CHAPTER 5

Libidinous Theology

Decades ago, when I was a graduate student, I supported myself playing the organ for a large Catholic church in the Boston suburbs. Vatican II had occurred shortly before that time, and my principal task was to teach these recalcitrant Catholics—most of them immigrants from Calabria—to perform hymns. Except for the few Marian anthems they had learned as children, they knew nothing of congregational singing. I persisted in trying; they persisted in sitting with buttoned-up mouths, glowering at this Protestant abomination. But except for being saddled with that singularly futile task, I was left more or less to my own devices. I learned on the job how to play the organ, and I played my exuberant postludes to a sanctuary that emptied as soon as the priest uttered the long-awaited "Go in peace." I never got the slightest indication that anyone even noticed.

Until the day I took it upon myself to sing Monteverdi's solo setting of "Salve Regina" during mass. I had scarcely finished the first page when two priests came stampeding up the back stairs to the organ loft. "Stop this immediately!" cried one. Still playing some semblance of an accompaniment as I spoke, I explained that this piece had been composed for San Marco in Venice. Said the priest, "I don't care if it was written by the pope himself. You will cease this instant!"

Needless to say, this priest had had no training in music semiotics, and he could not have named a seventeenth-century composer if his life had depended upon it. Yet the gestures of this solo motet (aided, no doubt, by somewhat heavy breathing on the part of the singer) communicated so unambiguously as to cause a minor scandal. A few years later I managed to provoke charges of blasphemy from a nun when I presented at an academic conference a lecture/demonstration of Frescobaldi's "Maddalena alla Croce." And a class session on Schütz's "Anima mea liquefacta est," in which two male voices simulate lovemaking, produced a memorable episode of homophobic panic on the part of several students. (I discuss both pieces later in this chapter.)

Such flare-ups eventually led me to develop a graduate seminar titled "Divine Love in Seventeenth-Century Music." By then, the publications of historian Michel de Certeau, Jewish theologian Moshe Idel, literary critic Richard Rambuss, and musicologist Robert Kendrick had done a great deal to legitimate work in this area.[1] Armed with theological and historical research, I no longer seem to be personally responsible for dragging sex into the study of religious music. At least five of my former students have now written on such topics, two of them by extrapolating what they had learned from baroque manifestations of the sacred erotic to help them understand elements of contemporary jazz, gospel, and popular musics.[2]

Most of the compositions discussed in the previous chapters emerged from secular venues: the aristocratic courts of Northern Italy and the burgeoning commercial hub of Venice. Within contexts that explicitly nurtured expressions of individual virtuosity and libertinism, the expansionist procedures and erotic imagery we have been tracing make good rhetorical sense. But we usually think of the sacred sphere in very different terms, as a place in which self-effacing devotion and faith in traditional orthodoxies always hold sway. Yet the devices then revolutionizing music at court were at the same moment invading the church.

Many of the pieces examined in this book and in its prequel, *Modal Subjectivities,* may sound to our twenty-first-century ears as if they unfold in an arbitrary fashion. I hope, however, that I have made the logics undergirding most of them relatively clear. For the most part, these compositions do not *intend* to sound obscure, and within the proper grammatical framework they become entirely intelligible. By contrast, those examined in this chapter strive to bypass normative procedures, for the structures of feeling they seek to capture reside by definition outside the realm of the ordinary. They all depend upon a blend between the spiritual and erotic—a stark violation of our modern frame of reference, which tends to relegate the sacred and the sexual to opposite ends of the experiential spectrum.

Anyone familiar with seventeenth-century culture, however, will have witnessed this blend many times before. It manifests itself in the lurid verse of Richard Crashaw, the masochistic holy sonnets of John Donne, and the ecstatic statuary of Bernini.[3] We have already seen that the fevered expressive vocabulary introduced by the *concerto delle donne* in Ferrara made its way into the church (see the discussion of Monteverdi's "Duo seraphim" in chapter 3), and the erotic dimensions of this vocabulary become even more explicit in the pieces by Frescobaldi and Schütz examined below.

It was because of such egregious violations of taste that eighteenth-century rationalists branded their predecessors with the pejorative term "baroque." But "baroque" has long since been reified as a technical term: in music history, it commonly not only refers to the early seventeenth century but also embraces the first half of the eighteenth. Indeed, because Handel and J.S. Bach are by far the most familiar "baroque" composers, many musicians assume that the word refers to the 1700s—the period most cultural historians would regard as the Age of Reason.

In contrast to this dubious use of "baroque" as a bland, mostly meaningless period label, Fernand Braudel's magisterial study *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* shocks readers into remembering the precise context within which this potentially objectionable strain of art developed: "The Baroque conveniently designates the civilization of the Christian Mediterranean: wherever we find the Baroque we can recognize the mark of Mediterranean culture. The Baroque drew its strength both from the huge spiritual force of the Holy Roman Empire and from the huge temporal force of the Spanish Empire. With the Baroque a new light began to shine; . . . new and more lurid colors now bathed the landscapes of western Europe."[4]

Braudel identifies this mode of cultural expression with the defiant reassertion of Catholicism in the face of its would-be reformers and with the militant agendas of the Jesuits; indeed, he suggests replacing "baroque" with the label "Jesuit" to designate such art (831). And far from apologizing for the art's excesses, he explains its purposes:

> Baroque art, then, often smacks of propaganda. Art was a powerful means of combat and instruction; a means of stating, through the power of the image, the Immaculate Holiness of the Mother of God, the efficacious intervention of the saints, the reality and power of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the eminence of St. Peter, a means of arguing from the visions and ecstasies of the saints. Patiently compiled and transmitted, identical iconographical themes crossed and re-crossed Europe. If the Baroque exaggerates, if it is attracted by death and suffering, by martyrs depicted with unsparing realism, if it seems to have abandoned itself to a pessimistic view, to the Spanish *desengaño* of the seventeenth century, it is because this is an art which is preoccupied with

> convincing, because it desperately seeks the dramatic detail which will strike and hold the beholder's attention. It was intended for the use of the faithful, who were to be persuaded and gripped by it, who were to be taught by active demonstration, by an early version of *verismo,* the truth of certain contested notions, whether of Purgatory or of the Immaculate Conception. It was a theatrical art and one conscious of its theatricality. (832)

Elsewhere Braudel suggests Muslim Sufism as a possible source of such practices (761).

But the repertories we are investigating here were most directly influenced by a cluster of sixteenth-century Spanish mystics, especially Saint Teresa of Avila. Quite possibly the descendant of Jews who converted under the threat of the Inquisition, Teresa and her experiences of divine union attracted Counter-Reformation theologians seeking ways of holding onto what still remained of their flock. Luther had criticized the alienating mediation of the priesthood between Christians and God; in response, this new form of Catholicism promised nothing short of fervent one-on-one contact between the faithful and Christ. Moreover, whereas Luther had banished women from his godhead, the Counter-Reformation foregrounded as exemplars of spiritual power the Blessed Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and Saint Teresa. As cults dedicated to such women spread across Catholic Europe, composers produced hundreds of devotional pieces designed to suture performers and/or listeners into these overheated subject positions. A Milanese nun, Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, even wrote duos that celebrate grazing on the wounds of Christ, greedily lapping milk from the Virgin's breasts, the ecstatic union of Mary Magdalene with her beloved.[5] Andrew Dell'Antonio's new book, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy,* examines the aesthetic writing of the time for evidence of how people heard and made sense of such music.[6]

The Counter-Reformation was not alone in exploiting such sensationalism during this period. Lutheran pietists also indulged freely in violent and erotic imagery, couching their meditations in Scripture-sanctioned sources, including the Song of Songs and the conjugal terrain made available by the metaphor of the church as the bride of Christ. Traces of the sacred erotic appear still in Bach's music, not only in the bride and groom duets of his cantatas but also in the simulated love-making of the Christ-related duos of the B Minor Mass.[7] A strain of ecstatic Judaism at the time similarly explored ways of stimulating spiritual immediacy.[8] But of these, only the Counter-Reformation allowed itself to make use of the whole gamut of artistic forms: sculpture, painting, theater, verse, and music. A descendant of Jews forcibly baptized

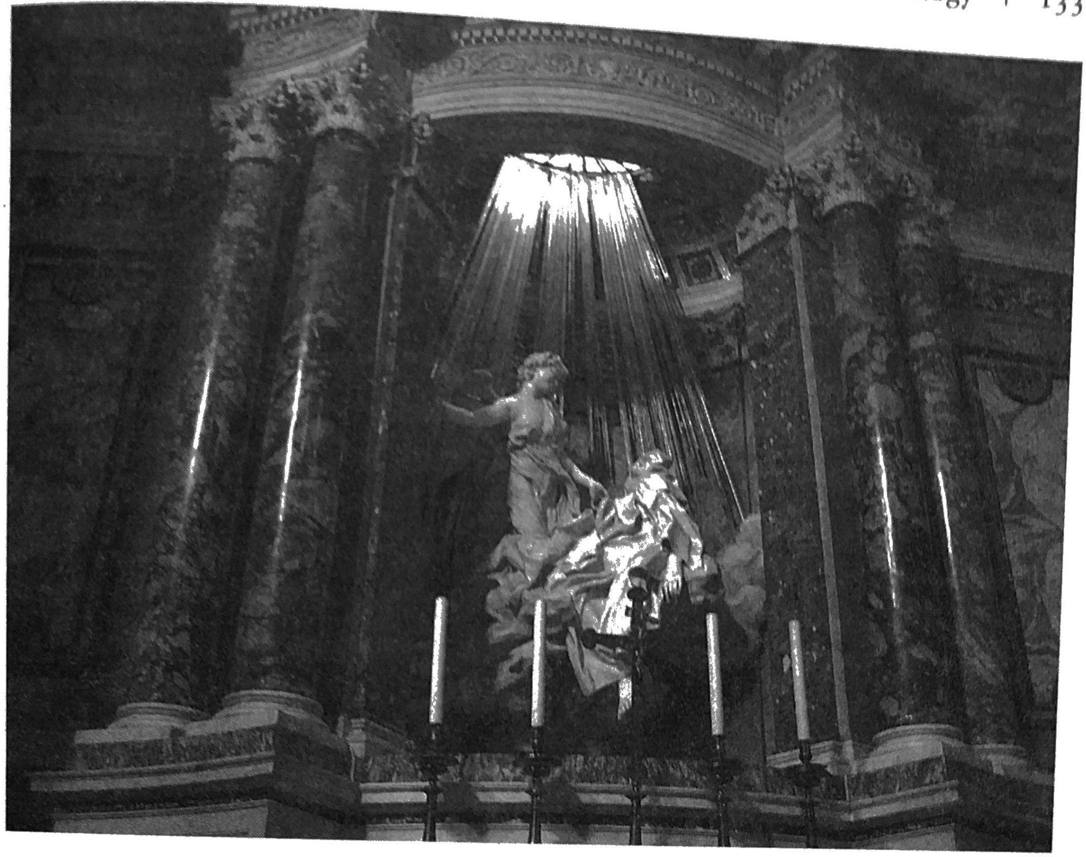


FIGURE 5.1. Bernini, *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (photo by Robert Walser).

in Spain, drawing on sedimented memories inherited from Sufism and elsewhere, incited a revolution in spirituality that transformed religious practices and their associated aesthetic expression across all of Europe.

Saint Teresa famously described her experience in these words:

> There grew so great a love of God within me that I did not know who had planted it there. It was entirely supernatural; I had made no efforts to obtain it. I found myself dying of the desire to see God, and I know no way of seeking that other life except through death. This love came to me in mighty impulses which, although less unbearable and less valuable than those that I have described before, robbed me of all power of action. Nothing gave me satisfaction, and I could not contain myself; I really felt as if my soul were being torn from me. O supreme cunning of the Lord, with what delicate skill did You work on Your miserable slave! You hid Yourself from me, and out of Your love You afflicted me with so delectable a death that my soul desired it never to cease . . . .
>
> Beside me, on the left hand, appeared an angel in bodily form. . . . He was not tall but short, and very beautiful; and his face was so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest rank of angels, who seem to be all on fire. . . . In his hand I saw a great golden spear, and at the iron tip there appeared to be a point of fire. This he plunged into my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails. When he pulled it out, I felt that he took them with it, and left

> me utterly consumed by the great love of God. The pain was so severe that it made me utter several moans. The sweetness caused by this intense pain is so extreme that one cannot possibly wish it to cease, nor is one's soul then content with anything but God. This is not a physical, but a spiritual pain, though the body has some share in it—even a considerable share. So gentle is this wooing which takes place between God and the soul that if anyone thinks I am lying, I pray God, in His goodness, to grant him some experience of it. Throughout the days that this lasted I went about in a kind of stupor.[9]

Teresa's text became the template for metaphysical poet Richard Crashaw and other poets. And when Bernini came to the task of representing Saint Teresa, he sought to capture the moment of upward convulsion before the implied collapse into postorgasmic satiety (fig 5.1). The music we shall encounter in this chapter simulates precisely the same gestural vocabulary.

DESIRING MARY

The text of the "Salve Regina" counts as one of four standard Marian antiphons added to the liturgy in the eleventh or twelfth century. Identified with the season between Trinity and the beginning of Advent, it also appears as the final prayer in the recitation of the Rosary. Versions of its text translated into vernacular idioms circulated for use in devotions; indeed, the one hymn I could dependably entice my resistant congregation to sing with gusto was "Hail, Holy Queen," a hymn based on verses of the original prayer. I must admit, however, that Monteverdi's music for his "Salve Regina" bears little resemblance either to the medieval monophonic chant grafted into the liturgy or to the English-language devotional hymn so popular among my former parishioners.

Were Monteverdi and I guilty of foisting our own dirty minds onto a pristine, virginal object? As I will demonstrate, Monteverdi did everything he could to raise the heat in his setting. And me? I was just following orders—the orders, that is, presented by the details in the score. But Monteverdi did not just arbitrarily impose his reading on these lyrics, which may have been written by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the twelfth-century theologian who not only brought us the Crusades and the Templars but also concentrated much of his energy writing commentaries on the erotically charged Song of Songs. Through extensive meditations on the lovers in the Canticles, Bernard sought to infuse the spirituality associated with divine union into what he regarded as an excessively rule-bound religion.

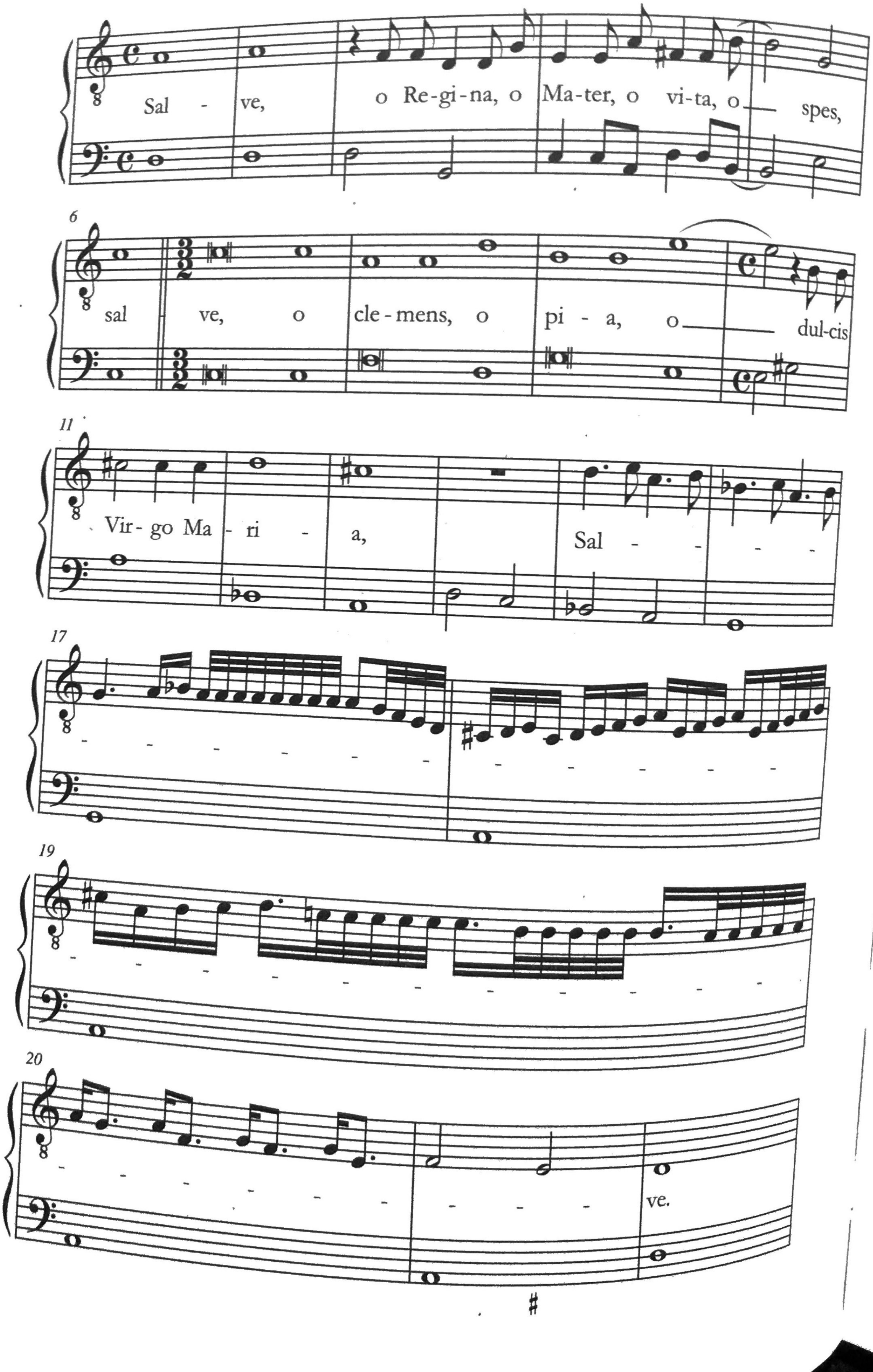
After Bernard's moment had passed (though with lasting traces in the secular verse of the troubadours and all that followed from them), the Church returned to more orthodox modes of expression. But the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed another enormous wave of mystics aspiring to direct spiritual and even quasi-physical contact with Jesus or Mary. Thus if Monteverdi's particular way of reading this already-ancient text might not have been the most obvious for previous generations, his own time had conditioned him and his contemporaries to notice and make full use of erotic potentialities offered by the "Salve Regina."

Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae,	Hail queen, mother of mercy,
Vita dulcedo et spes nostra, salve.	Hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae.	To we cry, poor exiled children of Eve,
Ad te suspiramus gementes et	To you we send up sighs, mourning and
flentes, in hac lacrimarum valle,	weeping in this vale of tears.
Eja ergo advocata nostra, illos tuos	Turn then, our gracious advocate,
misericordes oculos ad nos converte.	your eyes of mercy toward us.
Et Jesum benedictum fructum	And show us Jesus, the blessed fruit
ventris tui nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.	of your womb after this, our exile.
O clemens, o pia, o dulcis Virgo Maria.	O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary.

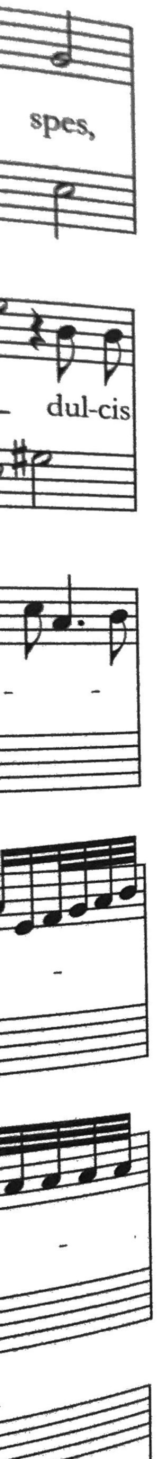
Monteverdi does a bit of rearranging within this text. Most significantly, he derives the lyrics for a refrain by lining up all the words that name the Virgin ("Regina," "mater," "vita," "spes," "clemens," "pia"), leading up inevitably to the cadential tag, "o dulcis Virgo Maria." Anyone familiar with the original text (which Monteverdi's congregants most assuredly were) might well have been stunned by this aural pelting with vocatives.

The music only intensifies the situation, as each new vocative presents the next step in a rapidly ascending sequence (ex. 5.1). Only a pause halfway through, on a reiteration of "salve" in mm. 6–7, offers relief from this single-minded ratcheting up of desire, but that pause also has the effect of teasing—delaying the continuation we know must occur; indeed, with the word "clemens" the momentum increases to a dancing triple meter. The principal rhetorical interruption occurs just before "dulcis," where a chromatic jump in the bass delivers a time-honored madrigalian frisson, a third-related sucker punch. The music

EX. 5.1. Monteverdi, "Salve Regina," mm. 1–22.



Sal - ve, o Re-gi-na, o Ma-ter, o vi-ta, o spes,
6
sal - ve, o cle-mens, o pi - a, o dul-cis
11
Vir-go Ma - ri - a, Sal - - - -
17
19
20
ve.



suddenly recoils from the self-perpetuating mechanism of ascent as if crumpling in abjection or in the combination of pleasure and pain portrayed in Bernini's statue, and we hear a slow-motion, nearly mournful half cadence on "Maria." To complete the first section, the vocalist is required to present a show of pyrotechnics, in which the word "salve" is meted out in the most minute of divisions and a sequence of those sobbing glottal stops called at the time *trillos.* (It must have been at around this point that my performance provoked the ire of my priests.)

This refrain returns three more times over the course of the motet, alternating with calm discursive passages, which attempt to reduce the heat a bit by presenting languid meltdowns: see again the whimpering conclusion of the refrain above or the extravagant depiction of the sighs, mourning, and weeping in this vale of tears that is the human condition.

Despite its melodic chromaticism, Monteverdi's "Salve Regina" stays quite chastely within the bounds of classic D Dorian; it does not achieve its effects, in other words, by challenging modal logic. Instead, it makes use of conventional materials to produce gestural patterns of urgently escalating desire and a gradual subsiding into intensely pleasurable languor.

FRESCOBALDI'S MAGDALENE

If the "Salve Regina" stays within the bounds of conventional procedure to produce its startling effects, Girolamo Frescobaldi's *sonetto spirituale* "Maddalena alla Croce" (1630) is the kind of piece that gives music of this period its reputation as incoherent. It begins in what might be A major, sets up camp in G minor halfway through, and climaxes on an unprepared F♯ major chord before concluding in . . . A minor (see ex. 5.2 below). In the face of such a chaotic assemblage, we could simply throw up our hands and focus exclusively on the lyrics or on social context.

The organist at Saint Peter's Basilica (designed by Michelangelo, with the portico and altar just then materializing according to Gian Lorenzo Bernini's specifications), Frescobaldi had studied with the Mannerists in Ferrara—a lunatic fringe that included composers such as Gesualdo. Monteverdi's *seconda prattica* manifesto advises us to accept unorthodox musical events so long as they seem justified by the lyrics. Given that Frescobaldi's poetic text involves the lamentation of Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross, we might accept that his erratic compositional choices make a certain kind of *cultural* (if not purely musical) sense.

But the fact that this brief monody must be understood within its historical context or as a manifestation of the *seconda prattica* does not suggest that its formal details cease to matter. No less than Bernini, Frescobaldi had acquired the most solid of constructional skills, as well as the most advanced expressive rhetoric vocabulary of his day. To ignore the material means by which each achieved his ends—Bernini in the altarpiece at Saint Peter's or in his *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, Frescobaldi in his toccatas or in this representation of the Magdalene—is to consign their work to the category of the merely sensational.

As I did with Monteverdi's "Salve Regina," I will locate "Maddalena alla Croce" within the fevered world of Counter-Reformation propaganda. Without this context it would be difficult to explain the intensely erotic quality of both lyrics and music. But I will also examine the particular ways Frescobaldi produces his imagery: the acute ascents that break off suddenly just before reaching their implied goals, the downward spiral that takes us from A major to G minor, the bizarre arrival on F♯ major, and so on. Such details concern not only the analyst and musicologist but also the performer, who must make sonic and temporal sense of these patterns in order to convey them meaningfully to the listener.

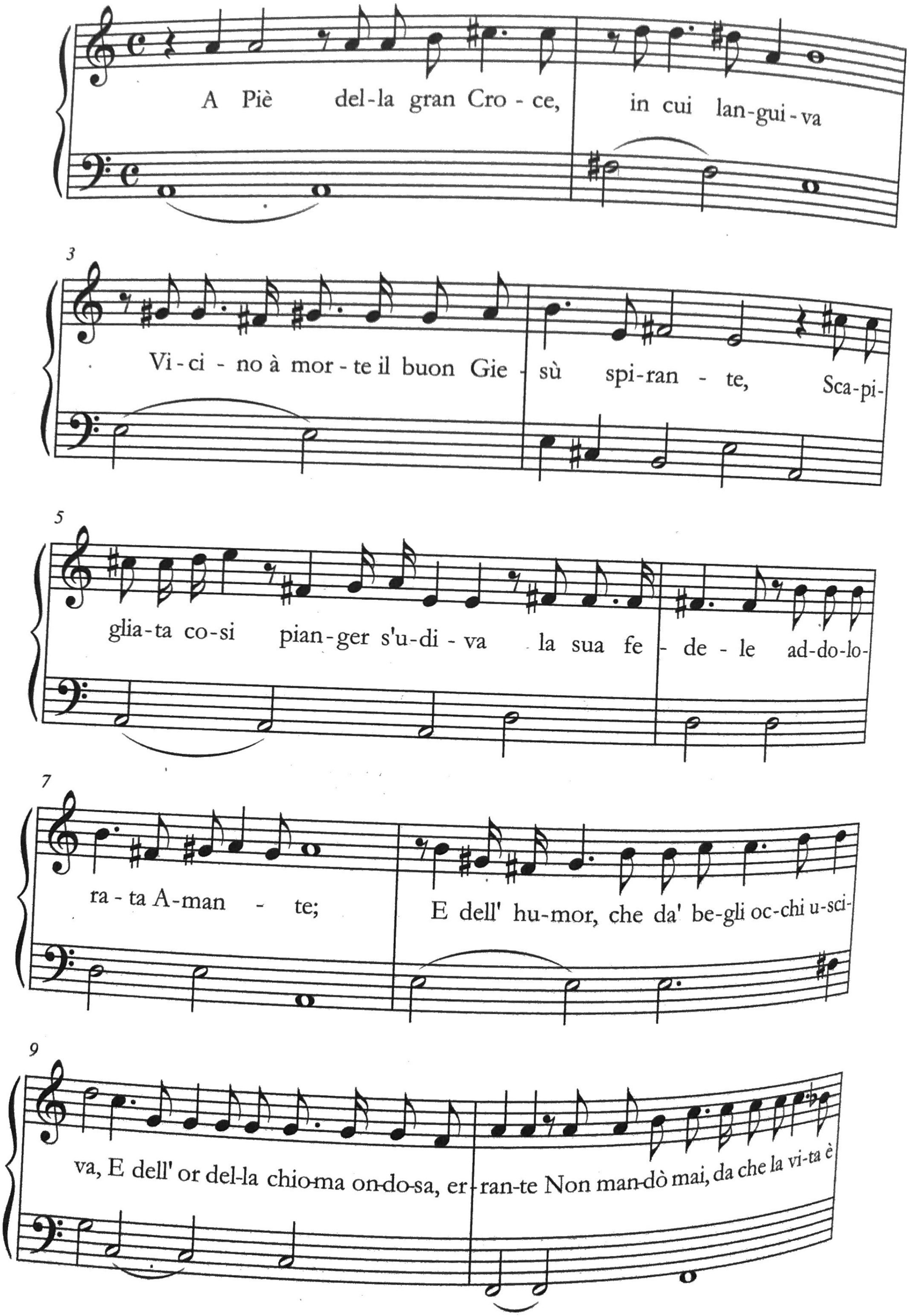
These details in turn lead back into a cultural environment that encouraged the simulation of frustrated desire, abjection, and shuddering catharsis in sacred music. And here again the writings of the Spanish mystics—Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross, without whose descriptions of divine love the Counter-Reformation might have foundered—necessarily enter into the analytical project. For both Frescobaldi and Bernini drew upon those heated descriptions of spiritual longing, the dark night of the soul, and the ecstasy of quasi-physical union with Christ in calculating the phenomenological dimensions of their artworks. The composer's task was to convey by way of sound the deeply irrational experiences of religious trance. How precisely did he do it?

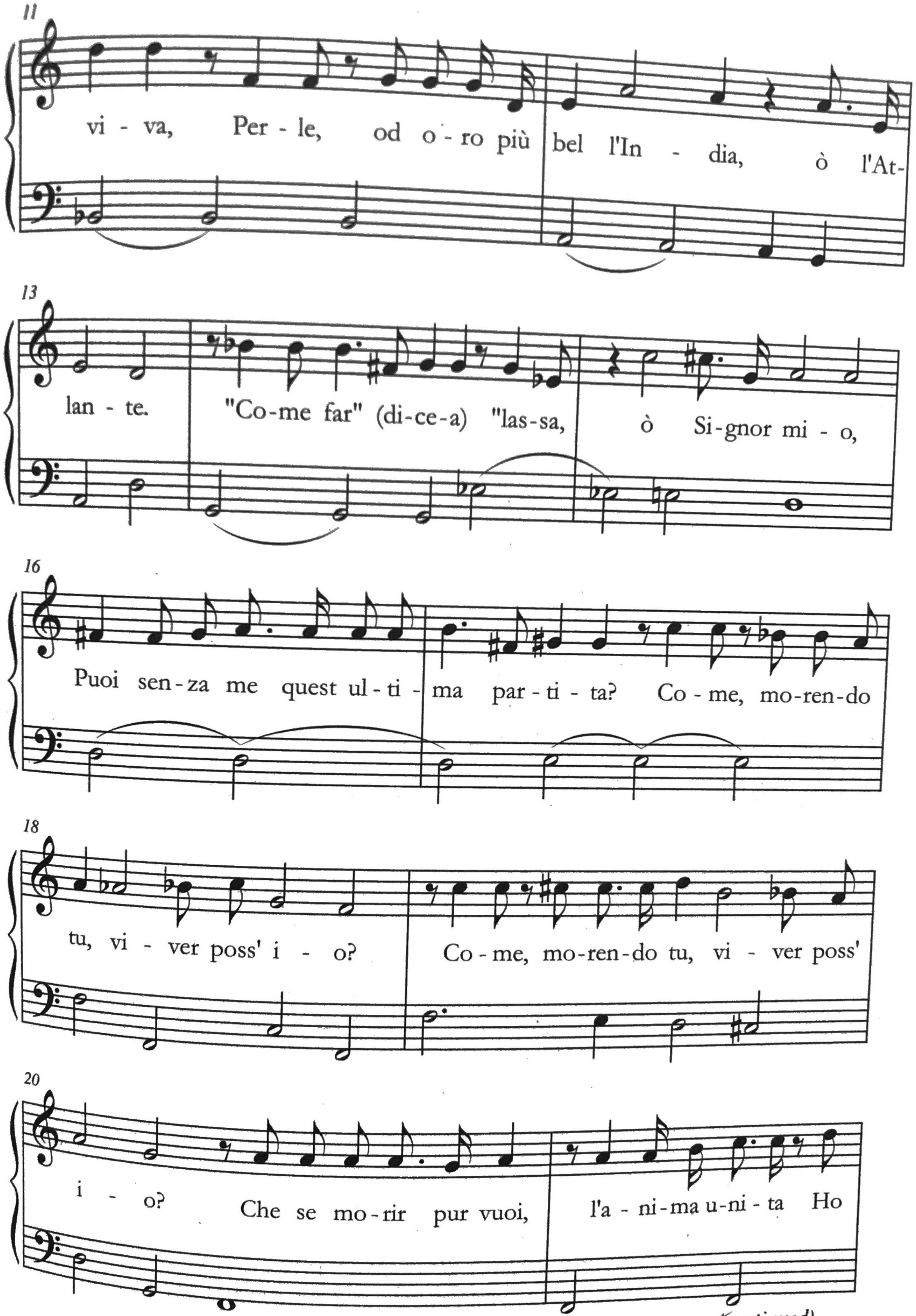
In addition to the erotically charged details of the music's moment-by-moment unfolding, Frescobaldi also constructs a theological allegory through his formal design, thereby deepening the argument of his poetic text. On this structural level, Frescobaldi reveals the method in his madness, his powerful control over the apparently disparate details of the piece. Those curiosities—the beginning in what seems like A major, the swerve into G minor, the sudden seizure on that F♯ major chord, the ending in A minor—all turn out to have crucial logical connections to one another. Just as the poem relates the Magdalene's arrival at divine understanding, so Frescobaldi plots his chain of events in ways that allow him a breathtaking moment of spiritual and also formal insight, when all is made plain. We can share more fully in that insight, however, if we have followed the musical details that produce it.

I emphasize once again that the listener will hear neither the surface gestures nor the allegory unless the performer conveys them in sound. In my experience listeners have no difficulty grasping the affective gestures of "Maddalena alla Croce" once they have the necessary historical context, provided that the singer knows how to translate the details of the piece in performance. My discussion, which brings together the politics of the Counter-Reformation, the mysticism of Spanish saints, the experiments of *seconda prattica* composers, and the salient formal details of this idiosyncratic composition, can help us grasp not only some of the priorities of seventeenth-century music but also the reasons why these composers were in no particular hurry to discover tonality.

A Piè della gran Croce, in cui languiva	At the foot of the great cross on which languished
Vicino à morte il buon Giesù spirante,	Close to death our good Jesus, expiring,
Scapigliata cosi pianger s'udiva	Disheveled and weeping was thus heard to cry
La sua fedele addolorata Amante;	His faithful, grief-stricken lover;
E dell'humor che da' begli occhi usciva,	And than the tears that issued from her lovely eyes,
E dell'or della chioma ondosa, errante,	And than the gold of her waving and errant hair,
Non mandò mai, da che la vita è viva,	Never has produced, since life was life,
Perle od oro più bel l'India ò l'Atlante.	India or the Atlantic more beautiful pearls or gold.
"Come far," dicea, "lassa, ò Signor mio,	"Alas, how," she said, "O my Lord,
Puoi senza me quest ultima partita?	Can you take without me this final departure?
Come, morendo tu, viver poss' io?	How, if you are dying, can I live?
Che se morir pur vuoi, l'anima unita	For if you wish to die, my soul is united
Ho teco (il sai, mio Redentor, mio Dio),	With you (you know this, my Redeemer, my God),
Però teco haver deggio e morte, e vita."	Thus with you I may share both death and life."

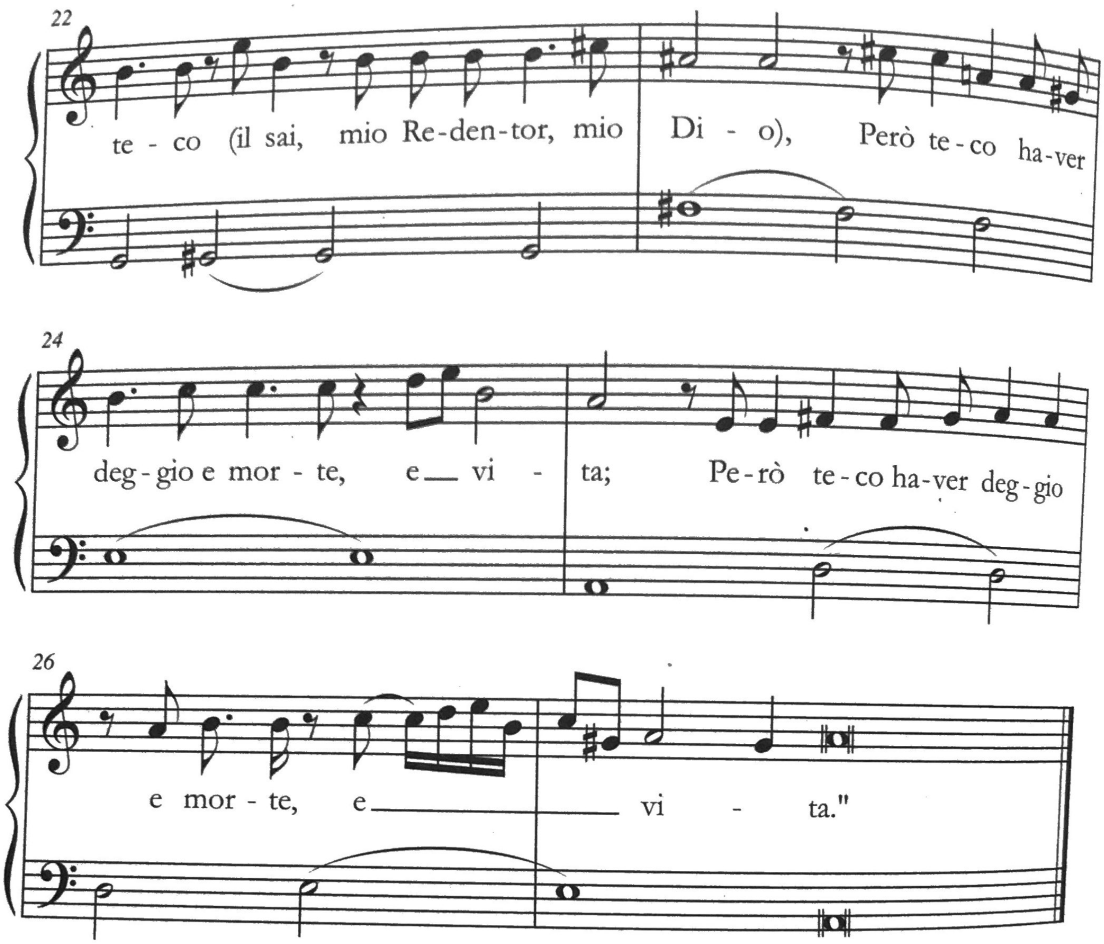
EX. 5.2. Frescobaldi, "Maddalena alla croce."


A Piè del-la gran Cro - ce, in cui lan-gui-va
3
Vi-ci - no à mor - te il buon Gie - sù spi-ran - te, Sca-pi-
5
glia-ta co-si pian-ger s'u-di - va la sua fe - de - le ad-do-lo-
7
ra - ta A-man - te; E dell' hu-mor, che da' be-gli oc-chi u-sci-
9
va, E dell' or del-la chio-ma on-do-sa, er - ran-te Non man-dò mai, da che la vi-ta è


11
vi - va, Per - le, od o - ro più bel l'In - dia, ò l'At-
13
lan - te. "Co-me far" (di-ce-a) "las-sa, ò Si-gnor mi - o,
16
Puoi sen-za me quest ul - ti - ma par - ti - ta? Co - me, mo-ren-do
18
tu, vi - ver poss' i - o? Co - me, mo-ren-do tu, vi - ver poss'
20
i - o? Che se mo-rir pur vuoi, l'a - ni-ma u-ni-ta Ho

(continued)

EX. 5.2. *(continued)*


22
te - co (il sai, mio Re-den-tor, mio
Di - o), Però te - co ha-ver
24
deg - gio e mor - te, e vi - ta;
Pe - rò te - co ha - ver deg - gio
26
e mor - te, e vi - ta."

The sonnet Frescobaldi sets purports to describe Mary Magdalene at the site of the cross, though it is laden with the metaphorical excesses typical of baroque verse. Thus, in the second quatrain the poet compares Mary's disheveled tresses to precious metals imported from the Americas, her tears to pearls conveyed from India. Much like the gaudy chapels that line the cathedral built by the Most Catholic Kings in Granada after their ethnic purging of the Iberian peninsula and in celebration of the vast quantities of gold and silver pouring in from their newly acquired colonies, this description of the grieving Mary converts her to an icon advertising as a casual point of reference the luxury commodities brought to seventeenth-century Europe by ships from both east and west.

But it is the blatant eroticism of this little piece that scandalizes most present-day listeners when they first hear it: here is Mary Magdalene at the site of Christianity's most holy site—the crucifixion—enacting a fantasy of simultaneous orgasm with the dying Christ. Even those who do not know the Renaissance convention of punning on the "little death" will catch this meaning when Frescobaldi's setting concludes with a spasmodic shudder. Both the jewel-encrusted poetry and the deliberate blending of the religious and the sexual recall Oscar Wilde's *Salome,* except that the sacrilegious stakes are much higher here. Recall that when pop star Madonna staged a similar (if much less audacious) scenario for "Like a Prayer," Pepsi yanked her ad from circulation within a matter of minutes.

In the opening pages of this chapter I circumscribed the cultural universe within which such texts made sense. But granting a composer license to explore erotic imagery in no way determines the choice of particular pitches or gestures. As I mentioned above, Frescobaldi developed his craft with the avant-garde composers at Ferrara, and he adopted and extended their experiments with chromatic harmonies and radical discontinuities in his own music. Like Gesualdo, Frescobaldi churned out pieces that today often seem to us little more than conundrums. In an attempt at dissuading me from taking this music seriously *as music,* one of my teachers told me, "It didn't matter to them where they started or ended or where they cadenced. They just worked through their texts and stopped." The challenge posed by that statement has fueled my work for the last forty years.

Frescobaldi's setting of the sonnet lasts for a mere forty-seven measures, but over the course of that very short duration he passes through at least eleven implied keys. By contrast, the much longer pieces by Bach typically move through only four or five. As in his toccatas (discussed at length in chapter 6), Frescobaldi creates here a febrile quality that leaps nervously with no more warning than a sudden leading tone pointing the way. As often as not, the tonic resolution indicated by that leading tone fails to materialize. Still, the powerful syntactical implication of the leading tone preparing to close on its tonic provides an adequate guidepost, however erratic its treatment in context. Without question, "Maddalena alla Croce" refuses to conform to a preset model of coherence; it disrupts modal expectations as much as it does tonal ones. But it does not make its moves at random.

A musician accustomed to tonal semiotics is likely to find perplexing the fact that the piece seems to open in A major and end in A minor. But the key signature, which sports neither flats nor sharps, does not confirm A major. If the continuo begins by striking a minor triad,[10] then the ascent of the voice to the signed-in C♯ for the word "croce" is startling and even hair-raising: in place of a complacent arrival on an alreadygranted major mediant, the C♯ now sounds like a C♮ wrenched up forcibly out of its proper position. Within the gestural vocabulary of this piece, in other words, the music of the first quatrain does not truly qualify as major; it presents an intensely spiky terrain (call it, perhaps, a severely wracked Aeolian) in which vocal lines and harmonic patterns strain upward past their normal bounds toward something that remains beyond their grasp.

The opening melody, the text of which describes the agony of Christ as he hangs on the cross, climbs over the sustained A in the continuo with increasing tension through to C♯—a leading tone that makes its way to D only after a gasp and an aggressive leap to F♯ in the bass. From that precarious configuration the voice presses up to D♯, which ought to resolve to E. Instead, the arching trajectory breaks off with an angular augmented fourth on "languiva." Similar labored ascents and melodic defeats occur repeatedly over the course of the sonnet, even when only the neutral narrator speaks. What starts out as an image of Christ's suffering becomes the pattern for Mary's attempts at reaching up to her Lord—futile attempts that repeatedly result in her falling back into herself.

On a kinetic level, Frescobaldi offers the phenomenological experience of heaving forward and collapsing inward, simulating a body in the throes of pain, passion, and (potentially) ecstasy. We can hear, perhaps even *feel*, the Magdalene's acute yearning, her desperate stabs at forcing a transcendence that all this striving fails to bring about (see again Bernini's Saint Teresa, figure 5.1). And although Frescobaldi continues to set the poetic text with careful attention to declamation, he chooses to subsume the second quatrain—with its fetishized description of Mary's tears and hair—musically into his larger allegory. For instead of stopping off to indulge in its particular images, the music keeps pursuing that same hapless pattern of arching up and falling back, though cycling down through increasingly lower pitch levels, as though losing energy. These iterations become paler and paler facsimiles of the model the Magdalene wishes to emulate.

When Mary begins to speak in the first terzet, she is in a dark G minor, far removed from the brilliance of the initial terrain. If the opening phrase pushed upward through all those spiky leading tones to encompass a distended tritone, here the Magdalene finds herself confined to the crabbed interval of a diminished fourth. More to the point for this piece, her speech (and, by extension, her consciousness) is crippled with B♭ and E♭, whereas a cadence on A—the final, which has stood since the beginning as her object of desire—would require B♮ and a fulfilled ascent all the way to E♮, the modal fifth degree. None of the efforts exerted during the first sections succeeded in catapulting her into the understanding she sought; now her vision seems permanently obscured.

A pessimistic gloom settles, making the A realm once nearly within her grasp now seem thoroughly impossible. She continues her struggle, even echoing in m. 25 the frustrated, broken-off leading tone of the opening gesture and almost arriving at A in her half cadence in m. 28 on "partita." But, despite these near successes, she only spirals down even further: if the setting began by moving far to the sharp side, it now sinks just as far to the flat side. Eventually the A♭ in m. 30 obstructs her access altogether and locks her in the dark night of the soul for the first presentation of her question, "viver poss' io?" (am I able to live?). Only with great tenacity does she repeat this phrase, managing to wrench herself back up only as far as G minor and the defeated outlook with which she started her terzet.

But a distant light suddenly glimmers at the outset of the final terzet as Mary begins to glimpse the solution. If her own personal efforts gained her nothing, she now recalls that her spiritual unity with Christ already guarantees her salvation. For the first time her bass line in m. 35 takes on a linear directionality, and she ascends by step, her melody reconquering first A♮, then pressing on to B♮ for "Ho teco" in m. 37.

With this realization she pauses for an intimate parenthetical address to Jesus himself. As her level of mystical insight comes to equal his divine knowledge, she respells the B♭—the pitch that had previously alienated her from Christ's key—as A♯, the leading tone to B as an implied tonic, producing a wildly dislocating F♯ major triad. (If we were to tune our keyboard as Frescobaldi did his, this chord would actually jangle.) For a strangely timeless moment we hover there with Mary, suspended in rapture.

Having attained that key to enlightenment, she can now freely enact an affirmative cadence on A, the realm initially identified with Christ. In m. 42 she achieves the ascent up to E (the withheld goal of the initial melodic vector that had broken off so precipitously), now with no difficulty. As she repeats this line of text she traces without obstruction the entire octave, from the depth of her low E all the way up to high E and thence to the final cadence marked so intensely with pain (note the diminished fourth) and pleasure. She now inhabits the world from which she had seemed hopelessly exiled. Before she saw through a glass darkly; now she clasps her Savior face to face.

I referred to Mary's nadir of despair in her first terzet as her "dark night of the soul"—the title of the celebrated testimonial by Saint Teresa's disciple Saint John of the Cross—and I have just described the F♯ major disruption as rapture. I now want to return to the Spanish saints who provided the impetus for artists like Frescobaldi. As easy as it might have been for Frescobaldi simply to grab onto the musical vocabulary developed in madrigals and opera for simulations of the erotic, he apparently chose (as did Crashaw and Bernini) to go back to the mystical sources themselves for inspiration. For the phenomenology of divine love, despite all its obvious resemblances, differs significantly from that of carnal love.

In her writing, Saint Teresa often apologizes for the clumsiness of language as a medium for communicating her experiences for the benefit of others, especially as she seeks to distinguish among several different varieties of mystical transport. She problematizes her own metaphors, switching from one to another in an attempt at getting closer to the ineffable events she strives so urgently to convey in words. But her verbal constructs, however inadequate their author judged them to be, circulated widely throughout the Catholic world and even as far as England, serving to instruct those who would follow in her footsteps. Frescobaldi's target audiences in Florence or Rome would have known key passages from Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross, and he strove to match these very famous images with musical analogues that grant us the illusion of actually experiencing these ecstasies firsthand.

With respect to the radical contrast between the harsh brightness of Frescobaldi's opening and the darkness into which the Magdalene finds herself at the beginning of her terzet, John of the Cross explains:

> When [mystics] believe that the sun of Divine favor is shining most brightly upon them, God turns all this light of theirs into darkness, and shuts against them the door and the source of the sweet spiritual water which they were tasting in God whensoever and for as long as they desired. And thus He leaves them so completely in the dark that they know not whither to go with their sensible imagination and meditation.[11]

But (he explains), this dark night of the soul is necessary for eventual transcendence:

> The strait gate is this night of sense, and the soul detaches itself from sense and strips itself thereof that it may enter by this gate, and establishes itself in faith, which is a stranger to all sense, so that afterwards it may journey by the narrow way, which is the other night—that of the spirit—and this the soul afterwards enters in order in journey to God in pure faith, which is the means whereby the soul is united to God.[12]

Translating this concept back to Frescobaldi's setting: without that alienated passage through G minor and even F minor, Mary could not have found the means of merging with Jesus. She has to proceed blindly through darkness in order to find enlightenment.

Which returns us to that mysterious F♯ major chord. Saint Teresa explains with respect to the Prayer of Quiet:

> This is a supernatural state, and, however hard we try, we cannot reach it for ourselves; for it is a state in which the soul enters into peace, or, rather, in which the Lord gives it peace through His presence. In this state, all the faculties are stilled. The soul, in a way which has nothing to do with the outward senses, realizes that it is now very close to its God, and that, if it were but a little closer, it would become one with Him through union. . . . It is, as it were, in a swoon, both inwardly and outwardly, so that the outward man (let me call it the "body," and then you will understand me better) does not wish to move, but rests, like one who has almost reached the end of his journey, so that it may the better start again upon its way, with redoubled strength for its task.[13]

Saint Francis de Sales describes a similar phenomenon in these words: "But when the union of the soul with God is most especially strict and close, it is called by theologians inhesion or adhesion, because by it the soul is caught up, fastened, glued and affixed to the divine majesty, so that she cannot easily loose or draw herself back again."[14] An extraordinary description of the effect of that F♯ major chord! With respect to rapture, Teresa writes, "Before you can be warned by a thought or help yourself in any way, it comes as a quick and violent shock; you see and feel this cloud, or this powerful eagle rising and bearing you up on its wings."[15]

The modern listener is likely to recognize the concluding cadential patterns as patterns of requited desire without too much difficulty. But Mary's real breakthrough occurs with that F♯ major chord, which suddenly and without warning lifts us from linear time for a moment of suspended animation—what we might call an out-of-body experience, a glimpse of timeless rapture. The syntax of this move would have baffled a conservative seventeenth-century music theorist as much as it does us, yet it is neither arbitrary nor merely a momentary response to an image in the text.

Over the course of the entire piece, Frescobaldi has carefully prepared the climactic effect of seeing through to some mystical truth by means of this irrational hinge. Just as John of the Cross offers a causal justification for God's plunging the believer into the dark night of the soul for the sake of unity, so here the very locus of Mary's alienated doubt becomes her key to redemption. The F♯ major chord functions on one level as what we call a secondary dominant, albeit to a pitch rendered highly significant within the context of this piece. But as it suddenly materializes out of nowhere, it offers (in Braudel's words) the desperately sought-after dramatic detail that strikes and holds the attention, the active demonstration that persuades and grips the faithful. We are not meant fully to understand what transpires with that F♯ major triad: we are to hear it and believe.

MELTING DOWN: HEINRICH SCHÜTZ'S "ANIMA MEA LIQUEFACTA EST / ADJURO VOS"

Heinrich Schütz acquired this overheated brand of sacred music and brought it to his home base in Dresden from the source itself, in the course of not one but two sabbaticals spent in Venice. After his first trip (1609–13), he produced his multichoir settings of the *Psalmen Davids* (1619) in a style learned from Giovanni Gabrieli; Gabrieli regarded Schütz as his greatest disciple and even bequeathed his ring to him when he died. A second trip put him in contact with Alessandro Grandi, whose extravagantly erotic effects Schütz mines in his *Symphoniae Sacrae I* (1629), a collection that includes several settings of texts from the Song of Songs.

The other two pieces examined in this chapter, Monteverdi's "Salve Regina" and Frescobaldi's "Maddalena alla Croce," both make extensive use of sudden surges of energy and subsequent deflations. Neither pushes the quality of melting down nearly so exhaustively, however, as Schütz in his setting of "Anima mea liquefacta est" in his *Symphoniae Sacrae*. The title, of course, alerts us to the topic of liquefaction. But it cannot begin to suggest the myriad ways the composer invents to simulate this quality.

In order to account for these, we need to have at hand the *Tractatus* of Christoph Bernhard, a colleague of Schütz's in Dresden.[16] Monteverdi had promised decades before to produce a theoretical account of what he called the second practice—a new way of treating dissonances—but he never got around to doing so.[17] Bernhard's *Tractatus* comes as close to fulfilling that promise as anything that survives from the period; a compendium of everything the practicing musician would need to know, it trolls through the classic first practice characteristic of, say, Palestrina, then introduces a number of what he explains as rhetorical tropes, ways of elaborating an orthodox background pattern with carefully manipulated dissonances on the surface. His two-layered music examples resemble conceptually the ones I deployed in chapter 1 of this book;

Bernhard even pursues a kind of musical reduction as he attempts to show composers how they might move confidently from conventional backgrounds to idiosyncratic foregrounds and, conversely, how the performer might identify the fundamental structures lying beneath the rule-flaunting details of the score. We need both background and foreground to unpack the images Schütz offers in such profusion.

A millennia-long tradition sutured believers into the subject position of the woman of the Canticles, with the male beloved understood allegorically as God. Most of Schütz's text comes from Chapter V of the Canticles, though he took lines three and four (altered from second to third person) from Chapter II.

Anima mea liquefacta est	My soul dissolved
ut dilectus locutus est,	as my beloved spoke, (5:6)
vox enim eius dulcis	for his voice is sweet
et facies eius decora.	and his face is lovely. (2:13)
Labia eius lilia	His lips are lilies
stillantia myrrha primam.	distilling purest myrrh. (5:13)
Adjuro vos, filiae Jerusalem,	I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
si inveneritis dilectum meum,	if you see my beloved,
ut nuntietis ei,	to tell him
quia amore langueo.	that I am languishing with love. (5:8)

Schütz's rearrangement of the scriptural text accomplishes several things. It adds more images inspired by erotic contemplation of the beloved (lines 3–4), and it eliminates the passages from Chapter V concerning abandonment and persecution that might have detracted from a concentrated expression of adoration.[18] Moreover, the revised text allows for the opening image of "liquefaction" (rendered, unfortunately, as "My soul failed me" in many English translations) to anticipate and balance the final image of "languishing."

"Anima mea liquefacta est" is in D Aeolian, and it features the ambiguity typical of that mode: from his second measure on, Schütz implies that the piece might belong to G Hypodorian. This basic tension between modal types counts as one of his most important strategies, for neither option ever guarantees satisfaction—not even the final cadence, which maintains itself on the cusp.[19]

Schütz opens with an instrumental sinfonia that introduces his principal set of tensions, intelligible even without lyrics to back them up (ex.

5.3). A forthright presentation of a D minor triad establishes the mode at the outset, but the dominant in m. 2 resolves to a D major triad, a chord that will constantly serve both as the tonic with picardy third and as a secondary dominant to G. Here, in its first appearance, the F♯ inserts a moment of expectation, of rising desire, that takes us to G.

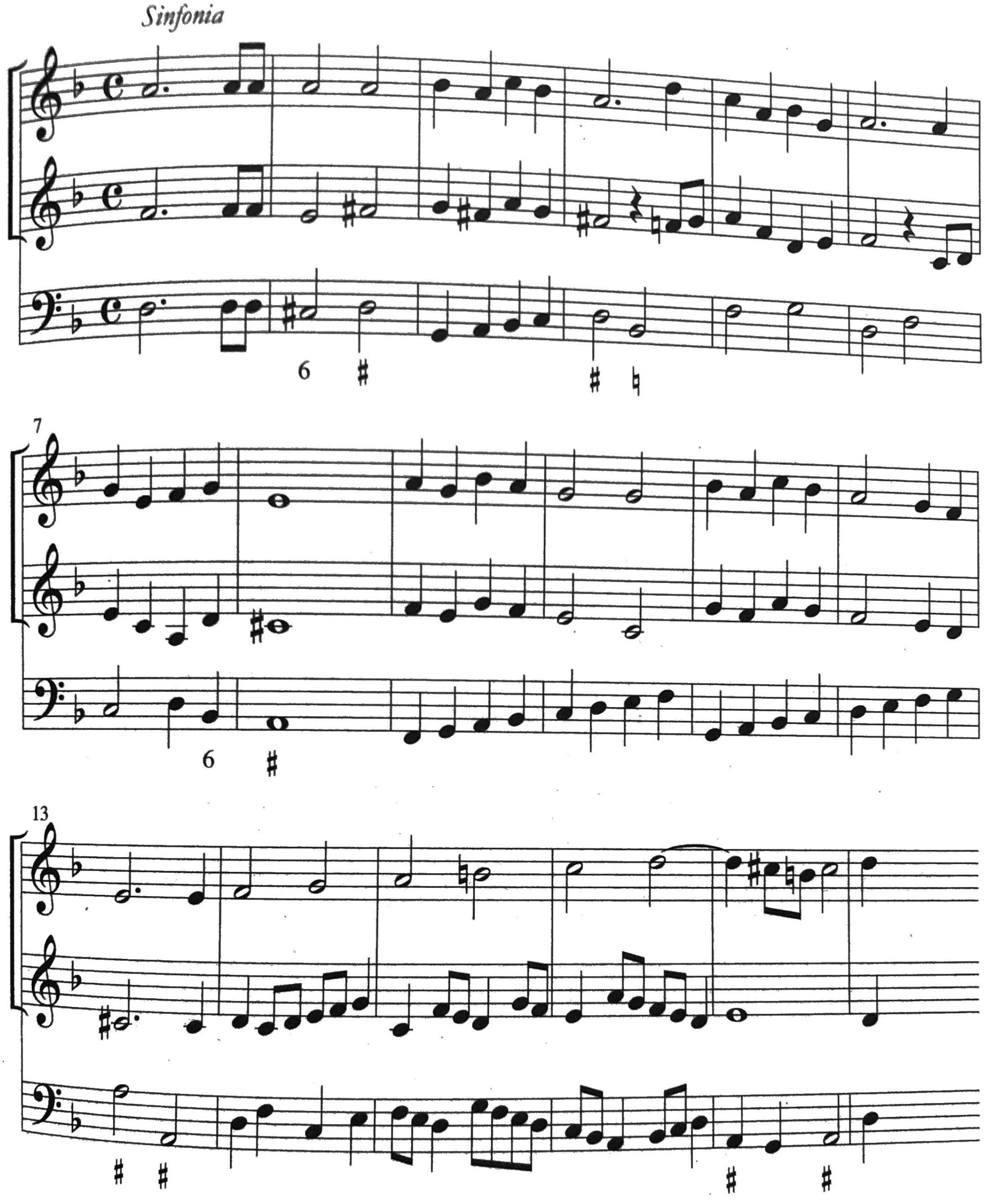
Halfway through m. 3, however, we hear two acute melodic dissonances, A and C, grinding against B♭ in the bass. Bernhard would advise us to notice that the bass is ascending by step—usually a hint that the one-to-one relationship between pitches in the modal line and those of harmonic support is being suspended temporarily. The reduction is easily accomplished: the opening and closing melodic pitches of m. 3 are identical, and they resolve down by step in m. 4 as the bass reaches its goal.

But providing fodder for analysis is never the point of music. Schütz accomplishes several things with m. 3. The bass offers an image of incrementally rising desire; the upper parts, on the other hand, attempt to resolve too soon, then arch up into that illicit dissonance that is not allowed by the bass, finally collapsing back down to the same position in which it began. Schütz traces an internal contradiction, surges that lead nowhere, resigned descents that leave the lover suffering on her bed. Recall the bodily motions of Frescobaldi's Magdalene or Bernini's Saint Teresa. Schütz encapsulates both vectors within a single measure.

At least we seem to have arrived firmly on V/G in m. 4. A *romanesca*-harmonized descent from melodic D in m. 5 confirms as much. But the arrival on A in m. 6 is given an F♮, and a subsequent diapente descent as though toward D duplicates the same gesture for the rival mode. At least the odd melodic turn figure that created the sharp dissonance at first hearing appears to have been domesticated when it arrives in mm. 5 and 7, as though Schütz wants us to focus here on modal ambiguity. But the four bars of mounting scales in the bass beginning in m. 9 bring the dissonances back in full force. And even if we seem to be fairly securely back in D, the entire complex of m. 11 echoes m. 3 except for the absence of F♯ and the insistence of the line in ascending the ninth from G to A. This simulates extraordinary effort coupled with repeated collapses. At last the melody manages to hoist itself up by step to the octave above the final for the cadence in m. 18. The sinfonia's cadence is met by the voice now putting words to the contradictory images we have just experienced in the instruments: "liquefacta, liquefacta, liquefacta," it moans as it melts down to a cadence on G in m. 25.

The downward spiral continues with the next phrase, which sets out C minor. As in the Frescobaldi, the second degree (E♮ here) required for an

EX. 5.3. Schütz, "Anima mea liquefacta est," Prima Pars, mm. 1–18.



authentic cadence has been tamped down something like the dark night of the soul. Except that the Schütz has nothing in its lyrics that would suggest the impending death that the Magdalene explicitly fears. No, this alienation from the world of reason simulates an erotic swoon, apparently brought about by the mere mention of the beloved. The instruments repeat the gesture, thereby underscoring its significance and preventing an immediate move away from this intensely pleasurable stupor.

As the lyrics go on to enumerate the qualities of the beloved, however, desire begins to build. The bass proceeds by rising fifth, and the voices seek to outdo each other in levels of enthusiasm. So intense is this inflation that it concludes on the other end of the spectrum, complete with an illicit cadence on A. The B♮ needed for this cadence appears with searing suspensions on the word "dulcis" (mm. 47–48). Just how sweet is his voice? Well, sweet enough to make the background structure exceed its boundaries.

After this quite indecent moment of self-exposure, the ensemble retreats to patterns that would confirm mostly a G axis. For a while it seems to be working step by step back to some kind of normalcy. But normalcy is never the desired condition for this piece, and the ambiguities continue apace.

We have only begun to melt down, however, for it is the secunda pars, "Adjuro vos," that presents the pièce de résistance. As before, it is the instrumental sinfonia that exposes the materials that will pervade this half (ex. 5.4). Here again we find the gesture of arching up and collapsing back, now compressed into two pitches. In the first measure, the C♯ in the bass ought to behave as a leading tone and ascend back to D; instead it falls to C♮, as if unable to sustain the pressure. When the motive moves to the top line in m. 4, its effect is intensified by its superimposition over the bass, which marches stalwartly from D to A, giving no consideration to the languishing lines above it. The clash on the downbeat of 5 is even more excruciating than those that appeared earlier in the piece. The motive with the frustrated leading tone then returns to the bass, where it traces first a cadence (with B♮) on A and then on D. Note that the lines accompanying each iteration of this motive offer the most teleological of patterns: they descend through diapente in search of gratification, but always with the crimped leading tone image inflecting their otherwise straightforward progress. When the voices enter, they bring back the internal contradiction between D and G, and the bass has to twist and turn to accommodate each in turn.

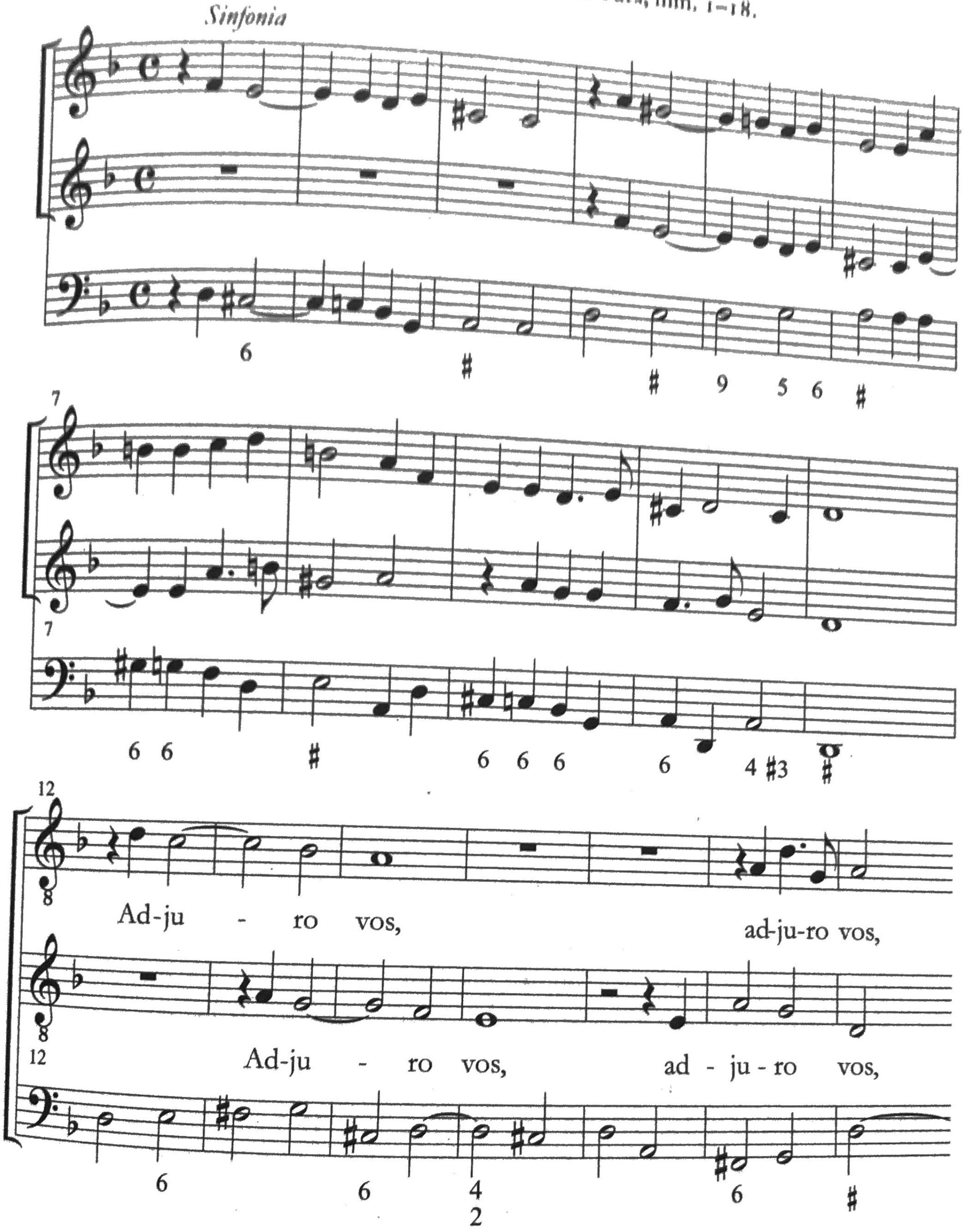
Once again Schütz halts the process to take a deep breath, and for a while we hear monodic recitation of the kind pioneered by Peri in 1600 and perfected by Monteverdi in *Orfeo*. Over a sustained pedal the voice runs through most of the remaining text: "If you find my beloved, then tell him that . . . " As in those earlier models, Schütz delays the descent of the modal line from 5 to 4 until "ei quia." But here the oratory falters, only to open onto the word we've all been waiting for, "langueo." Schütz does not disappoint us. I suggested above that the first line,

---

EX. 5

"Anima
ity right
ter on V
the noti
dimensi
back to

EX. 5.4. Schütz, "Anima mea liquefacta est," Secunda Pars, mm. 1–18.


Sinfonia
7
12
Ad-ju - ro vos,
ad-ju-ro vos,
Ad-ju - ro vos,
ad - ju - ro vos,

"Anima mea liquefacta est," was designed to announce this eventuality right from the beginning, and here comes the payoff. In my chapter on Wert and Marenzio in *Modal Subjectivities,* I explained how the notion of "madrigalism" detracts us from attending to the musical dimensions of the text/music relationship: in reducing our explanation back to word painting, we may neglect to observe how the lyrics serve merely as the pretext for the composer to imagine combinations otherwise not available. As if to demonstrate this argument, Schütz presents more than fifty measures that demonstrate how many different ways one might experience languor.

He sets the words "amore langueo," appropriately enough, to an elaborate cadential formula. Its melodic meanings, however, find themselves thwarted by other lines—instrumental and vocal—that duplicate the pattern at other pitch levels. For instance, when the second voice enters, the two grind painfully against each other, each denying the other's desired resolution (ex. 5.5). After much heaving and panting, the voices agree to cadence on G (not shown in the examples). But an exposed E♭ in the second voice in m. 68 drags the entire complex down to a cadence in C minor, illegally to the flat side of the piece's axis.

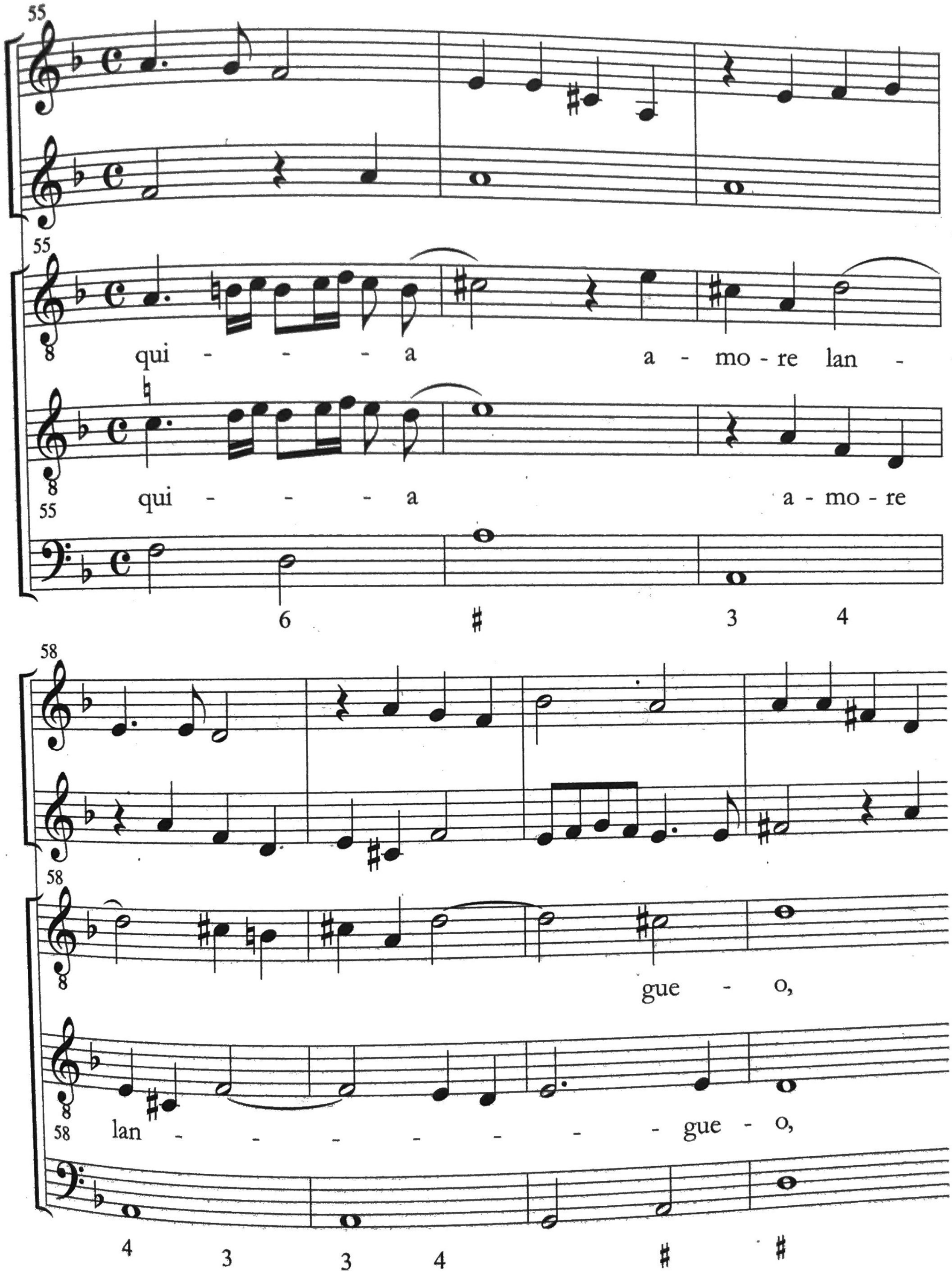
In contrast to Frescobaldi's Magdalene, who discovers the path (however convoluted) to rational closure, Schütz liquidates all markers of principal key identity in his last page. The aquatic images are not accidental. Moshe Idel quotes Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, an early Hasidic master who wrote of divine union:

> It is known, however, that everything depends on the arousal from below, the feminine waters, since it is the woman who first longs for the man. We, the Children of Israel, are "woman" in our relationship with God. We arouse ourself *[sic]* from below to cling to Him; then do we awake in Him, as it were, desire to extend to us His flow of all goodness. Then does the flow come down from above: blessing and compassion, life and peace. We, the Community of Israel, and the Creator, blessed be He, are a single whole when we cleave to Him. Either without the other is, as it were, incomplete.... When we begin the arousal by our feminine flow of longing for Him and [our] desire to cleave to Him, we awaken His desire for us as well. When these two desires are brought together, there is one whole being.[20]

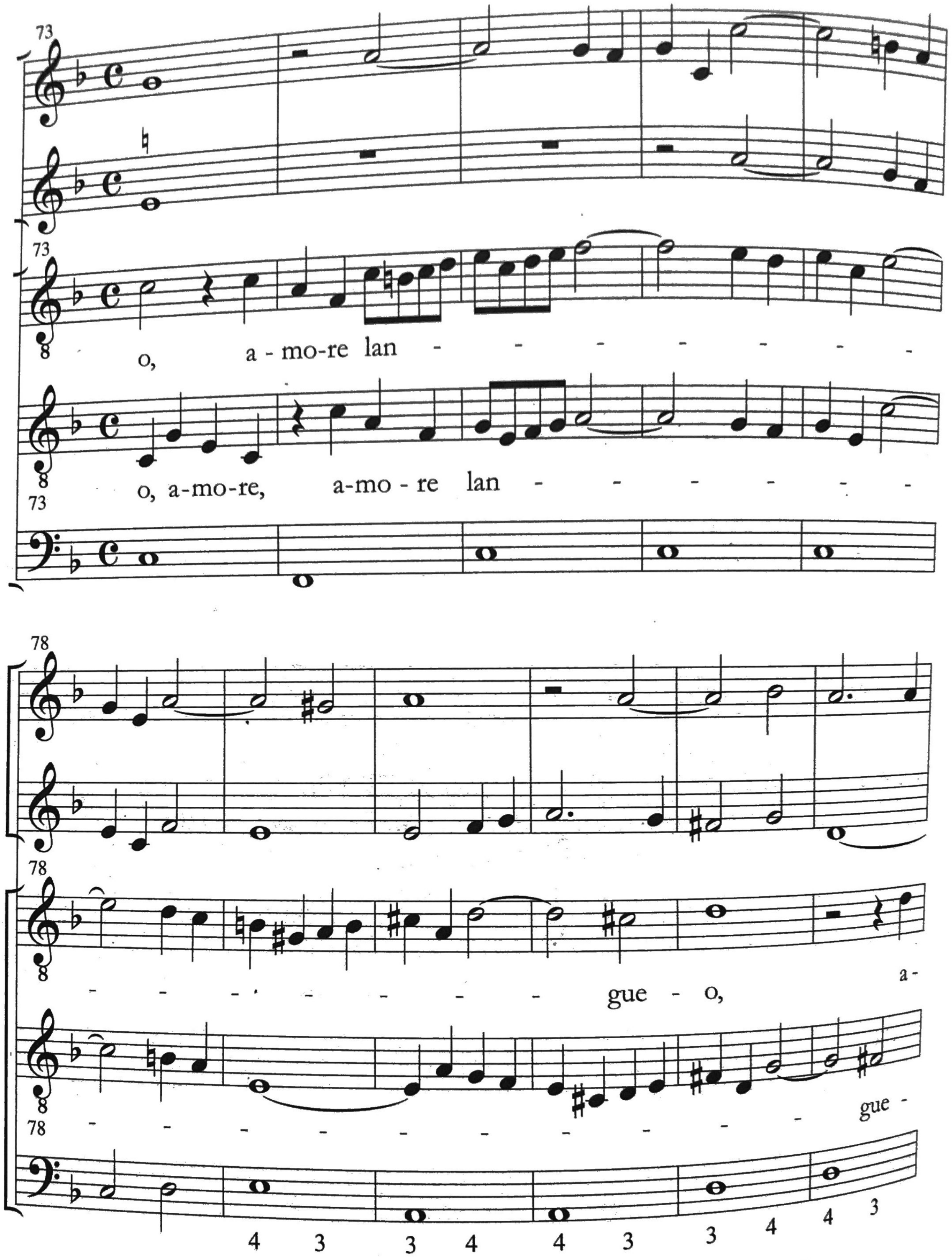
In his setting of "Anima mea liquefacta est," Schütz works hard to simulate "feminine waters" and the longing for "flow." From here to the end he plays a kind of shell game with leading tones and secondary dominants, disorienting us in a delicious puddle of unrequited desires (ex. 5.6).

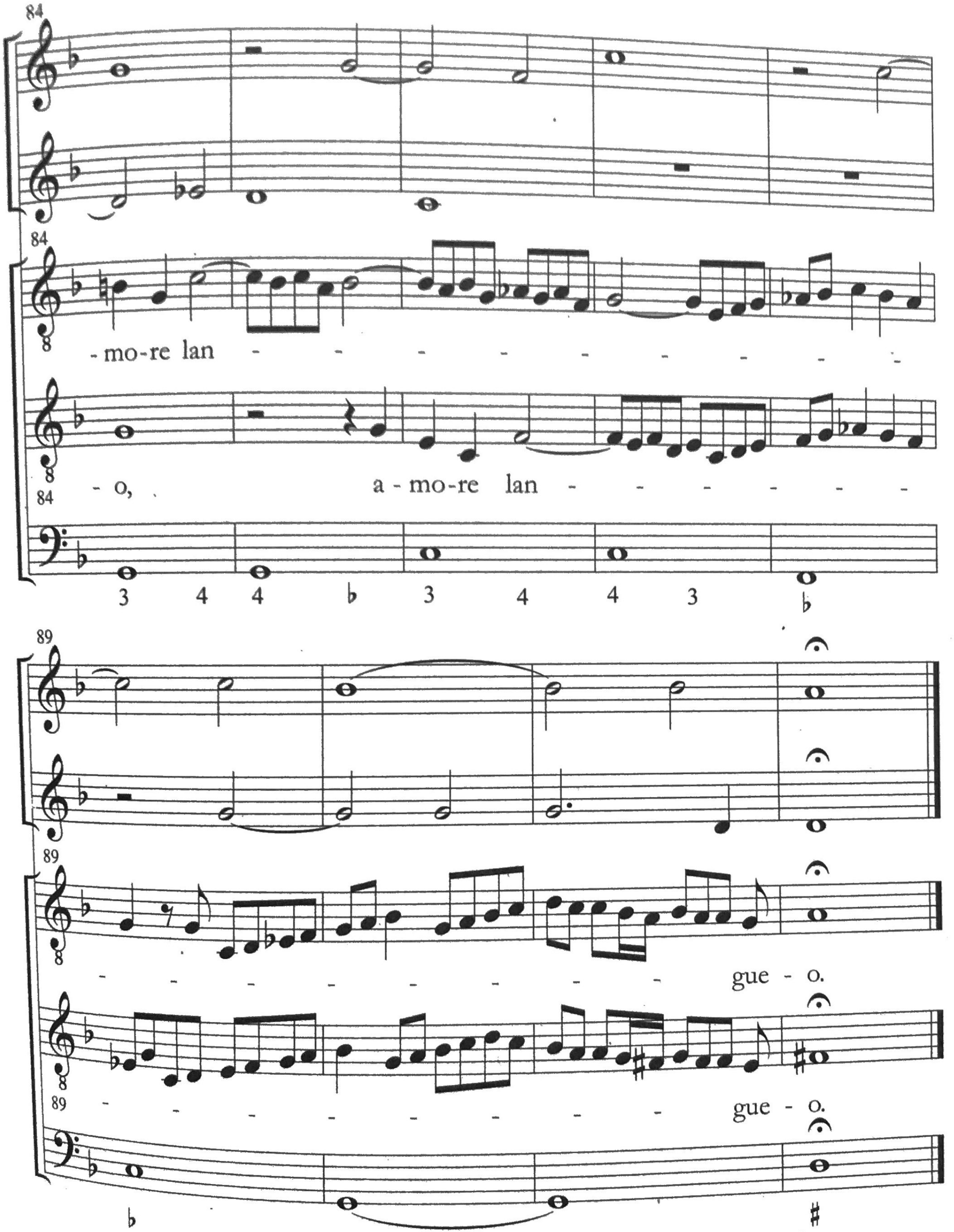
First he seems inclined to allow his process to devolve into the infinite regress of ever-flatter keys. The arrival on C in m. 73 might be a secondary dominant to F minor, and although he resists taking us there just yet, he will follow through with that implication in m. 88, a scant four bars from the end. But in this first instance he raises all the mediants, allowing the sun to break through. Note the extraordinarily bright quality of the major-oriented parallel sixths of mm. 75–76 and especially the sear-

EX. 5.5. Schütz, "Anima mea liquefacta est," Secunda Pars, mm. 55–61.


55
qui - - - - a a - mo - re lan -
qui - - - - a a - mo - re
6 ♯ 3 4
58
gue - o,
lan - - - - - - - gue - o,
4 3 3 4 ♯ ♯

EX. 5.6. Schütz, "Anima mea liquefacta est," Secunda Pars, m. 73–end.


73
o, a - mo-re lan - - - - - - - -
o, a-mo-re, a-mo - re lan - - - - - - -
78
gue - o,
a-
gue -
4 3 3 4 4 3 3 4 4 3


84
84
- mo-re lan - - - - - - - - - - -
- o, a - mo-re lan - - - - - - -
84
3 4 4 ♭ 3 4 4 3 ♭
89
89
- - - - - - - - - - - - gue - o.
89 - - - - - - - - - - - - gue - o.
♭ ♯

ing thirds halfway through m. 77 that hold out over the instrumental dissonances. They hold out in part because they are reorienting the piece away from the flat side and now toward the sharp side: they set up a powerful cadence on A, complete with B♮.

That arrival, however, initiates a series of falling fifths: first to D, then G, back to C, and finally to F with A♭. After this astonishing nadir, the process reverses itself, though only with the implication of a palindromic symmetry. If F minor yields to C minor, then G minor, and finally a D major chord, we can only tell by looking at the score that we have returned to the tonic. If anything, this sounds like V/G minor; nothing in this context indicates that it might be the final.

But at this point in the piece, who cares? Schütz's strategy has been to lose us in a labyrinth of pleasure so intense that closure scarcely matters. To continue the bodily image of arching up and collapsing back that so characterizes all the depictions of desire and pleasure in this chapter, Schütz leaves us not with resolution but in midarch—just as in Bernini's depiction of Saint Teresa—and performers should strive to make that last sonority sound like an unresolved dominant. God has not yet answered, the beloved is not yet fully present: we can only long indefinitely for the bridegroom's appearance.

. . .

I have gone into extensive detail concerning these pieces not for the sake of obscurantism but because I want to demonstrate the tight control these musicians had over their compositional strategies. The option of producing rational trajectories—the kind of procedure celebrated in eighteenth-century tonality—was available to each of them, as they demonstrate with some frequency. But the tracing of mystical experiences was a much higher aesthetic priority for them, and it posed much greater technical challenges. Without this cultural swerve into esoteric phenomenologies, musicians might have homed in on tonal hierarchies as providing the only game in town much earlier than they did.

With the increased growth of secularization in European culture, enterprises such as Schütz's begin to recede. Yet as long as mysticism commanded center stage, it inspired the cutting edge of musical experimentation, with simulations of linear reason pushed to the side. Chapter 6 will remain within this domain, though it will deal mostly with the ways such techniques and their ideological apparatus informed the development of the keyboard toccata.