] In this book I argue that interpretations or reinterpretations of topoi in *Dido* have foundations in distinct cultural and ideological ground. Consequently rather than valuing one definitive analysis over any other, I appraise *Dido*'s presentation and reception at different times in history.

Topic theory in musicology

In this section I provide a literature review outlining the history of topic studies in musicology. The term topos borrowed from rhetoric was first applied to musicology by Leonard Ratner (1916–2011) in *Music: The Listener's Art* (1957) and then developed in his *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (the "Expression" chapter) (1980) leading to the widespread adoption of the scholarly term 'Topic theory.'[20] Treating the topos as a musico-rhetorical mechanism transmitting 'meaning' Ratner divides topoi into two groups: 1. Functional types like dances or marches. 2. Styles including Turkish, military and hunting generating a thesaurus of characteristic figures.[21] According to my argument although pioneering, because Ratner's definition focuses only on the mechanisms of individual musico-rhetorical devices it is incomplete. Perhaps the profoundest flaw in Ratner's argument is that it does not address the broader, sociocultural aspects of music. Treating topics as rigid tools of representation means that context is ignored. In addition fixing topics definitively risks bypassing multiple 'meanings.' These issues are rectified to some extent by two of his students at Stanford University, Wye Jamison Allanbrook and Kofi Agawu.

Allanbrook and Agawu both extend Ratner's topical classificatory system. Allanbrook notes similarities between Ratner's musico-rhetorical Topic theory and Curtis' 'common place' literary exemplar.[22] For Allanbrook topical signification begins with the recognition of a style and/or genre that is found in a particular passage of music. She assumes that 18th-century listeners were fully familiar with this style/genre based musical vocabulary frequently encountering it in its basic forms. Recognition would have been instant and enjoyable. Allanbrook's concept of topical signification justly develops associations between styles and/or genres and affects but also makes connections to their social contexts. A case in point might be that dances are correlated with ballrooms and the social status of dancers; church music with religious ceremonials; pastoral music with the landscape; military marches with battlefields and parades; bugle calls with hunts. For this last reason especially Allanbrook correctly suggests that music is mimetic of the world.[23]

Agawu expands Ratner's scheme advancing a "universe of topic" in his monograph *Playing with Signs* (1991): chapter 2, figure 2. By adding classificatory categories Agawu integrates a variety of different affects and also some significant forms. His recognition of both the tragic and pathetic sentiments are relevant to *Dido*. Likewise his identification of the French overture, aria, recitative, bourrée, *ombra* [supernatural] and *Seufzer* [sigh] as topics are all pertinent to my argument.[24]

Like Agawu and many other scholars I study topoi as points of departure for hermeneutic investigation arguing that their significance is context-specific not definitive. However I also find that topoi have generalised or correlated 'meanings' which have been identified within the musicological dialogue.[25] Agawu is particularly interested in the structural and expressive qualities or attributes of music. In my opinion, Tate and Purcell's *Dido* combines Agawu's structural and expressive qualities thereby enabling in part its representations of fate, destiny, love, death and other topoi. Depicting musical rhetoric Agawu considers a language-based model to be helpful. Building on Raymond Monelle's argument which I shall return to later, Agawu expects musico-rhetorical analysis to do three things: 1. Explain the 'laws' governing the moment-by-moment succession of events in a piece of music. He believes that progression or sequence is the

musical syntax. 2. Explicate higher level organisation such as in literary terms, sentence, paragraph, chapter and more. 3. Supply a framework for understanding the overall discourse of music. Although according to Agawu there is no correlation between circumstance and 'meaning,' Agawu's method is valuable to my argument because I also interpret the sequence of musico-rhetorical and textual occurrences as events unfolding temporarily whilst giving a constructive interpretation of *Dido* in terms of formation and organisation. Like both Agawu and Monelle I argue that the musical tropes in Tate and Purcell's *Dido* supply a context/contexts for various modes and levels of associative signification.[26] Topic theories viewed through a postmodern lens might inform the recognition of various levels of signification in a work like *Dido*. I analyse some of those readings in my chapter 4 argument about proxemics among other things.[27]

Hatten rightly refers to the synthesis through which various musical elements combine to become an emergent entity that is not predictable as the sum of its parts.[28] His theory conveniently applies not only to gesture but also to topics which he defines as patches of music that trigger clear associations with styles, genres and expressive meanings.[29] For Hatten, separation which is characteristic of an analytical approach to musical understanding, is often inadequate to illuminate even basic musical modalities like structure and process. I endorse Hatten's argument that a synthetic approach might be more applicable, that is, a combination of hermeneutic and structuralist methods, which together might serve to enrich musical construal and appreciation. Hatten convincingly links a structuralist account (oppositions, their marked asymmetries and their expressive correlations) to a more hermeneutic perception of music—one that goes beyond general categories of meaning to address individual particularity as encountered in the unique contexts of specific works.[30] In this book I argue that expressive correlation in *Dido* is brought about both by unique context/s and also by formal and structural elements. In essence this means that like Hatten I fuse investigative inference with a critical awareness of both contextual and indicative significance.

In the wake of literary theory post-structuralist musicology generated a whole new range of arguments about the role of the listener or 'receiver' of music. The belief that a proliferation of interpretants existed led

musicologists directly toward a postmodern interpretative prototype.[31] It has by now become *de rigueur* to observe that an artwork necessitates a hermeneutic interrogation. From this perspective it is apparent and inevitable that the configurations of fate, destiny, love, death and the other topoi presented in *Dido* have the potential to bestow a multiplicity of meanings. In chapter 4 I question some of those 'meanings' by scrutinising staging practices and *Regietheater* representations in which dramaturgical priorities mould and shape audiences' experiences/perceptions of the work together with critical responses.

Recent adaptations of Ratner's original Topic theory have incorporated the template of connotation and denotation offered by literary theory. But according to my argument comparing music to language has always foundered on the ability of words to name or mean something 'specific'—the process called denotation—and the lack of such specificity in music. Peter Burkholder (2006) rightly contends that there are mechanisms in music which informed listeners intuitively grasp. According to those musico-rhetorical mechanisms or devices, music denotes something in particular (a 'meaning') which in turn both embodies and conveys connotations. Those connotations are significant here because they create patterns that are similar to the process by which a reader/audience 'understands' poetry, drama or other 'linguistic artworks.' Extending Burkholder's argument whilst designing a new paradigm, in chapter 3 I argue for the inclusion of textual topoi in the explication of musical rhetoric. Burkholder does not apply the labels connotation and denotation to musical meaning in their strictest sense but only insofar as they transmit the analogous impression that associations emerge with greater or lesser degrees of probability, variability and consistency.[32] Throughout this book I critique the mechanisms by which Tate and Purcell's *Dido* connotes fate, destiny, love, death and other topoi. My interdisciplinary, intertextual, interpretative study affirms that all analytical critique is contextually, culturally, ideologically and sociohistorically dependent.

Semiotics in musicology

In the section below I briefly survey particular aspects of contemporary music semiotics pertaining to my study. Since music semiotics is such a

large area of enquiry I have necessarily limited my review to: Nattiez (1990); Monelle (1992); Tarasti (1996); Walkling (1996); Lidov (2005); Hutcheon (2012); Rumph (2012); Saussure (2013) and Agawu (2014).

The subsequent investigation is necessary and apposite to my argument because (as numerous scholars have noted) during the Early Modern era the concept of musical signs and symbols traversed the art of persuasion through language. Like many other scholars, I argue that rhetorical principles play an important part in the examination and analysis of 17th-century music. 17th-century music theoreticians like Charles Butler and Thomas Mace (see chapter 3) and composers like Purcell discussed and applied figurative conventions to craft and design music that connoted specific narratives, inferences and/or emotions.[33] As I explain further in chapter 3 characterising music as a discourse was central to Butler, Mace and many of their peers by whom music was treated as a kind of rhetoric. Early modern theorists and composers applied techniques similar to those employed in speech in order to evoke audience response.

The first musicologist I evaluate in this segment is Raymond Monelle because he rightly affirms that semiotics provides a valuable framework for the understanding of music within a context. Monelle expands upon what he considers to be one of the linchpins of 20th-century linguistics—the declaration that linguistics is a synchronic study concerned with language as it is understood and spoken at this moment not with the (diachronic) history of the language. Like Agawu, a synchronic dissection according to Monelle must first rationalise the laws that govern the moment-by-moment succession of events in a piece which is the syntax of the music. Second and consequently it must expound upon the constraints affecting organisation at higher levels the levels of sentence, paragraph, chapter and beyond. Monelle aptly explores some of the implications of structuralist binary oppositions. In *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (1992) he attests that:

> Traditional metaphysics and epistemology have always privileged one of the terms in each opposition. In the field of aesthetics, the preference has been for forms of signification that revealed the 'essential.' Thus, *symbolism* has been preferred to *allegory*, *metaphor* to *metonymy*. The opposite of metaphor is *metonymy*. This is the figure of speech in which an

> idea is indicated by some object or quality only accidentally related to it. The most trivial examples are the use of 'head' to mean the whole animal ("two hundred head of cattle.") In each of these oppositions, the first term is considered motivated, organic, the second arbitrary, mechanical. Thus, 'music is a symbol of affective life' (Langer); 'music is a metaphor of the stress and release of emotion' (Ferguson). In each case music does more than merely point to feeling as its object; it typifies, exemplifies, and clarifies feeling by presenting its essential qualities. The connection with feeling is motivated rather than accidental.[34]

In accordance with my argument Monelle's definition of the affective quality of music coincides with the idea that 'feeling' is connoted by music. Likewise Monelle's 'essential qualities' might be expressed as musico-rhetorical tropes. In addition the literary-textual topoi given by Tate's libretto (judged as thematic representation) might also be vehicles of both affect and metaphor. In other words Tate's topoi not only signify certain specific themes or vestiges but also operate as means by which affective states and resonant metaphors might be communicated. As I clarify in later chapters the interaction between music and text serves to enrich the audience's interpretation of and engagement with the libretto imparting layers of meaning that might stimulate emotional responses whilst enhancing the overall complexity and effect of the work.

Monelle justifiably contests that the semantic study of music often takes the form of a search for simple reference—for instance, the military or peasant style—or for specific topics like 'fanfare' or '*Sturm und Drang*.'[35] For Monelle music semiotics necessitates a narrative point of view the conception of music as emotional or moral plot. Monelle convincingly reasons that specific features of methodology characterise the music semiologist. The first and perhaps traditionally most common is Schenkerian graphical analysis which is diachronic and syntagmatic being concerned with the temporal continuum of music and the texture of successive events in a syntactic structure. Other traditional approaches like Wagnerian *Leitmotif* are paradigmatic searching through the whole discourse for recurrent items which can then be grouped taxonomically.

In this book I argue for the possibilities of both a synchronic and a diachronic *Dido*. That is caught in the present (contemporary stagings

and/or the annual Armistice Day commemoration) but also a series of events over time (my argument in chapter 3 about the most 'authentic' version and also the 18th-century and 19th-century 'modernisers.') My argument draws on the association between *langue* and *parole* which goes back to Guido Adler (1855–1941) the 'father of musicology' who divided music research into two branches: the systematic (isolating the musical *langue*—its constant, immutable and general regularities) and the historic (identifying the musical *parole*—the varied practices of music with their different conceptual systems over the course of time). In later chapters, I provide both synchronic (*langue*) and diachronic (*parole*) readings of Tate and Purcell's *Dido*.

My approach has some similarities to Saussure's structuralism as mediated by Nattiez. Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (1990) a structuralist critique of music promotes Saussure's indication that the linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name but a sound-image (signifier) and a concept (signified). The former is not the material sound—a purely physical thing—but the psychological imprint of the sound or the mark that it makes on our senses.[36] Nattiez draws on Saussure's separation of the synchronic (*langue*) from the diachronic (*parole*) intending to prove that a language system is plausible independent of the language's history.

Somewhat less specific than Topic theory (evaluated above) structuralist musicology tends not to group musical elements equivalently. Paraphrasing Monelle the postmodern message refers first to meta-narratives—an acceptance of heterogeneity and multifariousness—in preference to uniformity and unity. Postmodern activities like *Regietheater* bring into being an infinite range of 'others.' In place of a principle of sameness as the pivot of intellectual activity there is a principle of otherness. Nattiez fittingly maintains that the musical opus is not merely a 'text' composed of 'structures' rather the work is constituted by the procedures that have engendered it (the deeds of composition) and the procedures to which it gives rise: acts of interpretation and perception. What Nattiez designates the essence of a musical work is at once its genesis, its organisation and the way in which it is 'perceived.'

Furthermore Monelle interestingly notes that language regarded in the 'here and now' manifests itself as a performance—something that is reborn in every oration of a native speaker. Saussure calls this 'speech' (*parole* or the diachronic). In Saussure's view structure is not possible in language unless the relationship between the signifier and the signified is stable. My point of departure is that music generally and *Dido* in particular might never embody the stable form identified by Saussure because of its inherent fluidity due to its relationship with performance. Notated musico-rhetorical topoi can only ever be approximations not static relationships between signifier and signified. In other words, summarising Nattiez there is no one–to–one correspondence between a musical signifier, the association produced and the feeling evoked. Nattiez solves this problem by terming musical symbolism 'polysemic.' Moreover Agawu convincingly defines each sign as the indissoluble union of a signifier and a signified. Needless to say Agawu also acknowledges that the significance of an individual topos is comprised of a set of signifiers which are created by the action of various parameters.

Equally weighted are Agawu's and Nattiez's accounts of Saussure's theory of the distinction between two linguistic dimensions. For Agawu *langue* refers to the larger system of language and is 'social.' *Parole* translates as 'speech' or the individual utterances made by a speaker of a language and is therefore individual. In Agawu's terms the classical style is a *langue* with the individual 'utterances' of Mozart and Haydn (among others) as various *paroles*. Agawu also considers the structuralist distinction between synchronic and diachronic dimensions. He defines historical change as the evolution of a composer's language. The study of a system without Agawu's 'props of chronology' encompasses the synchronic dimension. The study of a 'system' in this book necessitates my argument about *Regietheater* staging and its representation of fate, destiny, love and death in particular which I expand in chapter 4. According to Agawu the synchronic is a crucial component of the structuralist enterprise informing Ratner's approach to Topic theory. And to be sure the actual 'meaning' inevitably (for Agawu) takes on a narrative form retaining an implicit diachronic dimension.[37] But it might be the case that there are certain sonic relationships that cause or create an effective

response in the listener. Nattiez describes the perceptions of a western musician based on a number of connotations (figure 1.1):

Pitch	**Connotation**	**Connotation**	**Connotation**	**Connotation**
High	Shrill	Clear	Happy	Joyous
Low	Deep	Dark	Sad	Tragic

Figure 1.1: Perceiving music

In *Dido* this manner of semiosis might manifest as various musical effects and devices. In relation to my argument about topoi for example fate might, in certain circumstances, be musically represented by slow tempi, minor keys and chromaticism; destiny might leverage faster tempi, major keys (for the Sorceress' music) or minor (for the Spirit's) diatonic melodies, no dissonance (witches) or chromatic melodic movement (Spirit); love might implement fast music in major keys, mostly diatonic melodies and some dissonance; death might enlist major keys at moderate tempi with minimal or no dissonance but might also be conveyed otherwise as I shall elaborate in chapter 3.[38]

Returning to Monelle's *Linguistics and Semiotics* (1992) he less convincingly observes that semioticians tend to seek out structure rather than try to interpret 'meaning.' Monelle is of the view that music alone cannot express specific emotions like love or anger because topoi such as these imply real life situations which must be depicted in words. Later in this book, I argue that Purcell's music at times affirms and at other times contradicts Tate's text.

Resembling the thought that there were several doctrines of the affections in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Monelle contests (after Nattiez) that a survey of music semiotics discloses not a single developing discipline but a collection of varied and unrelated programmes. Rather than a single study called 'semiology' Monelle believes that there are semiologies or more precisely possible semiological projects. My semiological project here is not only to ascertain the significance of fate,

destiny, love and death to Tate and Purcell's audiences but also to reveal the relevance of the topoi to audiences today.[39] To this end I turn next to Eero Tarasti.

Tarasti mistakenly reads semantic content from musical structure without reference either to the historical context of the composition or to the subjective position of the interpreter. Although Tarasti's *Myth and Music* (1979) is accurately styled by David Lidov as the first book of semiotic affiliation to convey the idea that a serious semiotics of music could be more than merely structuralist.[40] Tarasti terms music as a process effectively arguing that the inner 'form-building forces' are inextricably bound to the nature of music as a specifically temporal art. In *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (1994) Tarasti well defines musicological text strategy as an *isotopy*: in music the same theme or thematic structure might be presented in a different light leading to a different result, a dramatic solution, the achievement or unfulfillment of the action.[41]

The relevance of the historic/diachronic paradigm was accurately identified by Andrew Walkling in 1996 when he appositely commented on the rise of a new interest among scholars in historical contextualisation.[42] By 2005, the debate about musical 'meaning' had evolved integrating new historicism.[43] Similarly, in *Is Language a Music: Writings on Musical Form and Signification* (2005), Lidov defines a topic as a category of musical figure that has developed an association with a unit of thought determined by cultural tradition. But Lidov links the etymology of a musical topic to an underlying icon. Lidov's association between a topic and a moment in time precludes the brand of postmodern reading that I provide later in the book. Although Lidov validly asserts that because music is an art its possibilities of ambiguation are of its essence he also contentiously asserts that structuralism celebrates ambiguity.

In structuralist music semiotics, topos/*tropus* are individuated concepts contributing to meaning creation. They serve different functions both within the cultural, rhetorical and narrative discourse, but also within the sign system. A topos is stable and supplies continuity. A *tropus* alters and evolves compelling transformation. They are not strictly dichotomic but they are in a dynamic relationship. In this book I demonstrate how *Dido*

exhibits both topoi (particularly fate, destiny, love and death) but also *tropoi* [tropes]—alteration in representational methods and devices—making those topoi relevant in shifting sociocultural contexts.

Some of the structuralist dialectic oppositions in *Dido* that I construe in the book are creator vs interpreter; writer vs reader; topos vs *tropus* and surface denotation vs expressive significance. In so doing I expose various interactions between the producers of a work and those engaging with it including between authors 'constructing' the narrative and audiences 'deconstructing' or deciphering it. My analysis also underlines diverse acts of context specific meaning co-creation. In addition my argument connecting topoi (common themes) and tropes (rhetorical devices) examines how thematic components might be articulated and communicated. Finally I address different varieties and levels of 'meaning' as the 'literal' text might initially preclude nuanced interpretation.[44]

The final musicologist in this section is Stephen Rumph whose monograph *Mozart and Enlightenment Semiotics* was published in 2012. Rumph's approach informs my study because he approaches characterisation from a particularly appropriate angle. According to Rumph operatic characters traditionally know precisely what they are, what they do and what they feel. Rumph's first two examples (below) are taken from Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786) and his third is from *The Magic Flute* (1791):

1. Cherubino's first aria in *Le nozze di Figaro* betrays a surprising uncertainty:

   Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio.

   I no longer know what I am or what I do.

2. The Countess Almaviva spells out her feelings in her opening aria:

   Porgi amor qualche ristoro al mio duolo, a'miei sospir!

   Grant, love, some remedy for my sorrow, for my sighs!