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Realizing the Continuo in Monteverdi's *Lamento della ninfa* and Its Implications for Early Seventeenth-Century Italian Continuo Practice¹

Roland Jackson

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Monteverdi's "Amor, dicea" (*Lamento della ninfa*),² appearing in his Eighth Book of Madrigals published in 1638, is regarded as among his most emotionally moving works, Denis Arnold (for one) calling it "unforgettable" and "almost unbearably intense."³ Nonetheless, our full sense of it and of its expressive potential, remains uncertain in that its accompaniment has come down to us in incomplete form, consisting of but a single bass line on a descending fourth, A – G – F – E, repeated throughout. How this line is to be interpreted has not been agreed upon among scholars or performers, despite its critical bearing on the effect of the piece—especially in respect to the kinds of dissonances Monteverdi would have intended to be heard as a result of it.

Malipiero in his Complete Edition⁴ proposes an accompaniment in which the chords are continually readjusted so as to conform to the dissonances in the voice parts. This solution, however, runs contrary to many written-out accompaniments of the time, in which composers made a pointed effort not to duplicate in their accompaniments any dissonances present in the solo parts.⁵ Two other misgivings might arise in respect to Malipiero's realization: (1) the continual changes in his accompaniment deprive it of consistency, a characteristic that seems inherent in the recurrent bass Monteverdi provided; and (2) the intermingling of dissonances in the accompaniment and solo parts vies against a clear sense of distinction between the two, taking away from their autonomy.

¹ I am grateful to my friend and colleague Jeffrey Kurtzman (Washington University, St. Louis) for his many valuable suggestions concerning this article. I take full responsibility, of course, for the conclusions reached.

² The designation *Lamento della ninfa* is sometimes applied to the larger, three-part piece, beginning "Non havea febo," and sometimes only to the second part of this piece, beginning "Amor, dicea." In this article I shall adopt this second usage, focusing on the "lament" proper, the segment based on a recurrent descending fourth.

³ Denis Arnold (revised by Tim Carter), *Monteverdi* (London, J. M. Dent, 3/1990), 94.

⁴ Gian Francesco Malipiero, *Claudio Monteverdi: Tutte le opere* (Asola, 1954-68), VIII, 286.

⁵ See my article "It Can 'spoil all the beauty': the Duplicating of Solo Dissonances in Seventeenth-Century Thorough-bass Accompaniment," *Performance Practice Review* 11 (2006).

Ellen Rosand, in her discussion of Monteverdi's *Lamento*,⁶ suggests two accompanimental possibilities. The first of these, which she calls "modal," consisting of a plain succession of descending triads, $i - vii - vi - V$, is a pattern closely linked with Renaissance improvisations. The second—contrapuntally rather more sophisticated—involves descending sixth chords in its middle two members, $i - v^6 - iv^6 - V$: a scheme allied with what in the seventeenth century became known as the "Rule of the Octave."⁷ In each of these possibilities, the two criteria mentioned above are fulfilled: a single chord pattern would be repeated throughout, providing consistency, and a clear separation would be maintained between the accompaniment and voice parts in regard to dissonances, which are usually present only in one or the other at any one time, mostly, however, in the voice parts.

Either pattern, 1 or 2, might be considered viable—and each has at one time or another been adopted in recorded performances.⁸ In the present paper, however, I shall make a case for the second ($i - v^6 - iv^6 - V$) over the first ($i - vii - vi - V$). The principal reason is that the dissonances occurring as a result of it more nearly conform with similar manifestations in earlier Monteverdi or his contemporaries than do those in respect to pattern 1. At the same time they more consistently fit the syllabic accents present in the text, accentuating them. And thirdly, their more extreme nature may be seen as making them particularly apt in regard to the unusual degree of expressivity Monteverdi sought to achieve in the *Lamento*.⁹

Further supportive of Monteverdi's espousal of the second pattern is its prominent use in a contemporary work, namely in Girolamo Frescobaldi's *Cento Partite sopra Passacagli*, published in 1637, just a year prior to Monteverdi's.¹⁰ A clear link can, in fact, be established

⁶ Ellen Rosand, "The Descending Tetrachord: an Emblem of Lament," *Musical Quarterly* 65 (1979), 349.

⁷ The "Rule of the Octave," according to which the second, third, sixth, and seventh degrees in a scale are usually realized as sixth chords, is described, for example, by Denis Delair in his *Traité d'accompagnement* (2/1690), translated by Charlotte Mattax, *Accompaniment on Theorbo and Harpsichord: Denis Delair's Treatise of 1690* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1991), 26.

⁸ The first, for example, is applied throughout by Nikolaus Harnoncourt, directing the Concentus Musicus Wien (*Das alte Werk*, Teldec Digital 8.43054ZK, 1984) and by Rinaldo Alessandrini, leading the Concerto Italiano (Op. 111, LC5718, 2000). The second is hinted at at times, although not consistently, by Frederick Renz in his version with New York's Grande Bande (Musical Heritage, 523536W, 1994). Jordi Savall, directing Hespèrion XX (Auvidis, France, Es 9901, 1996), adopts the second, with sixth chords on G and F plucked by a lute (often with arpeggios), although he often reverts to the single line, thereby avoiding the various harmonic clashes ensuing from the use of full chords.

⁹ Pattern 2, for example, is more extreme in invoking sevenths over sixths, instead of mere sevenths over fifths, as in pattern 1, this, for instance, in mm. 22, 23, and 83.

¹⁰ The priority of one work in respect to the other cannot be ascertained since both were probably circulated in manuscript before their dates of publication.

between these two pieces in their mutual adoption at one point of a striking dissonance in the form of a sustained second created by the notes A and B stretched over several beats (see Exs. 1a and 1b)¹¹—seven half-note beats in Monteverdi and seven and a half quarter-note beats in Frescobaldi. Frescobaldi’s appropriating of pattern 2, $i - v^6 - iv^6 - V$, with some slight variants, in his accompanying parts (see the reduction beneath)—here and elsewhere in the *Partite*—lends a certain plausibility to Monteverdi’s having done so as well, whether Frescobaldi’s work influenced his or vice-versa.

Example 1a. Monteverdi, “Amor, dicea” (*Lamento della ninfa*), mm. 64-68.

Example 1a shows a musical score for Monteverdi's "Amor, dicea" (Lamento della ninfa), measures 64-68. The score consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics: "mi - se - rel - la ah più, no, no!". The middle staff is the lute line, showing a sustained second between notes A and B. The bottom staff is the bass line, showing notes A, G, F, E.

Example 1b. Frescobaldi, “Seconda ciaccona” (*Cento partite*), mm. 1-3.

Example 1b shows a musical score for Frescobaldi's "Seconda ciaccona" (Cento partite), measures 1-3. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is the treble clef staff, showing a sustained second between notes A and B. The bottom staff is the bass clef staff, showing a sequence of notes.

Chord reduction.

Chord reduction. The diagram shows four chords in a sequence: i , v^6 , iv^6 , and V .

¹¹ Monteverdi, op. cit. Girolamo Frescobaldi, *Toccate, Il primo libro d'intavolatura di cembalo e organo*, ed. Etienne Darbellay, Monumenti musicali italiani, vol 4 (Milan, 1977), 107, m. 218, “ciaccona.”

At the beginning of the *Lamento* (see Example 2) Monteverdi firmly fixes the basic chords in the listener's mind. The chord pattern is initially presented alone (mm. 1-4), after which it reappears, reinforced by the voices (mm. 5-9): a soprano (the nymph), two tenors and a bass (her sympathetic male companions). The voices simply double the notes of the underlying chord scheme, strictly adhering to them, to form—assuming that the second pattern was utilized—the succession $a - e^6 - d^6 - E$ in A minor. The nymph's "Amor," offset by the companions' "dicea," corresponds exactly with the length of the pattern, cadencing on the Phrygian $iv^6 - V$, unlike many of the later phrases, which are independent of it.

Example 2. "Amor, dicea," mm. 5-9.

Amor/dicea

God of love/she said

The musical score for Example 2, "Amor, dicea," mm. 5-9, is presented in three staves. The top staff is the soprano line, the middle is the tenor line, and the bottom is the bass line. The time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "A - mor, A - mor, Di - ce - a" for the soprano and tenor parts, and "a: i v⁶ iv⁶ V" for the bass line. The chords are indicated by numbers 1, 6, 6, and 5 below the bass line.

Assuming the use of the sixth-chord realization (the second pattern), dissonances now appear in the voice parts in measures 9-12 (see Ex. 3a), distinctly differentiating these parts from the chordal accompaniment. In measure 11, an accented passing tone on c^1 (immediately repeated) appears in tenor 1, followed by another in measure 12, the latter combined with a suspension on a in tenor 2 (the unaccented passing tone in the bass in m. 11 being incidental). These first-beat dissonances add emphasis to the accented syllable "ran" in "mirando" and to the word "piè" in "piè fermo" (as underlined above). In this phrase Monteverdi also for the first time liberates the voice parts from the underlying chord scheme, this time extending them over five measures to cadence onto the tonic chord at the beginning of the next pattern.

Example 3a. “Amor, dicea,” mm. 9-12.
 Il ciel mirando, il piè fermo
 Gazing at heaven, her foot firmly planted

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics: "mor, pt — pt 6 — 5 4 — 3". The middle staff is a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics: "il ciel mi-ran-do, il piè fer-". The bottom staff is a basso continuo line in bass clef with a sharp sign above the clef in the final measure.

Concerning the background of these dissonances, the accented passing tone is common in early-baroque music, and may be found, for instance, in Monteverdi’s “Tu se’ morta” (*Orfeo*, Act 2), where the connecting note $g\sharp$ (also reiterated and falling on a strong beat), giving emphasis to the accented syllable “se,” appears against an underlying A-minor chord (see Ex. 3b). In the *Lamento* (Ex. 3a) the conspicuous sixth plus fourth on “piè,” resulting in a harsh double dissonance in respect to the E chord in the accompaniment, C clashing against B, A against $G\sharp$, prior to their resolutions into these lower notes, represents an audacious form of dissonance, one that Monteverdi may very well have deemed appropriate to the emotionalism of the lament. In adopting it he could have drawn upon similar formulas that occasionally appeared earlier in the century. In Antonio Troilo’s “Canzon prima” (Venice, 1606), for instance—a piece for which Troilo himself realized the continuo—a sixth moves into an occupied fifth and a fourth into an occupied third (see Ex. 3c).¹² Although not found elsewhere in the *Canzon*, its isolated presence affords evidence that such dissonances did at times occur, and were something of which Monteverdi could have taken cognizance. A similar example occurs in Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger’s *villanelle* of 1619 (Ex. 3d),¹³ where a sixth and fourth together appear against a major triad on D (called for by the \sharp above the clef).¹⁴ Closely corresponding is a cadence

¹² This full realization of a continuo, rare at the time, is reproduced by Irmtraut Freiberg in her *Der frühe italienische Generalbass dargestellt anhand der Quellen von 1595 bis 1655* (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York; Olms, 2004), 800.

¹³ Johann Hieronymus Kapsberger, *Libro secondo di Villanelle* (Rome, 1619, facsimile, Florence, 1979), Archivum Musicum, no. 28, 19.

¹⁴ A sharp above a note, according to early seventeenth-century thorough-bass theory, calls for a realization of a major third and perfect fifth. Although the third may at times have been omitted—as it is in Robert Dowland’s lute accompaniment of Caccini’s “Amarilli,” an example I point to in “It can spoil all the beauty” (see fn. 4)—it seems

appearing in Ludovico Viadana's *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* of 1602 (Ex. 3e),¹⁵ where the setting of "Peccavi super numerum" contains a suspended fourth against an E-major triad (called for by the # sign placed before the staff above the bass note). Other potential predecessors include a cadence in Don Carlo Gesualdo's 1595 madrigal "Crudelissima doglia" (Ex. 3f),¹⁶ where a suspended fourth on g¹ appears against a third on f¹, a combination associated with the words "doloroso al core" ("sorrowful at heart"), and in a cadence by Hieronymus Praetorius in his motet "Cantate Domino" of 1602 (Ex. 3g).¹⁷ In both Gesualdo's and Praetorius's examples the third moves away prior to the resolution; in the latter, however, the impression conveyed to the listener is of a fourth plus third on the first two beats of the measure resolving to a third on its last two beats, thus approximating, at least in sound, Monteverdi's possible later treatment of this dissonance in the *Lamento*.

Example 3b. "Tu se' morta," *Orfeo*.

The musical score for Example 3b shows a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The vocal line is in the treble clef and has a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are "tu se' da me par-ti-ta" and "se' da me par-ti-ta". The basso continuo line is in the bass clef and has a key signature of one flat. The score illustrates a cadence with a suspended fourth interval.

likely that in actual practice full triads might also at times have been played in such situations, and could have been part of Monteverdi's experience.

¹⁵ Ludovico Viadana, *Cento concerti ecclesiastici* (Rome, 1602). The cadence from "Peccavi super numerum" is cited by Franck Arnold, *The Art of Accompaniment from a Thorough-Bass* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 23.

¹⁶ Glenn Watkins, ed., *Gesualdo da Venosa: Sämtliche Madrigale* (Hamburg; Ugrino Verlag, 1957-62), III, 54.

¹⁷ Frederick K. Gable, ed., *Hieronymus Praetorius: Collected Vocal Works*, Corpus mensurabilis musicae, 110 (Madison, A-R Publications, 2008?), 230, m. 87. I am grateful to Professor Gable for allowing me to examine the proofs of this projected publication. A further example, similar to that of H. Praetorius appears at the end of the opening chorus of Schütz's *Historia der ... Auferstehung* (1623).

Example 3c. Antonio Troilo, “Canzon prima.”

6—5
4 — 3

Example 3d. Kapsberger, “Villanella,” 1619.

(tar) - da - te ec - co l'au - ro - ra

6 — 5
4 — 3

Example 3e. Viadana, “Peccavi super numerum,” *Cento concerti*, 1602.

(me) 4 — 3 (a)

Example 3f. Gesualdo, “Crudelissima doglia,” 1595.

4 — 3
3

(do-) lo - ro - so al co - re

Example 3g. H. Praetorius, “Cantate Domino,” 1602.

Again, assuming the sixth-chord realization, in measures 13-20 (see Example 4a, following page) a rather startling dissonance appears in measure 14 at the point of the soprano's note d^2 , a note that emphasizes the syllable “mor” in “Amor,” while at the same time betraying the disquietude of the nymph as she addresses the god of love for the third time. The actual dissonance, however, in this case takes place in the accompaniment, the soprano's note d^2 turning the e^1 in the accompanying chord into a suspension resolving to d^1 in the following measure. This is a conventional 2 – 1 suspension, here displaced to an octave below, turning it into a 7 – 8 suspension. In measure 20 emphasis is placed on the syllable “tor” in “traditor” through an unprepared seventh on d^2 in the soprano (a note which resolves to c^2 in the following measure).

Example 4a. “Amor, dicea,” mm. 13-20.

Amor, dove, dov'è la fe, che'l traditor (giurò)?

God of love, where, where is the trust that my betrayer (swore)?

Example 4a. (*continued*)

do - v'è la fe che'l tra - di - tor,

As background, an earlier instance of a 7 – 8 suspension may be found in “O dolcissimi lumi” (*Orfeo*, Act 4), where the notes $f - e^b$ in the accompaniment are sounded against an e^b ¹ in the voice part (see Ex. 4b). As in the *Lamento*, this suspension is reinforced by further chord notes which in this case in themselves act as suspensions, not only D and F, but possibly also A, resolving into $C - E^b - G$.¹⁸ Monteverdi’s subsequent unprepared seventh over a V chord is forecast earlier both in his *Orfeo* (see Ex. 4c) and in his “Confitebor tibi” of 1627 (see Ex. 4d);¹⁹ although in each of these instances, unlike the present example, the seventh is resolved as an escape tone.

Example 4b. Monteverdi, “O dolcissimi lumi,” *Orfeo*, Act 4.

¹⁸ A lower note suspension occurs as well in mm. 2 – 3 of this example, where the notes $a - c^1 - a$ in the melody bring about suspensions in the notes g and b^b in the accompaniment.

¹⁹ Cited by Hellmut Federhofer, “Die Dissonanzbehandlung in Monteverdis Kirchenmusikalischen Werken und die Figurenlehre von Christoph Bernhard,” *Claudio Monteverdi e il suo tempo*, Congresso internazionale (Venice, Mantua, Cremona, 1968), 470. Federhofer draws attention to another unprepared seventh in *Dixit (Vespers)* at the word “Amen,” 476.

Example 4c. Monteverdi, “O dolcissimi lumi.”

Example 4d. Monteverdi, “Confitebor tibi, Domine,” 1627.²⁰

In the continuation of the preceding (mm. 21-24) the soprano rises to an even more intense unprepared seventh on f^2 (m. 22), one that again places emphasis on the syllable “tor” in “traditor.” This time the seventh is positioned over a sixth chord in the accompaniment, forming an appoggiatura (Ex. 5a). The same sonority is reiterated in measure 23, bringing out the syllable “rò” in “giurò.” These unusual dissonances seem calculated to reflect the mounting agitation in the nymph. The latter dissonant note, e^2 , is especially peculiar, being treated as an escape tone not resolved in same part, but in the two tenors on a, an octave and a fifth below. The effect is that of leaving the soprano, the nymph, suspended, as it were, without resolution, mirroring her emotionally unfulfilled state. The reply of the male companions (mm. 23-4) returns to the cadential 6/4 against 5/3 of measure 12, the note c^1 this time being more intensely brought out by the leap upwards to it by the first tenor, forming an appoggiatura that even more noticeably accentuates the syllable “rel” in “miserella.”

²⁰Wilhelm Osthoff, ed., *Composizioni vocali profane e sacre (inedite)* (Milan: Ricordi, 1958).

Example 5a. “Amor, dicea,” mm. 21-24.

Che'l traditor giurò/ miserella!

That my betrayer swore/ poor wretch!

7 — 6 7 — 3
6 6

che'l tra - di - tor giu - rò?
Mi - se - rel - la!

The unusual sonority created by a seventh positioned over a sixth chord has a precedent in Gesualdo's madrigal "Gioite voi" (Book 5, 1611), where a suspended note on D appears simultaneously against its note of resolution C#, although the latter is placed an octave higher, and (as in Gesualdo's "Crudelissima doglia" considered in Ex. 3f) moves away from its position before the D resolves into it (see Ex. 5b).²¹ An instance more nearly approximating Monteverdi's is encountered in Kapsberger's "Gia risi" in his 1619 *Villanelle* (Ex. 5c),²² where the sixth, on A, is retained at the point of resolution of a suspended B. The escape tone has numerous precedents, as in Peri's *Euridice* of 1600 (Ex. 5d), where Orfeo's plaintive "ohimè," begun on the seventh C is resolved by a leap downward to a third on F#.²³ But Monteverdi's resolution of this dissonance to a different voice part (or parts) must be regarded as a rarity.

²¹ This example is cited by Carl Dahlhaus, "Gesualdos manieristische Dissonanztechnik," *Conviviorum musicorum: Festschrift Wolfgang Boetticher* (Berlin, 1974), 35.

²² This passage is cited by Thérèse de Goede, "From Dissonance to Note-cluster," *Early Music*, 33 (2005), 236.

²³ Facsimile edition (New York, 1973).

Example 5b. Gesualdo, “Gioite voi,”

ai do - lo - re

4 — 3
3

Example 5c. Kapsberger, “Gia risi,” *Villanelle* (Book 2, 1619).

7 — 6
6

due — bei ra - i

Example 5d. Peri (*Euridice*, 1600)

7 — 3

Ohi - mè Ohi - mè

#

Let us return now to measures 64-8 (Ex. 1, above), and consider its dissonant content (see Ex. 6a, cited originally in Ex. 1 above). The startling appearance in measure 65 of the note A, made more emphatic by being sung by both tenor 2 and bass, at first invokes a double suspension in the accompaniment (mm. 65-6), G – F acting as a 2 – 3, and B – A as a 2 – 1 suspension. In measure 66 the A plus B continues in the voices, but the dissonance now changes its form, becoming a fourth over third suspension—an inversion of the sixth over fifth, that would have occurred had the note D instead of F been sounded in the bass. A, the third, is the note of the suspension in measure 66, and as a fourth (in a 4 – 3 suspension) continues to be so in measure 67, where it resolves to G# (i.e. into an occupied third). At the same time the held A in the bass

part in this measure becomes an escape tone resolving downwards to E. These intense and unusual dissonances underscore the male singers' exclamation on "ah," which extends and magnifies the final syllable of the word "miserella."

Example 6a. "Amor, dicea," mm. 64-8.

Miserella ah, più, no, no!

Poor wretch, ah, no more, no, no!

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with lyrics: "mi - se - rel - la ah più, no, no!". The middle staff is a bass line with figured bass notation. Above the vocal line, there are rhythmic markings: $\frac{4}{3} (= \frac{6}{5})$, 4 - 1, and 4 - 3. Below the bass line, there are figures: 2 — 1, 2 — 3.

Sustained or reiterated seconds of this kind were sometimes drawn upon by seventeenth-century composers, and the procedure became known as the *cadentia duriuscula* ("harsh cadence"). Bartolomeo Bismantova presents an illustration in his treatise of 1677 (Ex. 6b),²⁴ his example being less extensive than either Monteverdi's or Frescobaldi's (as shown in Ex. 1). Lower-note suspensions (including double suspensions) are part of the Renaissance inheritance, and are illustrated by Lorenzo Penna in his treatise of 1672 (Ex. 6c).²⁵ Monteverdi, seemingly more so than his contemporaries, applied such suspensions directly to his continuo accompaniments, setting them apart in this way from the parts being accompanied. Finally, an example of Monteverdi's fourth over third suspension may be located in his earlier "O dolcissimi lumi" (*Orfeo*, Act 4), where Euridice's "e troppo amara" ("and too bitter") is sung on a half-note A, which turns the G (in the realization) into a suspension resolving to F#—the reduction (Ex. 6d) shows the progression in its inverted form, C – E \flat – G – A resolving to D – F# – A.

²⁴ Bismantova, *Compendio musicale* (1677), cited and realized by de Goede in "From Dissonance to Note-cluster," 239.

²⁵ Lorenzo Penna, *Li primi albori musicali* (Bologna, 1672; 2/1684), 170.

Example 6b. Bismantova, *Compendio musicale* (1677). Cited by Goede, 239.

Example 6c. Penna, *Li primi albori musicali* (1684), 170.

Example 6d. Monteverdi, “O dolcissimi lumi” (*Orfeo*, Act 4)

4
3 (=5)

reduction

In measures 77-80 (Ex. 7) this passage Monteverdi concocts a variation of measures 64-8 (Ex. 6a, above), in which the sustained note A, extended over six beats, appears in the bass voice alone, now the sole male singer, while the B against it is distributed between different parts, appearing initially in the accompanying chord (m. 78) and then in the soprano (mm. 79-80). The A in measure 78 again invokes a double suspension: G – F (2 – 3); B – A (2 – 1). The fourth over third suspension in measure 79, however, is varied by Monteverdi’s positioning of the fourth an

octave higher, the note b^1 in the soprano made more emphatic by being leapt to as an appoggiatura, a dissonance that lays stress on the syllable “glio” in “orgoglioso.” Lastly, in measure 80 the bass (as in m. 67 above) once again takes the form of an escape tone, resolving by leap downward to E. Of particular interest in this segment, as well as the following, is Monteverdi’s fusing together of the two protagonists, pitting against one another simultaneously the lamenting words of the nymph and the sympathizing words of her single companion.

Example 7. “Amor, dicea,” mm. 77-80.

Tutt’orgoglioso sta/ miserella ah, più, no, no.

You are altogether haughty/ poor wretch, ah, no more, no, no.

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the Soprano line with lyrics: "tutt'or - go - glio - so sta". Above the word "glio" are the fingerings "4 3 (=6)", and above "sta" are "4 - 1". The middle staff is the Bass line with lyrics: "mi- se- rel- la ah, più, no,". The bottom staff is the Continuo line with figured bass notation. Below the Continuo staff, there are fingerings: "2 2" and "1 3".

In measures 81-84 (Ex. 8a) Monteverdi achieves the epitome of intensity in the *Lamento*, especially in measure 83, where the nymph’s high note on “si” and the bass’s telling word “gel” (“scorn”) are brought together at the same time, Monteverdi reserving the most jarring dissonance of the entire piece for this moment (this, to be sure, resulting from the sixth-chord interpretation in the continuo). The soprano’s e^2 , an unorthodox escape tone approached by step and left by leap forms an ostentatious seventh over sixth dissonance, while the bass’s c acts as an accented passing tone. The resulting vertical sonority is difficult to explain in any conventional manner. Two harmonic patterns seem to be brought together (see Ex. 8b), descending sixth chords (shown as blackened notes in the reduction) plus a sixth over fifth suspension, $G - B - D - E$ proceeding to $A - C - E$ (shown in hollow notes), although in the latter the notes are positioned in an irregular manner, with the notes B to C in the *Lamento* appearing in the bass and D to E in the soprano (Ex. 8a, following page).

Example 8a. “Amor, dicea,” mm. 81-84.

Che sì, che sì, s’el fuggo/ tanto gel soffrir non, non (pùo).

Yes, yes, if I flee him/ such scorn she cannot suffer.

che sì, che sì, se'l fug- go
no. tan - to gel sof - frir non (pùo)
et ah

7 — 3
6
7 — (8)
7 — (8)

Example 8b. Sixth over fifth suspension, G – D – E, resolving to A – C – E (hollow notes), against parallel sixth chords (black notes).

* * *

The present interpretation of the *Lamento*, if correct, provides evidence that dissonance during the seventeenth century, at least in certain exceptional cases, may have been more intense than has been generally assumed. Monteverdi’s pitting of consonant chords against dissonances in the voice parts, his allowing of sixths to resolve into occupied fifths, of fourths into occupied thirds, and of sevenths into occupied sixths is highly innovative. At the same time he draws upon unprepared sevenths, on the fourth-over-third suspension, and on the escape tone resolving to different voices, these, too, departing from the conventional usage of the time. The invoking of such extreme dissonances was apparently something Monteverdi deemed especially appropriate in the *Lamento*, one of his most impassioned musical utterances. In doing so, he opened new harmonic possibilities for the composers who came after him, particularly for Cavalli and Cesti, his immediate successors in the composition of laments.