



Mediterranean Trade Routes and Music of the Early Seventeenth Century

Susan McClary

FERNAND BRAUDEL composed his magisterial *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* during World War II.¹ A daunting feat: most of us feel a sense of accomplishment simply managing to plow all the way through this massive work and in the best of circumstances. Once we get past wondering “how did he do it?,” however, it becomes clear that he *had* to do it: it was his way of imagining a world that could acknowledge its common history and deep interdependences. Reading Braudel today, when the international agencies formed after that war to ensure cooperation threaten once again to break apart along many of the same old fault lines—the patched and repatched Balkans, the mutual antagonisms between Christianity and Islam, the problem of securing a homeland for Jews too often driven into exile, Spain with its perpetual reconquests, and the destabilizing economic wild card that the Americas were then and now—one is struck again by his vision and by a sense of missed opportunities.

Musicologists in the post-war period did not pay much heed to Braudel. A German-based discipline that had long privileged a German repertory, American musicology sought ways of holding onto its central canon despite the enemy status of its origins. To

a large extent, music historians turned their attentions to projects that avoided potentially difficult ideological issues. The great achievements of the decades following the war involved the production of critical editions and inventories of archives, the scientific dating of autograph scores, and the development of objective analytic methods that bracketed everything outside the scope of “the music itself.” As Joseph Kerman argued in his *Contemplating Music*—a book that took on the task of explaining the discipline’s positivistic orientation and subsequent intellectual stagnation—these enterprises assumed in advance the greatness of their objects of study, thereby obviating the need of ever addressing questions of value.²

The so-called New Musicology, which took its direction from Kerman’s diagnosis, has often been vilified as a reaction from those who want to foist their special interests in women or queers or pop music on the previously uncontested canon. Note, however, that the lines drawn by that canon also excluded the art musics of Eastern Europe, England, France, the Americas, and (most pertinent to this collection) Spain. Only a small handful of mostly ignored scholars—foremost among them UCLA’s Robert Stevenson—have bothered to look into the music produced by Golden Age Spain and the new-world colonies of Philip II.³ They hold their own little

¹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 vols., trans. Siân Reynolds (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976; first published in 1949).

² Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985).

³ In addition to the huge bibliography of Robert Stevenson, see also Louise K. Stein, *Songs of Mortals, Dialogues of the*



support-group sessions in the evenings at meetings of the American Musicological Society, while prime-time panels dedicated to the Masters and to trendy topics fill ballrooms to capacity. Questions posed of music may have changed, but not enough so as to attract much interest to the Iberian world.

And here I must plead as guilty as anyone: except for a talk I gave a couple of years ago on the *chacóna*—a topic that required me to give credit to both Spain and the colonies before I scurried back to the security of Venice, Versailles, and J.S. Bach—I have neglected the Braudelian Mediterranean as much as the most blinkered of music theorists.⁴ I'm afraid I'm not yet ready to make my debut as a Hispanist, though I have learned enough Spanish in the last couple of years to read novels and to set up a summer place on the Catalonian seacoast. And the incomparably sensuous recordings by Jordi Savall's Hesperian ensemble are seducing me ever more powerfully toward those unfamiliar repertoires.

I take as my starting point today Braudel's provocative (and, as always, gorgeously written) statement concerning influences:

For every piece of cultural baggage recognized, a thousand are untraceable: identification labels are missing and sometimes the contents or their wrappings have vanished too.... Is it possible to say that Spanish mysticism in the sixteenth century can be traced back to Moslem Sufism through such intermediaries as the eclectic genius of Ramón Lull? Is it true that the use of rhyme in the West owed its origin to the Moslem poets of Spain? That the *chansons de geste* (as is quite probable) borrowed from Islam? We should be equally wary of those who are too positive in their identification of cultural phenomena (for example the borrowings from Arabic by French troubadours) and of those who by reaction deny all borrowings between civilization and civilization, when in the Mediterranean to live is to exchange—men, ideas, ways of life, beliefs—or habits of courtship. (761)

When we pass through airports today, we have to verify that no one unknown to us packed our bags; since the events of 9/11, that question resonates inevitably with the anxiety that an item of *Arabic*

origin might have slipped into one's suitcase. As María Rosa Menocal has explained, however, nervousness about Arabic meddling with our cultural baggage begins not with 9/11 or even with Braudel's World War II. It presents itself already in Petrarch's fourteenth-century attempt at drawing a direct line of descent from the cultures of Greek and Roman antiquity to the vernacular movements of his own day.⁵ If Braudel hesitated to confirm the "borrowings from Arabic by French troubadours," Menocal offers definitive proof of Petrarch's own love lyrics as the progeny of Moorish courts—something the Florentine poet no doubt suspected, and thus the defensiveness in his redrawn genealogy. For Petrarch worked very hard to alter all the identification labels from the baggage he had inherited. The Italian Renaissance that stands at the center of the narrative of cultural history we perpetuate always already sought to deny its debts to the racial Others who had not only inhabited part of Western Europe and influenced the rise of lyric poetry throughout the continent but had also preserved the very Greek texts upon which Petrarch wanted to build his cultural edifice.

I will take as my case study a *sonetto spirituale*, "Maddalena alla Croce," published in Florence in 1630 by Girolamo Frescobaldi (I include my score at the end of this essay). I propose to perform a Braudelian reading of this very compact piece, locating it in the cross-currents of Mediterranean trade routes by means of its large number of identification tags—long ignored but still quite legible.

My first piece of evidence is organographic: the singer is accompanied by an instrument, a theorbo, that ostentatiously betrays its debt to the Arabic *ud* (thus: the "lute"). We know of *ud* players visiting Andalusian courts as early as the ninth century, and the instrument quickly took root in this new context. Spanish Christians depicted themselves playing it in the thirteenth century, and by the fourteenth, the lute had spread throughout Northern Europe. The most celebrated luthiers formed guilds in Germany, though many fled during the Peasants' Revolt of 1525 and resettled their workshops in Venice, where they had access to exotic woods used by musicians from Turkey and beyond, leading to still further refinements. The expanded version of the lute makes

Gods: Music and Theatre in Seventeenth-Century Spain (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴ See my "Cycles of Repetition: Chacona, Ciaccona, Chaconne, and THE Chaconne," in *Ritual, Routine, and Regime: Institutions of Repetition*, ed. Lorna Clymer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

⁵ María Rosa Menocal, *Shard of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), chapter 1.

its first known appearance at the Florentine Medici festivities of the late 1580s that figure prominently in the early histories of monody and opera. Although Frescobaldi acquired his international reputation as a virtuoso keyboardist and singer, he specifically stipulated the theorbo for these chamber pieces. In short, a history of this object requires a concentrated version of Braudel's road map: multiple contacts with the Arabic world, diffusion through aristocratic courts in southern Europe, trans-Alpine migration, colonies of refugees clustered in cosmopolitan Venice, Medici displays of power as they formed alliances between their banking family with the royal blood of France.

Next, the poetic text: a sonnet (recall the impact of those Arabic rhymes on the troubadour *formes fixes!*) that purports to represent Mary Magdalene at the site of the cross. In the second quatrain, the poet treats the signs of Mary's grief with Marino-inspired surface imagery, but with a particular twist: he compares her disheveled golden tresses to the precious metals imported by way of the Atlantic, her tears to the pearls conveyed from India. Much like the gaudy chapels that line the cathedral built by the Most Catholic Kings in Granada after their successful ethnic purging of the peninsula and in celebration of the vast quantities of gold and silver pouring in from the colonies, this description of Mary converts her to an icon advertising as a casual point of reference the availability of luxury commodities brought by ships from both east and west. If our poet had mentioned silk, we would have to acknowledge the influence of caravans to the Far East as well; a more contemporary version might compare the black of her eyes to the oil reserves of the Iraqi desert.

A piè della gran croce, in cui languiva
Vicino a morte il buon Giesù spirante,
Scapigliata così pianger s'udiva
La sua fedele addolorata amante;

E dell'umor che da begli occhi usciva,
E dell'or della chioma ondosa, errante,
Non mandò mai, da che la vita è viva,
Perle ed oro più bel l'India ò l'Atlante;

"Come far," dicea, "lassa, o Signor mio,
Puoi senza me quest' ultima partita?
Come, morendo tu, viver poss' io?"

Che se morir pur vuoi, l'anima unita
Ho teco (il sai, mio Redentor, mio Dio),
Però teco aver deggio e morte, e vita."

At the foot of the great cross on which languished
Close to death our good Jesus, expiring,
Disheveled and weeping was thus heard to cry
His faithful, grief-stricken lover;

And then the tears that issued from her lovely eyes,
And then the gold of her waving and errant hair,
Never has produced, since life was life,
India or the Atlantic more beautiful pearls or gold.

"Alas, how," she said, "O my Lord,
Can you take without me this final departure?
How, if you are dying, can I live?"

For if you wish to die, my soul is united
With you (you know this, my Redeemer, my God),
Therefore with you I may have both death and life."

I will not try to describe Frescobaldi's musical style as anything other than the confluence of mannerist harmonic practice he absorbed during his apprenticeship at the court of Ferrara—the most concentrated site of musical experimentation in the late sixteenth century—and the dramatic monody that had taken the world by storm since its debut in Florence forty years earlier. The neo-modality with which it produces its effects descends from the Italian avant garde madrigal with no obvious tributaries from elsewhere. In other words, a classification based on its purely musical elements keeps Frescobaldi's sonnet firmly planted within an uncompromised Italy.

But the theological orientation of the poem and Frescobaldi's response to that poem betray a far more profound influence of the greater Mediterranean than the mere choice of a theorbo or the off-hand mention of gold and pearls. The blatant eroticism of this little piece scandalizes many 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. Frescobaldi's setting concludes with a spasmodic shudder; even if those who do not know the Renaissance convention of punning on the "little death" will catch his meaning. Both the lapidary, 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. When Madonna (the pop star) attempted a similar scenario for "Like a Prayer," Pepsi yanked her million-dollar ad from circulation within a few hours. For our modern frame of reference relegates



the sacred and the sexual to opposite ends of the experiential spectrum.

But anyone familiar with seventeenth-century culture will have witnessed this bizarre blend many times before. It manifests itself in the lurid verse of Richard Crashaw, the sado-masochistic holy sonnets of John Donne, the ecstatic statuary of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the music of Claudio Monteverdi and Alessandro Grandi at San Marco, the *symphoniae sacrae* of Schütz, who brought the contagion back to Dresden after his sabbatical in Venice.⁶ 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, up through the death of Handel—a colleague of Alexander Pope, whose agnostic texts he sometimes set in his oratorios. Indeed, because Handel and J.S. Bach are by far the most familiar "baroque" composers, most musicians assume that the word designates the 1700s.

In contrast to this dubious use of "baroque" as a bland, mostly meaningless period label, Braudel shocks readers into remembering the context within which precisely this potentially objectionable strain of art developed:

[T]he 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. (827)

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

⁶For more on this phenomenon, see Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Vol. 1: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Deborah Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998).

art (831). And far from apologizing for its excesses, he explains their 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)

Allow me to connect these comments back to the Frescobaldi. The theatricality of "Maddalena alla Croce"—despite its brevity and modest performing forces—is quite unavoidable: it hits the listener over the head with its startling affective mixtures. And although Braudel does not mention the Magdalene specifically in this quotation, he refers to "a means of arguing from the visions and ecstasies of saints." He suggests Moslem Sufism as a possible source of such practices (761), though the great model for artists of Frescobaldi's time is Saint Teresa of Avila, who lauded Mary Magdalene as a model.

Quite possibly the descendent of *conversos*, Saint Teresa and her experiences of Divine Union ignited the imaginations of Counter-Reformation theologians seeking ways of holding on to what 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, Luther had banished women from his godhead; by contrast, the Counter-Reformation foregrounded as exemplars of spiritual power the Blessed Virgin, the holy sinner Mary Magdalene, along with that cluster of Spanish mystics. As cults dedicated to these women spread across Catholic Europe, composers

produced hundreds of devotional pieces designed to suture performer and/or listener into these overheated subject positions. A Milanese nun, Chiara Margarita Cozzalani, even wrote duos that celebrate feeding on the wounds of Christ, greedily lapping the milk from the Virgin's breasts, the ecstatic union of Mary Magdalene with her Beloved.⁷

The Counter-Reformation was not alone in exploiting such sensationalistic topics at this time. Lutheran pietists also indulged freely in violent and erotic imagery, though they usually couched their meditations in scripture-sanctioned sources: the *Song of Songs* or the conjugal terrain made available by the metaphor of the church as the bride of Christ. A strain of ecstatic Judaism at the time similarly explored ways of stimulating spiritual immediacy.⁸ But of these, only the Counter-Reformation (Braudel's Baroque) allowed itself to make use of the whole gamut of artistic forms: sculpture, painting, architecture, theater, verse, and music. A handful of Jews forcibly baptized 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: the stones that had been cast aside became the cornerstone. And Frescobaldi's "Maddalena alla Croce" sits squarely in the middle of this phenomenon.

I want to examine Frescobaldi's music in greater detail. I have circumscribed the cultural universe within which such texts made sense, but granting a composer license to explore erotic imagery in no way determines choice of pitches or gestures. As I mentioned before, Frescobaldi developed his craft with the avant-garde composers at Ferrara, and he extended their experiments with chromatic harmonies and radical discontinuities in both his vocal and instrumental music. Like Gesualdo, who also honed his skills at Ferrara, Frescobaldi churned out pieces that often seem to us today little more than conundrums. In an attempt at dissuading me from taking this music seriously *as music*, one of my teachers

⁷ See Robert L. Kendrick, *Celestial Sirens: Nuns and Their Music in Early Modern Milan* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Kate Bartel recently presented an extraordinary concert of Cozzolani's music in UCLA's Powell Library.

⁸ See Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn, eds, *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 1996).

quote me: "It didn't matter to them where they started or ended or where they cadenced. They just worked through their texts and stopped."

Frescobaldi's sonnet lasts for a mere 47 measures, but in the course of that very short duration he passes through at least 11 implied keys. By contrast, the much longer pieces by J.S. Bach typically move through only three or four. As in his toccatas, Frescobaldi creates here a febrile quality that leaps nervously with no more warning than a mere leading tone pointing the way. As often as not, the tonic resolution indicated by that leading tone fails to materialize. Still the powerful syntactical implications of the leading tone preparing to close on its tonic provide an adequate guidepost, however erratic its treatment in context. Without dispute, "Maddalena alla Croce" refuses to conform to a pre-set model of coherence—it startles modal expectations as much as it does tonal. But it does not make its moves at random.⁹

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, nor does Frescobaldi indicate a raised mediant under the first bass sonority. If the continuo begins by striking a minor triad, then the ascent of the voice to C# for the word "croce" sounds suitably excruciating: not the complacent arrival on an already granted major mediant, the C# should sound like a C# wrenched up 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 continuo A 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.

⁹ My analysis relies on sixteenth-century theorists such as Zarlino, as reworked and distorted through Mannerism. See my *Modal Subjectivities: Self-Fashioning in the Italian Madrigal* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004). *Power and Desire in Seventeenth-Century Music*, sequel that concerns procedures such as Frescobaldi's, is in process.



From there, the voice presses up to D#, which ought to resolve onward to E. Instead, the arching trajectory breaks off with an angular dissonance 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 always result in her falling back on 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. 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 the 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 Mary wants 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 had pushed upward through all those spiky leading tones to embrace a distended tritone, the Magdalene here finds herself confined to the crabbed interval of an abject diminished fourth. More to the point for this piece, her speech (and, by extension, her consciousness) is crippled with B \flat and E \flat , whereas a cadence on A, which has stood as her object of desire, would require B \sharp and a fulfilled ascent to E \sharp . None of her effort 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 seem thoroughly impossible. She maintains 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 sonnet began far to the sharp side, it now sinks just as far to the flat side.

Eventually, the A \flat in m. 30 obstructs her access altogether and locks her in the dark night of the soul for the first presentation of "viver poss' io?". 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 figure out 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 \sharp , then pressing on to B \sharp for "Ho teco" in m. 37. With this realization, she pauses for an intimate parenthetical address to Jesus himself, and as her level of mystical insight comes to equal his divine knowledge, she respells the B \flat that had previously alienated her from Christ's key as A \sharp , leading tone to B as an implied tonic, producing a wildly dislocating F \sharp -major triad. For a still, strangely timeless moment, we hover suspended there with Mary in rapture. And having attained that key to enlightenment, she can freely enact a strong 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—with no difficulty whatsoever. When 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. If before she saw through a glass darkly, now she clasps her Savior face to face.

I referred in my discussion to Mary's nadir of despair in her first terzet as her "dark night of the soul"—the title, of course, of the celebrated testimonial by Saint John of the Cross—and I have just described the F \sharp -major disruption as rapture. I want to return now 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.

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 close to the ineffable events she strives so fervently to convey in writing. But her verbal constructions, however inadequate, circulated widely throughout the Catholic Mediterranean and even as far as England, serving to instruct those who would follow in her footsteps. It is safe to say that Frescobaldi's target audiences in Florence or Rome would have known key passages from Saint Teresa's writings, and he strove to match these very famous images with musical metaphors that grant us the illusion of actually experiencing these ecstasies first hand.

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:

[W]hen [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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

Translating back to Frescobaldi's setting, without that alienated passage through G minor and even F minor,

¹⁰ Saint John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. E. Allison Pears (New York: Image Books, 1990), 62.

¹¹ *Dark Night of the Soul*, 75.

Who could not have found the means of merging with Jesus.

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.¹²

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."¹³ 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."¹⁴

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 on "mio Dio," which suddenly and without warning lifts us out of the linear context 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 the 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

¹² Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Way to Perfection*, chapter 31.

¹³ Saint Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book VII, chapter 3.

¹⁴ *Saint Teresa, The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila by Herself*, trans. J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1957), 136.



piece, Frescobaldi has carefully prepared this 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 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 supposed to understand what transpires with that F#-major triad: we are to hear it and believe. As our own present-day propagandists would say: "Shock and awe!"

My work has tended to concentrate on the music of Italy, understood as a relatively insular cultural universe. But this exercise has forced me to come to terms with the folly of observing such artificial boundaries. I had known about the connection between the *ud* and the lute, of course, and the luxury goods itemized in the sonnet's poem first made

me choose "Maddalena all Croce" for my essay on Braudel. As it turns out, however, the most technical details of the music itself require for their understanding *and for their performance* acquaintance with those mystical texts that so deeply informed the Mediterranean baroque. I have not yet mentioned the fact that Frescobaldi writes his vocal part in the soprano clef. So long as the collection remained in northern Italy, it might have been sung by one of the female divas who flourished in Florence. But when he returned to Rome, the performing privilege would have fallen to a castrato: a cultural practice traceable to the eunuchs of Moorish Spain and an indispensable ingredient of Italian music throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

I could go on tugging at various loose ends, pursuing trails of Derridean *déference*, of Foucauldian genealogy, but I think the case is made. Few cultural artifacts lack traces of such interconnections, and we historians ignore them to our peril. For our cultural baggage has evidence of its having passed through the heterodox Mediterranean stamped all over it. Yes, someone else packed our suitcases. How else would we have acquired such treasures?

Maddalena alla Croce

MUSICA Y DANZA

FACULTAD DE ARTES

Girolamo Frescobaldi

Al piè del-la gran cro-ce, in cui lan-gui-va Vi-ci-noa mor-teil buon Gie-sù spi-rant-

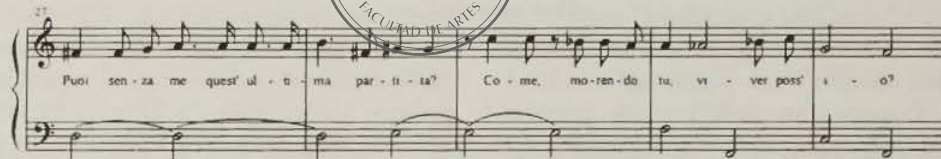
te, Sca-pi-glia-ta co-si pian-ger s'u-di-va La sua fe-de-le ad-do-lo-ra-taa-man-

te, E dell' u-mor che da' be-glioc-chiu-sci-va, E dell' or-del-la chio-maon-do-sa er-

ran-te. Non man-do mai, da che la vi-tae vi-va, Per-le ed o-ro piu bel l'In-dia, o l'At-

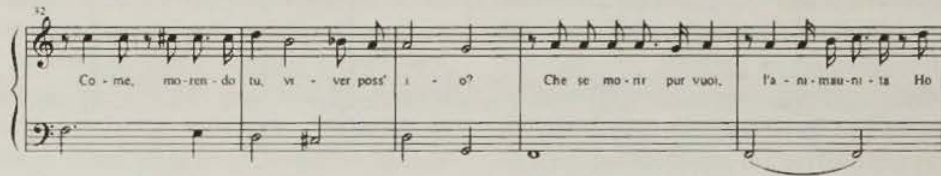
lan-te, "Co-me far," di-ce-a, "las-sa, o Si-gnor mi-o,"

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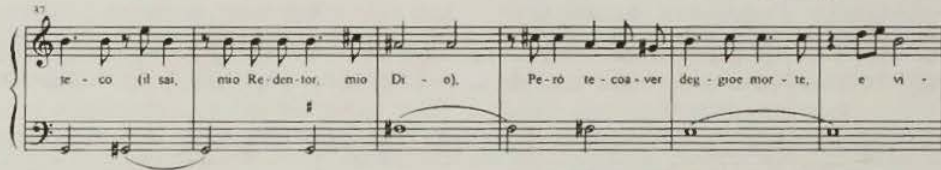
Puoi sen - za me quest' ul - ti - ma par - ti - ta? Co - me, mo - ren - do tu, vi - ver poss' i - o?

32



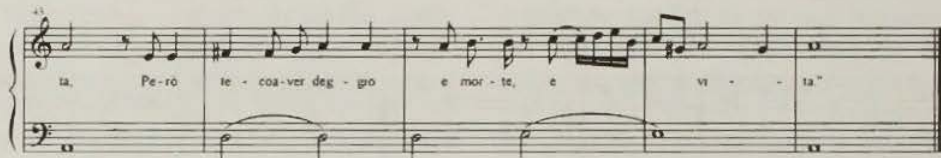
Co - me, mo - ren - do tu, vi - ver poss' i - o? Che se mo - ri - pur vuoi, l'a - ni - mau - ni - ta Ho

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te - co (il sai, mio Re - den - tor, mio Di - o), Pe - rò te - coa - ver deg - gio mor - te, e vi -

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ta, Pe - rò te - coa - ver deg - gio e mor - te, e vi - - ta"