

Più gravi sospiri: Monteverdi, Marenzio

December 2004
Bruno T. Ruviaro

Introduction

After having listened to Luciano Berio's recomposition of Mahler¹ inside his own *Sinfonia* (1968), we can never listen again to the original Mahler in the same "pure" way. Our cumulative, historic (and creative) listening makes all cross-references at once each time we go back to either one. I feel that something very similar happened to me after having compared Marenzio's 4-voice madrigal *Zefiro torna* with Monteverdi's 5-voice version of the same Petrarch text. I had known Monteverdi's *Zefiro* for quite a while, and only recently I have had contact with Marenzio's version. So now, in my personal timeline as a listener, the earlier *Zefiro* (Marenzio, 1585) came to strongly change, or rather "amplify" the way I listen to the other (Monteverdi, 1614).²

This paper will present a musical analysis of each of these pieces in terms of use of modes, texture, text setting and formal organization. By discussing their similarities and differences, we hope to demonstrate the following basic ideas:

* Marenzio's piece reflects many of the characteristic traits of the so-called *prima prattica* and uses a more clearly modal language; at the same time, his musical treatment of the text anticipates features of what Monteverdi would call *seconda prattica*;

* Monteverdi's piece serves as an example of the development of such *seconda prattica* principles: the new approach to the text and the subordination of music to it; new compositional devices

¹ The third movement of Mahler's II Symphony (1894) is quoted in its entirety in the third movement of Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968).

² These crossed relations between different compositions can be of many types: the Berio-Mahler is an extreme example of recomposition that creates perceivable links of a structural nature (see also Finnissy's *Verdi Transcriptions* for a less perceivable recomposition based on historical musical material). Other less "invasive" methods can be seen in orchestrations like "Pictures of an Exposition" (Mussorgsky-Ravel), and "The Art of Fugue" (Bach-Webern). However, even an orchestration can bring new compositional "touches" and unexpected connections between different historical periods, adding to the meaning of the original piece, such as the use of *klangfarbenmelodie* in the Bach-Webern example. The widespread use of various degrees of quotations in many twentieth-century music is also another possibility of interconnecting pieces. In this study, the comparison Marenzio-Monteverdi will show a special case of connection in which composers shared not only the same text: being a few decades apart from each other, they also shared common assumptions within a musical tradition, and their differences reflect exactly the changes and the internal developments of such assumptions.

increasing the expressive potential as demanded by that new approach; and the appearance of “gray areas” where modality is used in a qualitatively different way, getting closer to the point of becoming something else.

The text

1 Zefiro torna, e 'l bel tempo rimena,
2 E i fiori e l'herbe, sua dolce famiglia,
3 E garrir Progne e pianger Filomena,
4 E Primavera candida e vermiglia.

5 Ridono i prati, e 'l ciel si rasserena;
6 Giove s'allegra di mirar sua figlia;
7 L'aria, e l'acqua, e la terra è d'amor piena;
8 Ogni animal d'amar si riconsiglia.

9 Ma per me, lasso! Tornano I più gravi
10 Sospiri, che del cor profondo tragge
11 Quella ch'al ciel se ne portò le chiavi;

12 E cantar augelletti e fiorir piagge,
13 E 'n belle donne honeste atti soavi
14 Sono un deserto e fere aspre e selvagge.

—Petrarch (Sonnet), *Canzoniere*, 310

Free translation: “Zephyr returns, and brings back fair weather / and the flowers and the grass, his sweet family, / and Procne’s chattering and Philomena’s lament,³ / and Spring, white and vermilion. / The meadows laugh, and the sky clears up; / Jupiter delights to look upon his daughter; / The air, and the water, and the earth are full of love; / All creatures reconcile with love / But to me, alas, the heaviest sighs come back / which she draws from my deepest heart / she who carried off to Heaven the keys to it; / and the singing of the birds and the flowers of the fields / and virtuous gentle gestures in beautiful ladies / are a desert and cruel, savage beasts.”

The poem is organized around a collection of binary oppositions that can be shortly described as the delicateness of the coming Spring (in the “outside” world of Nature) versus the desolation of the lover (in the internal world of the poet’s subjectivity).

In its temporal, “horizontal” organization, the poem is divided as follows: the first eight lines

³ Procne and Philomena (or Philomela): in the Greek mythology, these two sisters were turned into birds by the Gods to escape the fury of Tereus, King of Thrace.

present the the arrival of the Spring and all its beauties with a considerable amount of detail; the last six lines dramatically turn to the exposition of how the poet feels disconnected from all that because of the loss of his loved being. Such absence, then, can only turn all external world signs of hapiness into the most cruel images of pain and individual torment. Especially striking in this horizontal juxtaposition of poetic images is the crude, instantaneous “conversion” of the birdsongs, the flowers and the beautiful ladies into a desert, a wilderness filled with savage beasts in the lover’s point of view.

At the same time, in its “vertical” axis, the poem presents a rich list of directly contrasting images that are tied together not by their linear proximity in the text but by their paradigmatic, associative meanings. As examples, consider the following pairs: a) “[Light] Laugh vs. heavy sighs” (human physical actions); b) “Earth vs. Heaven” (and derivate connotations of Life and Death involved in this context); c) “Open, clear sky” versus the “Lost keys to Heaven” (note the ambiguity of the word Heaven, which in this alternate, simultaneous interpretation may also be in place of hapiness — the hapiness that now is not “open” anymore, but rather “locked forever”); d) The bundle “Flowers/grass/air/water” against the “Desert/wilderness” (two opposite manifestations of Nature, associated to human emotional states); and e) “All animals in love” versus the “Cruel, savage beasts” (two sides of the animal world).

This dense network of meaning is put together in a syntactical architecture that can be roughly described as follows:

Lines 1-4: Action takes place right at the beginning. “Zephyr returns” followed by a enumeration of what things he brings along with him (brings back fine weather, flower, grass etc.);

Lines 5-8: The list-like structure suggested in the previous stanza is further developed. Here, each line furnishes an extra detail of the Spring imagery. Even though each line here has its own verb, the sensation is pretty much of ethereal absence of motion (they are all “natural” or “divine” facts);

Lines 9-11: Structural change to the three-line structure of the sonnet: this is the turning point of the poem. The reason of the poet’s suffering is exposed all at once. The heavier sighs that come back, which are caused by “her”. She supposedly died (went to Heaven), thus eliminating any possibility of happiness.

Lines 12-14: The poem concludes by bringing back a somewhat disturbing recollection of the Spring imagery (birdsong, flowers), now completely distorted in its function by the surrounding lines. The list-like format is used to begin this section, leaving the main verb (and the climax of the poem) to the very last line. The beautiful images reveal themselves as a cruel punishment to their narrator. Charged with a hopeless tone, the poem ends by turning upside down all the first interpretations of the

initial harmony of Nature.

Marenzio's Zefiro torna

We will guide our analysis by referring to line numbers of the poem. This appears to be especially useful since we can notice that the musical structure itself is guided by the phrase structure of the text. Roughly, each line corresponds to one or two more or less autonomous musical ideas (or “figures”) in Marenzio’s madrigal, generally separated by cadences (weak or strong). Lines 1-8 are labeled “prima parte” in the score; a strong cadence separates it from the “second parte”, which starts with a new bar numbering.

- Line 1 = mm. 1-11 (Zefiro torna...)
- Line 2 = mm. 12-21 (E i fiori...)
- Line 3 = mm. 21-30 (E garrir...)
- Line 4 = mm. 30-33 (E Primavera...)
- Line 5 = mm. 34-43 (Ridono i prati...)
- Line 6 = mm. 44-50 (Giove s’allegra...)
- Line 7 = mm. 51-59 (L’aria e l’acqua...)
- Line 8 = mm. 60-73 (Ogn’animal...)

- Line 9 = 1-17 (Ma per me... until the word “Sospiri”, which must be considered as part of this “line” in terms of sentence completeness)
- Lines 10 + 11 = mm. 17-30 (Che del cor...)
- Line 12 = mm. 31-42 (E cantar augelletti...)
- Line 13 = mm. 43-49 (E ‘n belle donne...)
- Line 14 = 50-72 (Sono un deserto...)

The score presents the music transposed one whole step below (in F; by looking at the original clefs we infer it was originally in G).⁴ We will base the discussion on the transposed version, including the musical examples provided.

We identify F Dorian as the main mode of the piece. The cadence concluding the first part is on C; the one concluding the second and last part is on F. As we shall see, all internal cadences and shifts of modal focus⁵ are related to one of the following pitch centers:

F — C — Ab — Eb — Bb

Note that these are all closely related by a relationship of fifth or third (as the reciting notes in the older modal system), and they all belong to the Dorian mode on F. Momentarily escaping from the strict framework of the three flats in the key signature, we can find sporadic occurrences of E natural,

⁴ Marenzio, Luca. *The complete four voice madrigals for mixed voices*. Edited by John Steele; translations by Barbara Reynolds. New York : Gaudia Music and Arts, 1995.

⁵ By “modal focus” we mean the sense of a flexible, local pitch center.

B natural, A natural and D flat. The first three can be easily understood as the necessary leading tones to one of the main pitches listed above. The last one (Db), however, cannot be explained that way, and is more likely to be an indicator of a stronger shift of modal focus (commixture) whenever it appears.

Line 1 of the text presents F very clearly by means of cadencing on F, then C, F and C again. The ambitus of each voice is also well delineated and respects the authentic/plagal alternation between voices (see Fig. 1). Each piece of text is set to music in a clear-cut way. The internal cadences are used precisely to reach that goal — see how the clauses “Zefiro torna” and “e ‘l bel tempo rimena” are “pronounced” in this way (and are also repeated once).

Line 1
F-C-F-C

Canto (auth) Alto (plagal?)
Tenore (auth) Basso (plagal)

Figure 1

Line 2 introduces a figurative gesture of eighth-notes depicting the “flowers”, within a more extended imitative passage. A more dynamic harmonic transformation is determined by the sequence of descending notes in the bass line. This creates an immediate contrast with the previous Line, which was characterized by a much more stable assertion of a pitch center. Here, on the contrary, the counterpoint leads to a very gradual shift of focus from F to Ab (see Fig. 2)

Line 2
C-Bb-Ab

C (F) Bb (Eb) Ab Ab

Figure 2

Line 3 begins by insisting on the Ab and finally cadences in Bb. This happens after a sequence that could very well be present in an actual tonal piece of a later century, especially concerning the

succession of leading tones pertaining to triads within the cycle of fifths (see Fig. 3; the movement of leading tones is indicated by the arrows in the chord progression G-C-F-Bb). This shift of modal focus goes on in Line 4, using the Bb as a bridge to return to the F area (Fig. 3). We can see this type of “commixture” in the modal world as the very basis of what would be called a “modulation” in the tonal world. And perhaps it is the existence of this kind of musical situation (which can be seen at the same time as “extensions” of the past or “indices” of a future practice) that makes it hard to find a precise turning point from modality to tonality.

Lines 3+4

"E garrir..." "... Philomena" "E Primavera..."

Insisting on Ab Bb (Line 4: → F)

Figure 3

Lines 5 and 6 continue the word painting: see the descending rapid notes in the Canto (mm. 34-36) representing the “laughing” and the canonic “trumpet call” rhythms announcing god Jupiter’s happiness (mm. 44-48). Ambitus continues to be an essential element in the definition of modes, although incomplete octave species are used for the plagal voices (Fig. 4). The pitch center goes on in its shifting around modally related zones (F, Eb, Ab, Eb).

Lines 5+6

Ca
Al
Te
Ba

F Eb Ab Eb

Figure 4

The F zone keep fluctuating back and forth as we can see in Line 7: the pitch centers move from Bb to Ab, just “passing by” F (mm. 54). Note that the presence of this F sonority is downplayed: it is reached not by means of a real cadence, but more as a side effect of the Bb area (which was clearly

defined by the previous imitative melodic movements in mm. 51-52; see also Fig. 5). Another very interesting level of ambiguity is created by the composer in the ambitus of each voice. In the movement to Ab, Bass and Alto (mm. 55-59) can be said to be in an authentic Lydian on Ab (their melodic movements corroborate that view), while Canto and Tenor are in a sort of incomplete plagal ambitus of such Ab Lydian. Interestingly enough, this incomplete ambitus of Canto and Tenor is exactly the main fifth (F-C) of the main mode F, thus creating an internal ambivalence between Ab and F (Fig. 5, second “bar”).

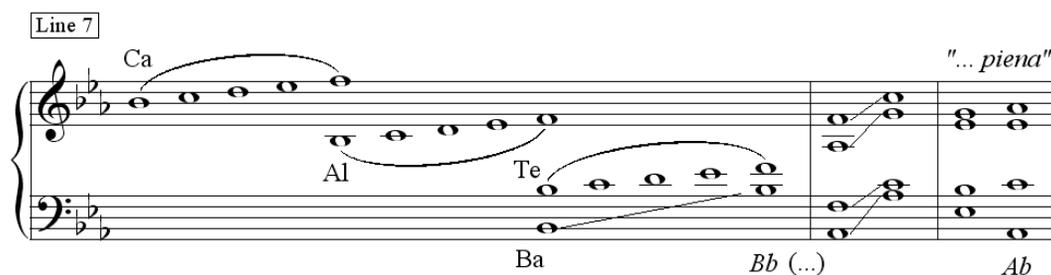


Figure 5

Line 8 concludes the first section of the piece by reestablishing F and cadencing on its “reciting tone” a fifth above (C). The final chord is reached by a complete tenor cadence, and no third is used in the final sonority (see Fig. 6a). This option of not using the third is a strong link with the past modal framework of composition; as functional harmony develops alongwith the concept of triad as a basic unit, this type of cadence should get less and less frequent in the following centuries.

The division of the piece in two different sections strictly reflects the division of the text. The *seconda parte* (Line 9) begins with a diatonic descent texture that strikingly resembles the corresponding section in Monteverdi — or, more appropriately, the Monteverdi setting of this part of the poem is curiously similar to this earlier version by Marenzio, to the point that we may speculate as to whether Monteverdi knew this piece and intended to make some kind of “quotation” of Marenzio in his own madrigal. Figure 6b shows how this progression is based on suspended dissonances moving from C back to F and finally Ab:

Line 8

F C

Line 9

"Ma per me..." "...Sospiri"

C F Ab

Figures 6a & 6b

In Lines 10 and 11, moving back from Ab to F, two other images from the text are musically depicted. The word “profondo” is sung by an unusual all-descending texture comprising octave leaps in the Bass, Alto and Canto (mm. 19-20). This is immediately followed by a long stepwise ascent through the scale made by Bass and Canto, possibly to reach the higher register for the following image of Heaven (“she went to Heaven and carried the keys to it with her”). The literary opposition “profondo” vs. “cielo” is represented by a musical opposition of falling down versus stepping up high. Also, there is a perfect tenor cadence on “chiavi”, ending this phrase without a third in the F chord (see Fig. 7).⁶

Lines 10+11 Line 12 Line 13

"... chiavi" "E fiorir..." "... piagge"

F F Bb Eb Bb

Imitative birdsong

⁶ We wonder if by that time this type of cadence was attached to some austere sense of “an ancient, church style”, thus being symbolically meaningful to use it in the end of a musical phrase expressing Death and the way up to Heaven.

Figure 7

Line 12 continues the succession of musical images derived from the text, now by a long, rhythmic imitative descending sequence suggesting the singing of birds. This phrase is especially remarkable for it is the first reprise of the lightness of the Spring imagery, but now bitterly recontextualized. The singing birds in form of canon actually come in a very disturbing manner right after the revelation of “her” death — it had to be musically disturbing to be effective. The same is valid for the continuation of Line 12 with “the flowers in the fields”. This whole section moves once more from F to Bb, while the short Line 13 suggests Eb-Ab-Bb with a lighter texture (no Bass) for the “gentle ladies” (see Fig. 7 above).

The exceptional conclusion of the piece with the long musical setting of Line 14 presents a high degree of musical “disorder” in a carefully constructed texture to cope with the literary climax of the “wilderness” and the “savage beasts”. Hocket-like rhythmic structure, annulation of traditional stepwise melodic movement, voice parallelism, deceptive cadences and overall harmonic instability are all combined to generate an extremely agitated and contrasting section that stands out from the rest of the piece (see Fig. 8). As we shall see, Monteverdi’s version of this same Line 14 is also concerned with creating a strong musical climax that presents things that never happened in the piece before, as if they were all “saved” precisely until such moment just to make their occurrence even more impressive.⁷

Line 14a

Tenor goes upwards in contrast to other voices

a possible Ab cadence is deviated to F

Line 14b

F

The image displays two musical staves, Line 14a and Line 14b, in a grand staff format (treble and bass clefs). Line 14a features a tenor line that ascends while other voices descend. Line 14b shows a possible Ab cadence deviated to F. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals, with annotations explaining specific musical choices.

⁷ The beginning of this “coda” in Monteverdi’s version gives us another hint that he might have known Marenzio’s one and wanted to make an almost explicit reference to it. The basic descending thirds idea is “quoted” in Monteverdi’s first measures for “Sono un deserto...”, before he moves to his own musical development of the rest of Line 14.

Figure 8
Monteverdi's Zefiro torna

We will refer to Line numbers corresponding to measures in the same way we did for Marenzio's piece. Here are Monteverdi's sections for each sentence:

- Line 1 = mm. 1-14 (Zefiro torna...)
- Line 2 = mm. 15-18 (E i fiori...)
- Line 3 = mm. 19-29 (E garrir...)
- Line 4 = mm. 29-37 (E Primavera...)
- Line 5 = mm. 38-51 (Ridono i prati...)
- Line 6 = mm. 52-56 (Giove s'allegra...)
- Line 7 = mm. 56-65 (L'aria e l'acqua...)
- Line 8 = mm. 65-73 (Ogn'animal...)

- Line 9 = 74-82 (Ma per me... including the word "Sospiri")
- Lines 10 + 11 = mm. 82-92 (Che del cor...)
- Line 12 = mm. 93-98 (E cantar augelletti...)
- Line 13 = mm. 99-104 (E 'n belle donne...)
- Line 14 = mm. 105-123 (Sono un deserto...)

By looking at the key signatures and the overall internal cadences, the mode Dorian on G can be ascribed to the first section of this piece, whereas the second section could be said to be on G Ionian. Imitative procedures seem to be less important in Monteverdi's piece, although they generally happen in the first entries of voices in a new phrase. While the overall range of each voice is broad in the piece as a whole, we can find consistent use of ambitus as a way of defining modes locally within the piece. For example, Figure 1 shows the ambitus for each of the five voices in Line 1, where Dorian on G is clearly established:

Line 1

G dorian Canto Quinto Alto

Tenore Basso

Figure 9

Line 2 shifts the tonal focus to Bb (possibly Ionian; see local ambitus of each voice in Fig. 10). Line 3 brings back the G as a center, now with some kind of compromise due to the dual existence of Bb and B natural (Fig. 11).

Line 2

Canto Quinto Alto

Tenore Basso

Figure 10

Line 3

Canto Quinto Alto

Tenore Basso

Figure 11

Line 4 introduces D (with the major third) as a center, not without passing quickly by F and Bb (mm. 34-36). What is important to point out, though, is that all these transistions are made almost unnoticeably. There are no significant cadential movements between phrases. The text flows much more rapidly and without break than in Marenzio's piece. As a result, the first four lines sweep from G (Line 1) to Bb (Lines 2 to 3) to D (Lines 3 to 4) in a continuous texture.

Another important characteristic of this madrigal is the structural repetition of the same musical setting used in Lines 1 to 4 in the following Lines 5 to 8. With the new lyrics, measures 38 to 73 recapitulate almost literally measures 1 to 37. This creates a qualitatively different sense of unity and connection for all the first part of the poem (first 8 lines). It is something that doesn't happen in Marenzio's case, in which, as the poem goes, every single sentence presents us with new textures and melodic shapes, all clearly divided by internal cadences. Thus, what in Marenzio was a succession of new musical ideas in the surface, tied together by the modal grid behind them, became in Monteverdi a more formally unified approach of the first block of the poem. If the same musical setting can be

repeated with a different text, then in this piece Monteverdi is moving away from the local, phrase by phrase word-painting towards a more global representation of the moods of the text. As a concrete example, see how the same light melody used to represent the words “E primavera candida e vermiglia” (mm. 29-37) is later reused to represent “Ogn’animal d’amar si raconsiglia” (mm. 65-73). By allowing himself to use repeated music to different texts, Monteverdi seems to be aiming at the structural position of each line within the poem and its paradigmatic, “vertical” meaning and rhyme, instead of the actual specific images that follow one another (as was Marenzio’s concern).

Following his tendency of presenting the text in a more straightforward manner (less text repetitions and more fluidity), Monteverdi does not allow a longer intermission between the two parts of the piece (as Marenzio did by using the double bar, fermata and actually starting a new section separating the two parts of the poem). However, his *seconda parte* does provide a change in meter, tempo and key signature. Here we have one of the already mentioned interesting similarities between the two madrigals. The way Monteverdi depicts the mood change characteristic of Line 9 is almost the same as that of Marenzio 30 years earlier: a diatonic descent of suspended dissonances (see Fig. 12 and compare with Fig. 6b). Considering that Marenzio’s original version was written in G, we actually have the same notes for both of them (D-F in Monteverdi corresponding to the C-Eb in Marenzio’s transposed version). Both versions also use Bass and Tenor to sing this minor third, although Monteverdi put it an octave below.⁸



Figure 12

Line 9 moves to a more distant modal space for the first time in the piece. There is what could be called a “plagal cadence” on E on measure 82, followed by a more clear E cadence (including a major triad on B) in measures 86-87. All this brings together many more sharped notes than the mere shift to

⁸ Putting the minor third in the lower octave is symptomatic in Monteverdi’s case: it is a clear musical option to reinforce the contrasting affect between the first and second halves of the poem, as well as it underlines the “voice of the suffering subject” as a *character* in a quasi-theatrical way.

G Ionian would admit. The words “più gravi sospiri” are treated in a way that resembles Marenzio’s setting of the word “profondo”: some voices are leaping to their low registers.

Thus, after the initial “Ma per me” texture, this section goes on representing the revelation of the sorrow not by word-painting melodic or rhythmic “pictoric” shapes, but rather by structurally moving into the most distant modal zones within the piece.⁹ The movement from Line 11 to Line 12 goes one step back toward the main pitch center G, so to speak: if we consider the cycle of fifths, E moving back to A would necessarily be followed by A moving to D and finally to G again. This A cadence happens in measure 92. Then, instead of what the cycle of fifths would predict, Lines 12 and 13 do not move smoothly back to G — at least, not in the ideal of smoothness of later tonal works. Not being bound by the concept of functional tonality, Monteverdi is allowed to open a “musical parenthesis” for Lines 12 and 13: from the last cadence on A with a major third on m. 92, a direct shift to the minor third is made (C# to C natural).¹⁰ This instantly leads the texture to C as the center of this section, even admitting a major triad on F natural just a few measures after that cadence on A. Line 12 cadences on C, and Line 13 does the same (mm. 98 and 104 respectively). This “parenthesis” on C is the connection between the previous E and A sonorities and the return to G to happen in Line 14. Again, a structural element serves to underline the meaning of the text: the recollection of images from the beginning of the poem is highlighted by this excursion into the C zone. Like in Marenzio’s setting of Line 13, both Lines 12 and 13 in Monteverdi have a lighter texture by the suppression of the Bass. Monteverdi adds even more to the internal cohesion of this section by having Line 13 present an inverted version of Line 12’s melodic idea (compare Canto in mm. 93-95 to Canto in mm. 100-103).

In many passages, Monteverdi follows a traditional treatment of dissonances. Unresolved dissonances do not abound in the piece as a whole — rather they are save for the most important moments. The last section (Line 14) is especially remarkable in this sense. It is as if all the tension that can be created by the new use of dissonances were condensed in this very last page of music. Line 14

⁹ We don’t mean to say that the more pictorial text representation found in Marenzio’s piece is less important or less interesting than this structural approach that we are trying to find in Monteverdi’s. It’s more a matter of trying to identify the stronger *tendencies* present in each one; their musical action may happen more in one vector than in the other, but these are not mutually exclusive.

¹⁰ The identity of a major/minor harmonic duality does not seem to be established in a functional way. We can attest that by looking at the free alternation between these two options—the major and the minor third of a triad—that happens in moments very close in time during the music. From this we may infer the absence of a strong sense of categorical importance attributed to these sonorities; they are still somehow “interchangeable” for different expressive purposes, and their precise distinction is not yet hierarchically crucial for the formal coherence of an underlying musical structure. Example: see mm. 80-83 and 86-87. The triads of what we may call B (major), E (major) and A (minor AND major) coexist within these passages. The ambivalence of the A triad is very clear audibly, and the following measures actually keep using C natural for quite a while (mm. 89-91) until a cadence happens with the C# on m. 92, followed immediately by a new phrase beginning with A minor again (m. 93). To us, this seems to be one of the strong modal components present in Monteverdi’s music, cohabiting the same space in which pointers of tonal functions may be foreseen.

begins by downwards arpeggiations of the G triad, in a way that makes us think of another quasi-quotation of Marenzio’s version (not literal, but representing the essence of the descending thirds as seen before). After this brief texture finishes the words “Sono un deserto”, the last 13 measures reveal a spectacular architecture consisting of a virtually endless upward movement of dissonances: in every measure, a new dissonant pair is placed a step above the previous one, and with varying degrees of dissonance each time (not a simple sequence of parallel, identical types of dissonances). More than one octave is covered in this unresolving sequence of “prohibited intervals” (from the middle C region B3-C4 up to D5-E5 a tenth above). It is precisely this musical structure that is used to express the “cruel and savage beasts”, building up the impressive climax of the piece. The table below analyzes the mechanism of this section in detail:

Bar	Dissonant notes	Bass note	Leaping voice	Comment
111	B-C (Alto/Tenor)		Tenor (voice-crossing to reach a dissonance)	Tritone with Canto (F#)
112	C-D (Tenor/Alto)	(G, later)	Alto (crossing)	
113	D-E (Alto/Tenor)	E	Tenor (crossing)	Canto jumps a tritone up to C#; Alto resolves downwards to C#, but then creates a tritone with Quinto
114	F#-G (Alto/Quinto)	B	Alto	Dissonant notes F#-G are both consonant to the bass note (B), and here G (the upper note) resolves to a unison in F# (a different resolution in this context)
115	F#-G (Alto/Canto)	C#	Canto (crossing)	Now BOTH dissonant notes are also dissonant in relation to the Basso (P4 and Tritone – the tritone being exposed in the outer voices of this diminished chord); moreover, there is an E sounding together with F#-G (almost-cluster structure: 3 neighbor tones at the same time). All this confers a much higher degree of dissonance to this passage.
116	G-A (Canto/Alto)	D	Alto (crossing)	
117	A-B (Quinto/Canto)	B	Canto (crossing)	
118	B-C (Canto/Quinto)	F#	Quinto (crossing)	Again, both dissonant notes are also dissonant to the Basso (P4 and Tritone), and are in the outer voices of a diminished chord. Plus, in this case, the Bass also leaps; so the tritone with the Quinto is reached by a double leap, not to mention the Alto’s F# that also makes a tritone with the Quinto (a bit attenuated since it is a passing tone within that line; but the F# falls in the downbeat). The low bass note also contributes to a clear opening of overall tessitura.
119	C-D (Quinto/Canto)	G	Canto (crossing)	Highest Canto note

120	D-E (Canto/Quinto)	C#	Quinto (crossing)	Highest Quinto note (highest of all in this section – climax). Canto treatment of its dissonante D is completely unusual: it does not resolve, and actually it leaps down a seventh. Moreover, this D is also highly dissonant to the Basso (open minor ninth). And the Basso reached its note by a leap of tritone. In short: all dissonances unresolved and arrived at by leaps on strong beats.
121- 123				[final cadence in G]

Conclusions

The body of the analyses above contains most of what we wanted to say. However we may add a few comments to summarize some important points:

Monteverdi’s piece is considerably shorter than Marenzio: the former sets the text more straightforwardly, the latter makes use of textual repetitions to sustain a longer musical discourse. On the other hand, both have made a clearly similar division of the music in two sections according to the poem’s internal structure.

Marenzio seems to build his relationship with the text based on a musical tradition from “outside”; in other words, he seems to be stretching an inherited style of composition to suit the needs of the text. In spite of the wealth of different musical ideas on the surface (all bound to text illustration purposes), the homogeneity of his overall texture reveals some degree of balance between the influence of the text and the composer’s own musical agenda. In Monteverdi, the style itself appears to be coming from “inside” the text, in the sense of past inheritances being subjugated as needed in the search for a style that could more strongly represent the affects presented in the poem. Naturally, this new style ought to be born from a re-evaluation of the older practices. It is not that the text inherently suggests a bolder use of dissonances, thus Monteverdi being “better” than Marenzio. The interest is in seeing how different generations of composers renovate their methods and principles by cultivating and extending certain aspects of musical practice that are seen as “neglected” by a previous generations and by neglecting other aspects that are seen as “overused” or “inappropriate” to the needs of contemporary practice. After all, history seems to be like a big boiling soup of elements in constant, tense interaction, each century choosing different ingredients and seasonings to be added, developed or removed from the pan offered by the previous age.

Bruno Ruviano, December 2004