

Counterpoint and Modality in Gesualdo's Late Madrigals*

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§ Gesualdo è stato un compositore 'moderno' o 'tradizionale'? Il suo cromatismo trasgredisce realmente le regole generalmente accettate, o risulta 'semplicemente' da una più ampia interpretazione di quelle stesse regole? Sebbene molte risposte siano state date a queste domande, esse permangono tuttora aperte, perché una loro risposta presuppone non solo considerazioni contrappuntistiche, ma anche un appropriato modello di organizzazione dello spazio sonoro. Il presente saggio esamina pertanto le ultime raccolte madrigalistiche di Gesualdo – ordinate modalmente, pubblicate sotto il suo controllo e dunque passibili di un'analisi modale anche in una prospettiva strettamente powersiana – alla luce del concetto di 'differente resistenza dei diversi tipi tonali alla rappresentazione modale' che gli autori hanno sviluppato negli ultimi anni, studiandone in particolare le maniere con le quali Gesualdo spesso evita la conclusione dei processi cadenzali e le correlazioni tra contrappunto e cromatismo nel suo linguaggio madrigalistico.

§ Was Gesualdo a 'modern' composer, or a 'conservative' one? Does Gesualdo's chromaticism transgress the generally accepted rules, or result 'simply' from a wide(r) interpretation of those very rules? Although many answers have been given to these questions, they remain still open, because they cannot be answered uniquely on the basis of counterpoint considerations: an appropriate model of 'tonal space' is also needed. The essays examines therefore the tonal organization of Gesualdo's last two books of madrigals – modally ordered, published under his control, and thus confirming the relevance of modality in analysing his music also from a Powersian perspective – in the light of the concept of 'different resistance of different tonal types to modal representation' the authors have developed in the last years. In doing this, it also explores the ways Gesualdo avoids to finalise the cadential processes, and the relationships between counterpoint and chromaticism in Gesualdo's madrigal language.

1. Situating the question

A great deal of critical remarks about Gesualdo's music have long since focused around a question which basically sounds as follows: was Gesualdo a 'modern' composer, or a 'conservative' one? Or, to state the same question in more technical terms: does Gesualdo's chromaticism transgress in a substantial way the generally accepted rules, or result 'simply' from a wide(r) interpretation of these very rules?

The first point of view is expressed at its best in Edward Lowinsky's famous concept of 'triadic atonality' (LOWINSKY 1961, pp. 38-50). Given that each triad tends to define a stable tonal space, Gesualdo's music can be considered intrinsically modern, since his use of triads undermines that same stability. Such an approach, however, has a strong shortcoming: as Peter Niedermüller and other scholars have pointed out (NIEDERMÜLLER 2001), and Catherine Deutsch recently summed up, it «defines itself against the norm of a future tonality» (DEUTSCH 2013, p. 28), and thus reveals itself as essentially a-historical.

The second point of view has been mainly advocated by Carl Dahlhaus (DAHLHAUS 1967). The German scholar considered Gesualdo's writing within the norms of Renaissance counterpoint, only 'coloured' by chromaticism, and thus concluded the composer was hardly a revolutionary: he represented «eher ein Ende als einen Anfang» (DAHLHAUS 1974, p. 34), differently from an authentic a revolutionary as Claudio Monteverdi.¹

Following Dahlhaus' paths, several scholars have then investigated specific aspects of Gesualdo's music in the light of Renaissance theory. Of particular interest in our horizon of research are Paolo Cecchi's analysis of modality in Gesualdo's fifth book of madrigals (CECCHI 1988), John Turci-Escobar's scrutiny of expressive and constructive device in the six Gesualdo's books of madrigals (TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004), and Roland Jackson's (JACKSON 1994) and Marco Mangani's (MANGANI 2001a) investigations about that individual type of cadence which involves (to use an anachronistic term for sake of clarity) the fourth-sixth chord, defined by Nicola Vicentino as «cadenza con sincopa tutta cattiva» (VICENTINO 1555, f. 51v). Jackson's and Mangani's enquiries, in particular, and in some sense also Turci-Escobar's, revealed that in certain cases Gesualdo's chromaticism can be a means of constructing *cadenze fuggite* of a peculiar kind.²

It should be noted, however, that the uncertainty about Gesualdo's 'modernity' is not a purely modern phenomenon. As Catherine Deutsch has clearly

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¹ A position somehow similar to the opinion on Gesualdo expressed by EINSTEIN 1949, vol. 2, p. 706.

² See below, § 5.

demonstrated, it also characterized the composer's reception in the first half of the seventeenth century: in her appropriate wording, Gesualdo is therefore to be situated «in an 'elsewhere' that, for early seventeenth century musicians, represented more a 'beginning' than an 'ending'» (DEUTSCH 2013, p. 48). Yet, as the same Deutsch affirms, «if Gesualdian modernity is etched in the collective memory of the first baroque musicians, it is probably more in reference to an expressive power than to any explicitly formal or technical features» (*ibidem*).

For all these reasons, the question of whether and to what extent Gesualdo should be 'technically' defined as a modern composer still remains open. Moreover – in our opinion – such a question cannot be answered uniquely on the basis of counterpoint considerations: an appropriate model of 'tonal space', more historically-oriented than Lowinsky's, is needed as well.³ Our aim, therefore, is to begin here an investigation of the tonal organization of Gesualdo's two last books of madrigals in the light of a concept we have developed in the last few years as an analytical/hermeneutical tool on the matter.⁴ (In doing so, we take advantage of a new critical text, established by Maria Caraci Vela – book V – and Antonio Delfino – book VI – for the forthcoming *New Gesualdo Edition* in course of publication by Bärenreiter Verlag.⁵ Among other features, the new edition unveils the system governing the writing of accidentals in Carlino's *editiones principes*,⁶ and then results in some more direct chromatic semitones than in current Ugrino edition.⁷)

2. New perspective on the tonal organisation of sixteenth-century polyphony

The question of the tonal organisation of music composed before the accomplishment of the so-called 'harmonic tonality' has been debated practically since the dawn of modern musicology. For a long time, an evolutionist, almost teleological approach prevailed (which had a significant impact on Gesualdo's dedicated literature, as in the case of Lowinsky). In the last thirty years, on the contrary, the debate has polarised around two different, roughly antithetical perspectives: an even too simplifying interpretative orthodoxy *à la* Meier,⁸ and an even too sceptical, (post-)Powersian suspension of any possible modal

³ For an analysis of Gesualdo's style in the light of sixteenth-century modality and counterpoint, see PRIVITERA 2008.

⁴ MANGANI – SABAINO 2003; MANGANI – SABAINO 2008; SABAINO 2008, MANGANI – SABAINO 2009.

⁵ The two volumes were pre-printed in one book with an unified introduction as an anniversary publication supported by the city council of Gesualdo: see GESUALDO 1611/2013.

⁶ See GESUALDO 1611/2013, p. XXXII. We would like to express our gratitude to both editors for sharing their work with us prior to publication.

⁷ GESUALDO 1613/1957 and GESUALDO 1613/1958.

⁸ Stemmed from MEIER 1988.

judgement.⁹ The present authors, after ten years of research, are more and more convinced that neither position gives full justice either to the reality or to the complexity of the subject of polyphonic modality in Renaissance music: the first because it trusts even too much in the existence and consistency of a real 'system' in which *tout se tient* perfectly and easily; the second, on the contrary, because, all in all, it is ultimately unable to decipher the very dynamics that support (most of the time in a unified and consistent manner) the sound plot of a particular composition.

The problem, on the one hand, is that it seems in fact difficult to believe (as would the ultimate Powers)¹⁰ that Renaissance composers did not have a (both general and detailed) pre-compositional conception of the question of (polyphonic) modality and, consequently, that anything related observable in their composition is a result *a posteriori*, unplanned by the authors within a comprehensive foresight of the matter. On the other hand, however, it seems equally difficult to explain everything happening in an actual piece of music only on the ground of the categories exhibited by the coeval theory (magisterially summed up by Meier), because these very ones sometimes appear to be in conflict precisely with the music reality they should contribute to comprehend.

A possible way to overcome the dilemma, in our opinion, can perhaps be found in a fade-out of the most radical part of each position. If it seems in fact unavoidable to admit (with Powers) that, in not-modally ordered collections, the attribution of a composition to a specific category of the theoretical tradition is not always a trouble-free process not only from a practical, but also from a conceptual/hermeneutical point of view, this does not mean that the music content of the same composition (objectively condensed in the three minimal markers which constitute Powers' tonal type: cleffing, *proprietas* and quality of the last sonority) is always equally foreign – or equally impossible to relate – to one of the same modal categories. Specific analyses of Josquin's, Palestrina's, Lasso's, Ingegneri's and Monteverdi's music¹¹ have indeed demonstrated – we believe – how the development of compositions in some tonal types manifests (almost) literally the features that (most of) the theorists associate to a particular mode, while other compositions in other tonal types does it only in part or not at all. We can therefore say that different tonal types 'resist' differently to a possible modal interpretation; or – to put it in another way – that is feasible to order the tonal types along a scale going from the least to the most problematic as regards modal implications. The tonal types \flat -c₁-F, \flat -g₂-F, \natural -c₁-G, \flat -c₁-G, and \flat -g₂-G, for example, usually do not pose any problem of modal representation; the tonal types \flat -c₁-D and \natural -g₂-G are less plain as far as possible modal readings are concerned, and the tonal types \natural -g₂-C, \natural -c₁-A,

⁹ The most influential studies by Harold S. Powers on the matter are POWERS 1981, 1982, 1992a, 1992b, 1996 and 1998.

¹⁰ Especially POWERS 1992a and 1992b.

¹¹ For Palestrina, Lasso and Monteverdi, see footnote 4; for Josquin and Ingegneri, see MANGANI – SABAINO (forthcoming), and INGEGNERI (forthcoming), *Introduction*, § 4 respectively.

♯-g₂-A, and ♭-g₂-A regularly need subtle reasoning to be convincingly linked to a mode of the theoretical mainstream. (It should be noted that the level of easiness/difficulty towards modal representation normally seems to be inherent in the tonal type itself, and not dependent on composers' idiosyncratic usage, since analyses of different authors' music singled out roughly identical orderings).

In this sense – and in our effort to revisit the modal practise of Renaissance musicians in relation to contemporary theories – Gesualdo's madrigals are particularly challenging. In fact, they raise almost at sight several questions of no small importance. Are these madrigals, and especially the later ones, with all their chromatic intricacy, still rooted in the modal tradition? And, if so, in which one exactly: in the long-standing scheme of the eight, or in the newest, Glarean/Zarlinian of the twelve modes? Does the tonal types employed by Gesualdo 'resist' modal representation in the same way and order as described before – i.e. as in other Renaissance masters' music? And again: which tensions or conflicts possibly develop between the modal complex (if at work) and Gesualdo's stylistic peculiarities? Is there any modal coherence in each madrigal (or group of madrigal), beyond – or: in spite of – the exasperate chromaticism of many of them? Does these chromatic inflections affect equally every tonal type (and/or every mode), or it is more likely for them to appear in some tonal types/modes than in others? And finally: does the expressiveness unanimously acknowledged to Gesualdo's music result also from distinct modal selections, or is it mainly created through a skilful manipulation of other music parameters (such as dissonances or – once more – chromaticism)?

The present paper seeks to answer some of these questions, in the context of a larger research in progress.

3. Modal ordering of books v and vi

As regards the first two questions, an answer – albeit a first-level one – can be found in the arrangement of madrigals in either book v and vi. As it has already been noted (for example by Mathilde Catz; CATZ 1996, pp. 37-40), this follows a clear modal progression organised along the path of the twelve-mode scheme, although each book in turn lacks some authentic and/or plagal category (as table 1 and 2 show, book v misses out Lydian, Hypolydian, Hypomixolydian, and Hypoionian madrigals, while book vi omits the Hypolydian, Hypomixolydian and – perhaps/partially – Hypoaeolian modes; the twelve mode background is confirmed, in book vi, also by the presence of truly Lydian compositions, i.e. ♯-F ones with scarce or no recurrence of B-flats). It is also noteworthy that each book concludes with a composition in mode 1 (v, n° 21; vi, n° 23) which seems to have the function to bring the modal order to full circle, so to speak. In addition, this order can assumed to be in accord with author's intentions, and not to derive from a publisher's decision, as either of

books appears to have been published under Gesualdo's control (see Table 1 and 2).¹²

Such an ordering, therefore, not only confirms the relevance of modality in analysing Gesualdo's music, but does so also in/from a 'classic' Powersian perspective, which recognises the pertinence of the concept of mode specifically to (and only to) modally ordered collections.¹³

| Tonal type | N° – Title | Mode |
|---------------------|---|---------|
| b-g ₂ -G | 1. <i>Gioite voi col canto</i> | 1° tr. |
| | 2. <i>S'io non miro non moro</i> | |
| | 3. <i>Itene, o miei sospiri</i> | |
| | 4. <i>Dolcissima mia vita</i> | |
| b-c ₁ -G | 5. <i>O dolorosa gioia</i> | 2° tr. |
| | 6. <i>Qual fora, donna, un dolce "oimè" d'Amore</i> | |
| | 7. <i>Felicissimo sonno</i> | |
| b-c ₁ -E | 8. <i>Se vi duol il mio duolo</i> | 3° |
| | 9. <i>Occhi, del mio cor vita</i> | |
| b-g ₂ -E | 10. <i>Languisce alfin chi da la vita parte</i> | 4° |
| | 11. <i>"Mercè!", grido piangendo</i> | |
| b-g ₂ -G | 12. <i>O voi, troppo felici</i> | 7° |
| | 13. <i>Correte, amanti, a prova</i> | |
| b-c ₁ -D | 14. <i>Asciugate i begli occhi</i> | 9° tr. |
| b-g ₂ -A | 15. <i>Tu m'uccidi, o crudele</i> | 10° |
| | 16. <i>Deh, coprite il bel seno</i> | |
| b-c ₁ -A | 17. <i>Poiché l'avida sete (part I)</i> | |
| | 18. <i>Ma tu, cagion di quell'atroce pena (part II)</i> | |
| | 19. <i>O tenebroso giorno!</i> | |
| b-g ₂ -F | 20. <i>Se tu fuggi, io non resto</i> | 11° tr. |
| b-g ₂ -G | 21. <i>"T'amo, mia vita", la mia cara vita</i> | 1° tr. |

Table 1
Numeral and modal ordering of Book v

¹² See GESUALDO 1611/2013, pp. IX-X.

¹³ The same relevance is then confirmed by the organisation of book IV, equally arranged – even not completely – according to some modal categories, and also by a random scrutiny of some madrigals from books I-III carried out in a doctoral seminary coordinated by the present writers at the Department of Musicology and Cultural Heritage of the University of Pavia, for which we would acknowledge here the work of our PhD students Jacopo Leone Bolis, Matteo Cossu, Dario De Cicco, and Federica Marsico.

| Tonal type | N° – Title | Mode |
|---------------------|--|--------------|
| b-g ₂ -G | 1. <i>Se la mia morte brami</i> | 1° tr. |
| | 2. <i>Beltà, poiché t'assenti</i> | |
| | 3. <i>Tu piangi, o Fille mia</i> | |
| ♯-g ₂ -D | 4. <i>Resta di darmi noia</i> | 2° |
| | 5. <i>Chiaro risplender suole</i> | |
| ♯-c ₁ -E | 6. <i>“Io parto”, e più non dissi, ché 'l dolore</i> | 3° |
| | 7. <i>Mille volte il dì moro</i> | |
| ♯-g ₂ -E | 8. <i>O dolce mio tesoro</i> | 4° |
| | 9. <i>Deh, come invan sospiro</i> | |
| | 10. <i>Io pur respiro, in così gran dolore</i> | |
| ♯-g ₂ -F | 11. <i>Alme d'amor rubelle</i> | 5° |
| | 12. <i>Candido e verde fiore</i> | |
| ♯-g ₂ -G | 13. <i>Ardita zanzaretta</i> | 7° |
| | 14. <i>Ardo per te, mio bene, ma l'ardore</i> | |
| ♯-g ₂ -A | 15. <i>Ancide sol la morte</i> | 9° (and 10°) |
| | 16. <i>Quel “no” crudel che la mia speme ancise</i> | |
| | 17. <i>Moro, lasso, al mio duolo</i> | |
| b-g ₂ -F | 18. <i>Volan, quasi farfalle</i> | 11° tr. |
| | 19. <i>Al mio gioir il ciel si fa sereno</i> | |
| ♯-g ₂ -C | 20. <i>Tu segui, o bella Clori</i> | 12° |
| | 21. <i>Ancor che per amarti io mi consumi</i> | |
| | 22. <i>Già piansi nel dolore</i> | |
| b-g ₂ -G | 23. <i>Quando ridente e bella</i> | 1° tr. |

Table 2
Numeral and modal ordering of Book VI

4. Problematic and unproblematic elements of modal representation in book V and VI

Setting up a proper response to the other questions mentioned before, instead, is only possible through a close examination of the musical content of books V and VI.

According to the research model we have employed for Palestrina, Lasso, and other composers, to determine the level of problematic nature of any given tonal type we should survey Tenor *ambitus*, *exordium*, and cadential plan of every composition. Their convergence to, or divergence from, theorists' description of represented modes would be the starting point for their classification.

In Gesualdo, however, this procedure might call for some reassessment, because the three elements cannot be embraced all together at a single glance. Most madrigals, in fact,¹⁴ commence with a declamatory/homorhythmic beginning that outlines the pivotal notes of the modes and the relative species of fourths and fifths far less distinctly than an imitative *exordium*, so weakening its significance for modal determination. Cadences, too, sometimes need to be approached cautiously, for reasons that will become apparent later in the speech. The fundamental relationship Tenor *ambitus*/mode, on the contrary, remains an objective marker irrespective of other parameters' behaviour, and thus provides a good starting point for any analysis.

Under this aspect, Gesualdo's madrigals of either book are mostly unproblematic as regards modal representation. The only imbalances between 'theoretical' and actual ranges are noticeable

• in book V, in the tonal type:

♯-g₂-E = mode 4 (nn° 10-11): the Tenor moves in the same *ambitus* as the tonal type ♯-c₁-E (= mode 3), as frequently happens in the Phrygian categories also according to Meier's studies (MEIER 1988, pp. 47-88) (cadences, however, as we shall see, confirm the plagal classification);

♯-g₂-A = mode 10 (nn° 15-16): Tenor range is plagal, as in the tonal type ♯-c₁-A (where a C-cadence at the end of n° 17 – the only piece of the collection subdivided into two parts – validates the plagal representation); n° 16, in addition, presents an unmistakable *mixtio* with the germane authentic mode at bars 22-26 of the Caraci edition;

• in book VI, in the tonal type:

♯-g₂-G = mode 7 (nn° 13-14): in n° 13 the Tenor range exceeds its theoretical low limit descending till E₂ without any apparent textual suggestion, and so covering almost the entire plagal species of fourth too (n° 14, on the contrary, fulfils flawlessly the theoretical premises);

♯-g₂-A (nn° 15-17): the Tenor voice embraces both the authentic and the plagal *ambitus* (it goes from the low E₂ to the high A₃), and therefore dilutes the distinction between the ninth and the tenth mode (a dilution not easy to solve neither appealing to the cadential plan, to say the truth).

The correspondence between Gesualdo's voice ranging and the theorists' prescription on the matter, together with the ordering of both collections, establishes therefore a basic modal coherence that chromaticism and irregular cadences can taint but never really question. Gesualdo's music, thus, is firmly – and pre-compositionally – rooted in the modal tradition of the Renaissance.

¹⁴ Mainly nn° 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 14, 19, and 21 of book V, and 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 15, 17, and 22 of book VI.

5. Cadential attenuation and representation of modes

We already had the occasion, in the previous paragraphs, to mention in passing cadences and cadential plans of Gesualdo's madrigals. The topic, however, is worth of some more detailed reflections, especially to discern some distinctive Gesualdo's habits and to specify the standpoint from which we look at the entire issue.

Let us begin with the latter question. We actually agree with the scholars who consider cadential attenuation as one of Gesualdo's main stylistic traits, a mean of expression of (the sense of) the literary text as well as a counterbalance of a very fragmented foreground musical phrasing.¹⁵ John Turci-Escobar expounded a detailed taxonomy of the possible ways in which a (Gesualdo's) cadence can be attenuated (TURCI-ESCOBAR 2007), and in principle we go along with his classification (except perhaps for his choice to label «synecdochic cadence», *ibidem* pp. 121-123, – and thus anyway *cadence* – what we prefer to define plainly, according to their actual nature, as 'non-cadential articulations' or 'non-cadential conclusions'). We think, however, that sometimes it is necessary to be more drastic in the identification of the cadential goals 'hidden' (or, better, 'implicit') in some typical Gesualdian procedures or *fuggimenti della cadenza*.

To identify such cadential goals, in our opinion, it is in fact necessary to draw all the possible consequences from the syncopated dissonance of a sixth resolving to an octave (or a third resolving to a unison). This, as everyone knows, defines – in close relation with text underlay¹⁶ – the prime framework of a cadence (the 'text-music relation' must be stressed,¹⁷ in order to avoid considering *any* syncopated movement from a six to an octave a cadence¹⁸), and gives special emphasis to the last and final sonority of the cadence itself. Moreover – and crucially –, this emphasis works not only when the triggered aim is reached, but also when it is avoided or denied: the cadential goal remains active regardless of its actual sounding in the music, as it were, and orients the musical expectations of the listener.

In its simplest occurrence, the suppression of the last sonority of a cadential movement results in what we call 'truncated cadence',¹⁹ a particularly strong form of *cadenza fuggita*²⁰ (or the most extreme form of what Anthony

¹⁵ WATKINS 1991², p. 108; CECCHI 1988, pp. 113-122; TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004, pp. 245-258; TURCI-ESCOBAR 2011.

¹⁶ At least in sixteenth century repertoire: in other ages the situation can be different (not only in Italian Trecento music, as our research are revealing, but also in Tinctoris' works, for example, as Francesco Molmenti's PhD Diss. in progress is clearly going to demonstrate).

¹⁷ See the idea of 'double segmentation' proposed in MANGANI 2001b and MANGANI 2007.

¹⁸ Something which occasionally still happens even in scholarly literature.

¹⁹ See the cadential taxonomy proposed in SABAINO 2008, pp. 42-43.

²⁰ «'l Fuggir la Cadenza [è] un certo atto, il qual fanno le parti, accennando di voler fare una terminatione perfetta, secondo l'uno de i modi mostrati di sopra, et si rivolgono altrove»: ZARLINO 1558, Lib. III, cap. 54, p. 226.

Newcomb has termed «evaporated cadence»; NEWCOMB 1980, p. 120). Ex. 1 shows one of its typical arrangement:²¹ the contrapuntal combination at the end of bar 10 implies a resolution on a B-flat that never materialises, but, this notwithstanding, that insinuates itself into the listener's ear. (Ex. 2 displays, as a comparison, a more 'conventional' evaporated cadence, where three voices out of four drop the final note, and only the Tenor arrives at the proper cadential conclusion.)

10

C. *- gni stel - la,*

Q. *stel - - - la,*

A. *va - ga d'o-gni stel - la,*

T. *(silence)*

B. *(silence)*

Ex. 1
Quando ridente e bella (VI: 23, b. 10)

11

C. *- - ta,*

Q. *dar vi - - - ta,*

A. *chi mi può dar vi - ta,*

T. *chi mi può dar vi - ta,*

B. *può dar vi - - - ta,*

Ex. 2
Moro, lasso, al mio duolo (VI: 17, bb. 12-13)

²¹ This and all the following examples are taken, with permission, from the new editions of book V and VI quoted at the end of § 1.

At times, however, the mechanism is more ambiguous: a major third which, in the final sonority of a cadence, comes out as a resolution of a suspension, because of the dissonance virtually opens the path to a further resolution, and so to a new, fresh cadence. In a situation like that shown in Ex. 3, the C-sharp which resolves the suspended D may be perceived not only as a point of rest, but also as a push for the continuation of the contrapuntal flow to a following (truncated) D-sonority: so that it is not easy to state once and for all which is the intended final goal of the cadential process – or, in other words, if the passage comprises a single cadence or a cadential combination. The aim is somehow undecided, and so the sense of cadential closure somehow attenuated.

26

C. s'hai d'a-mor de - sì - o e, s'hai d'a-mor de-sì - o,

Q. e, s'hai d'a-mor de - sì - o e, s'hai d'a - mor de-sì - o,

A. e, s'hai d'a-mor de-sì - o e, s'hai d'a-mor de - sì - o,

T. e, s'hai d'a-mor de - sì - o de - sì - o,

B. e, s'hai d'a-mor d'a-mor de - sì - o,

Ex. 3
Tu segui, o bella Clori (vi: 20, bb. 29-30)

This procedure – this ‘push’ towards something which will never actually sound – is even more pronounced when the cadential movement incorporates the *sincopa tutta cattiva*. Ex. 4 is a case in point: the double suspension (the sixth and the fourth) resolves regularly on a G sonority, which in turn involves a close on a C sonority that Gesualdo avoids and substitutes with a general rest.

33

C. - - te fiam - ma che sì dol - ce m'in - fiam - ma m'in - fiam - ma.

Q. - te fiam - ma che sì dol - ce m'in - fiam - - - - ma.

A. ma che sì dol - ce sì dol - ce m'in - fiam - ma m'in - fiam - ma.

T. quel - l'ar - den - te fiam - ma che sì dol - ce sì dol - ce m'in - fiam - ma m'in - fiam - ma.

B. den - te fiam - ma che sì dol - ce m'in - fiam - ma.

Ex. 4
Tu piangi, o Fille mia (vi: 3, bb. 33-36)

The same can occur also in the context of a Phrygian cadence (Ex. 5) and in the middle of a chromatic zone (Ex. 6).

18

C. m'in - fiam - - - - ma.

Q. ma m'in - fiam - ma.

A. fiam - ma m'in - fiam - ma.

T. ce m'in - fiam - ma.

B.

11

C. do - lo - re pri - vò

Q. pri - vò

A. ché'l do - lo - re pri - vò

T. do - lo - re pri - vò

B. lo - re pri - vò

Ex. 5
Tu piangi, o Fille mia (vi: 3, bb. 18-19)

Ex. 6
"Io parto", e più non dissi, ché 'l dolore (vi: 10, bb. 11-13)

A particular configuration of the procedure, linking it with another we shall consider in a while, takes place when the outer voices hold the same note above and under the suspensions, as in Ex. 7. Before examining the possible consequence of such an instance, however, we would like to underline that truncations of this type cannot properly be considered 'half-cadences', if the terms implies a sense of rest on the penultimate cadential sonority (that is, on the last sonority before the truncation); the contrapuntal expectations, in our opinion, give in fact to the penultimate imperfect consonance a tendency to

resolve on a following sonority (regardless of the facts that, in Gesualdo's time, this normally contains another *imperfect* consonance, and that, in actual music, this very last sonority really sounds or not). What is here in operation, in other terms, is a *fuggimento* of a full cadence, and not a resting break in the middle of a cadence, as the contrapuntal expectations are for continuity, not for a pause halfway.

Ex. 7
Resta di darmi noia
(VI: 4, b. 24)

Ex. 8
Resta di darmi noia (VI: 4, bb. 39-43)

Not infrequently, anyway, situations as the one in Ex. 7 are just a step away from a different type of attenuated cadence very frequent in Gesualdo's madrigals, the 'deviated' cadence. One of its configuration we would like to draw the attention to is in fact obtained simply by restating the sonority on which the dissonance resolves and closing the phrase with it (a sort of '*cadenza piana*', to use an expression of Italian prosody). The deviation is particularly intense when the preceding dissonance is, again, the *sinco-pa tutta cattiva*, as in Ex. 8, but the figuration accomplishes its effect even without any dissonance, because of the contrapuntal contour alone – in Ex. 9, for instance, our ear perceives the last A sonority as a substitution of (a deviation from) a proper conclusive D. An even clear demonstration of the same feature is in Ex. 10, where an almost literal repetition of the same vocative («*anima mia*») ends the first time with two identical E sonorities (i.e. with a deviated cadence), and the second time with the most classical progression E-A (with an added 4-3 suspension as a further cadential marker).

49

C. t'a - mi ch'io non t'a - mi, ahi, ch'a pen-sar-lo so - lo

Q. t'a - mi ch'io non t'a - mi, ahi, ch'a pen-sar-lo so - lo

A. - mi ch'io non t'a - mi, ahi, ch'a pen-sar-lo so - lo

T. t'a - mi ch'io non t'a - mi, ahi, ch'a pen-sar-lo so - lo

B. - mi ch'io non t'a - mi, ahi, ch'a pen-sar-lo so - lo

Ex. 9
Se la mia morte brami (VI: 1, bb. 49-55)

30

C. mi - ra-mi pur, a - ni-ma mi - a a - ni-ma mi - a,

Q. mi - ra-mi pur, a - ni-ma mi - a a - ni-ma mi - a,

A. mi - ra-mi pur, a - ni-ma mi - a a - ni-ma mi - a,

T. mi - ra-mi pur, a - ni-ma mi - a a - ni-ma mi - a,

B. mi - ra-mi pur, a - ni-ma mi - a a - ni-ma mi - a,

Ex. 10
O dolce mio tesoro (VI: 8, bb. 30-34)

In Gesualdo's composing palette, however, a cadence can not only be attenuated through one the device just discussed: it can also be completely cancelled, so that the conclusion of a musical phrase, or even of an entire piece, is attained by means of non-cadential proceedings. Normally, these conclusions are depending on particular textual circumstances: so, let us continue with some considerations about Gesualdo's combination of cadences and poetic text.

We consent, in fact, with the scholars who, more or less explicitly, believe that – at least in the first instance – it is best to avoid any attempt at a general interpretation of the overall sense of a text, and focus instead on the meaning of its single words.²² This does not exclude that a wider rhetoric level exists in Gesualdo's music (and that such a level is worth of an examination on its own);²³ however, concentrating at first on the meaning of any significant word – provided it does not turn into a negative value judgment of Gesualdo's musical behaviours²⁴ – is surely the most suitable way to grasp the composer's well-known attitude towards a 'visual' rendering of the textual images.

We would like to begin, therefore, with a simple observation: the very last word of a given poetic text determines (at least in madrigal books v and vi) whether a madrigal setting ends or not with an authentic cadence (that is, with a cadence constructed upon a 6>8 grid with a syncopated dissonance and an ascending semitone): a 'positive' or 'neutral' final word calls for a conclusive authentic cadence (Exx. 11 and 12), while a 'negative' or 'interrogative' final word implies a weakened musical conclusion, which can be obtained either with a Phrygian cadence (by no means a strong one in – late – Gesualdo's style:²⁵ Ex. 13), or with some non-cadential progressions, generally laying on a pedal point, and often (but not always) prolonging a previous *cadenza fuggita* (Ex. 14).

²² The relevance of single words for the understanding of Gesualdo's compositional habits has been repeatedly underlined (in a positive way) for example by WATKINS 1991², pp. 107, 173, 175, 178, 304. See also the examination of Gesualdo's expressive use of melodic shapes and registers in TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004, pp. 208-243.

²³ See WATKINS 1991², *passim*.

²⁴ An extreme example of such negative judgement is the letter of Aldus Huxley quoted in REYNOLDS 1997, p. 373: «Gesualdo never set a poem, only the individual words and phrases».

²⁵ See for example TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004, p. 88, footnote 202.

62
C. e_i do-lor mie - i e_i do - lor mie - - - - i.
Q. do - lor mie - - - i e_i do-lor mie - - i.
A. e_i do - lor mie - i.
T. do-lor mie - - - i e_i do - lor mie - i.
B. do - lor mie - i e_i do - lor mie - i.

Ex. 11
Gioite voi col canto (v: 1, bb. 62-69)

48
C. te - co e fug - ga te - co_A - mo - - - - re!™
Q. fug - ga te - co e fug - ga te - co_A - mo - - - - re!™
A. fug - ga te - co e fug - ga te - co_A - mo - - - - re!™
T. - - re e fug - ga te - co_A - mo - - - - re!™
B. - - - co e fug - ga te - co_A - mo - - - - re!™

Ex. 12
O tenebroso giorno! (v: 19, bb. 48-51)

51

C. pa - ga mor - te_e vi - ta_ap - pa - ga?

Q. pa - ga mor-te_e vi - ta mor - te_e vi - ta ap - pa - ga?

A. ga mor - te mor-te_e vi - ta_ap-pa - - - ga?

T. - ta_ap-pa - ga mor - te_e vi - ta mor - te_e vi - ta_ap - pa - ga?

B. mor - te_e vi - ta_ap - pa - - - - - ga?

Ex. 13
Ma tu, cagion di quell'atroce pena (v: 18, bb. 51-57)

62

C. e, l mo - rir mor - te mor - te!

Q. mor - te mor - - - te mor - te!

A. - - te mor - te mor - te mor - te!

T. te mor - te mor - te!

B. mor - te mor - te mor - te!

Ex. 14
S'io non miro non moro (v: 2, bb. 62-68)

Within Gesualdo's fifth book of madrigals there are no exceptions to this rule: it is the single word, and not the gist of a whole sentence, that originates the musical solution (as evident in Ex. 11, where the neutral sense of the word «miei» is not affected by the overall meaning of the expression «dolor miei»). In the sixth book the situation is slightly less predictable, and we do find cases of an interpretation of the strict sense of the final sentence (in Ex. 15, for instance, the music conveys the 'negative' implication of «morte mia»). Yet, the general stylistic tendency does not substantially change, as can be noticed

in Ex. 16, where the fact that the soul's flight implies the poet's death is totally overlooked.

65

C. - a la mor-te mi - a.

Q. la mor-te mi - - - a.

A. la mor-te mi - - - a.

T. a la mor-te mi - - - a.

B. la mor-te mi - - - a.

Ex. 15
O dolce mio tesoro (vi: 8, bb. 65-70)

95

C. l'al-ma fug - ge e l'al-ma fug - ge a vo - - - lo!

Q. lo e l'al - ma fug - ge a vo - - - lo!

A. lo e l'al-ma fug - ge a vo - - - lo!

T. a vo - - - lo a vo - - - lo!

B. a vo - - - lo!

Ex. 16
Se la mia morte brami (vi: 1, bb. 95-98)

Gesualdo's treatment of internal cadences may be seen in the same light. Modally irregular cadences are often chosen for their intrinsic 'sonic' quality, thus displaying Gesualdo's ability to express musically the meaning of the poetic text.²⁶ The strong cadence on F in Ex. 17, for instance, must be con-

²⁶ We use purposely the neutral expression 'sonic quality', in order to avoid any reference to modal ethos, giving the discrepancy existing on the matter between Renaissance theorists

sidered foreign to the transposed Dorian mode of the piece: nevertheless, the 'joyful' and 'singing' mood of its final sonority is clearly perceptible. On the contrary, a stopover foreign to the mode may create a diversion that strongly contrasts with a subsequent 'regular' passage, as is the case of Ex. 18, where the non-cadential F-sharp *fermata* on the word «moro» at bar 83 is widely compensated by the diatonic conclusion on the word «amando», which also reinstates the tonal space around A (that is, around the modal final of the piece) with a clear-cut authentic cadence perfectly expressing the 'positive' nature of the verb «amando».

The image shows a musical score for five voices. The top staff is the Soprano part, followed by Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, and Bass. The lyrics are: "Gio-i - te voi col can - - - to men", "Gio-i - te voi col can - - - to col can - to", "Gio-i - te voi col can - - - to col can - - - to", "Gio-i - te voi col can - - - to", and "Gio-i - te voi col can - - - to". The music is in a 3/2 time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

Ex. 17
Gioite voi col canto (v: 1, bb. 1-5)

(SABAINO 2005); of course, this use does not intend excluding that a possible ethos system could have been present in Gesualdo's mind, and that further studies can possibly disclose it.

81

C. ch'io mo - ro ch'io mo - ro a - man - do

Q. - mè, ch'io mo - ro ch'io mo - ro a -

A. mè, ch'io mo - ro ch'io mo - ro

T. ch'io mo - ro a - man -

B. ch'io mo - ro

87

C. a - man - do a - man - do!"

Q. man - do a - man - do!"

A. a - man - do a - man - do!"

T. do a - man - do!"

B. a - man - do!"

Ex. 18

Ma tu, cagion di quell'atroce pena (v: 15, bb. 81-90)

The most evident example of Gesualdo's attitude towards the 'sonic' rendering of specific word meanings is perhaps the beginning of *O dolce mio tesoro*, from the sixth book of madrigals (Ex. 19). The almost exclusive choice of major sonorities for the initial progression, together with the authentic cadence on G (a 'positive' goal completely foreign to the 'negative' E-mode of the piece), fits perfectly the only cheerful concept expressed by the poetic text. Far from representing a rejection of the modal system, such beginning may well be explained in terms of *commixtio modi*: within a sad, Phrygian context, the Mixolydian final conveys perfectly a contrary, although temporary, sentiment. The impact of the passage, in any case, is all the more stronger, since *internal* authentic cadences are extremely rare in Gesualdo's late madrigals.²⁷

²⁷ See again CECCHI 1988, pp. 113-122.

The image shows a musical score for five voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor 1, Tenor 2, and Bass. The music is in 2/2 time and features the lyrics "O dolce mio tesoro". The score is written on five staves, each with a treble clef (except for the Bass staff which has a bass clef). The lyrics are written below each staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The music is characterized by its chromatic and modal nature, typical of Gesualdo's style.

Ex. 19
O dolce mio tesoro (VI: 8, bb. 1-5)

6. Gesualdo's chromaticism and modality

If the attenuation (deviation, avoidance, ... up to the complete deconstruction) of a cadence is typical of Gesualdo's style (where it functions not as a disruption, but on the contrary as a continuity builder – as Turci-Escobar has also noted²⁸ – and a means of expression of the poetic text), at times one has the impression that also some chromatic insertions brings forth as a last-moment deviation of a normal cadential resolution. In a passage like the one in Ex. 20, for instance, the surprising F-sharp sonority in our opinion stays for a more obvious G sonority (which could be easily achieved with a 3>1 formula combining *Tenorizans* and *Cantizans* clausulas²⁹ in Tenor and Bass). It is as if Gesualdo raised (or lowered) the crossbar of the goal which has been preparing up to that point, and then at the last moment deflected towards an unexpected degree.³⁰

²⁸ TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004 and 2011, *passim*.

²⁹ We adopt Meier terminology (see MEIER 1988, pp. 91-93), and call therefore *clausula* the melodic movement of the single voices, and *cadence* the combination of at least two *clausulae*.

³⁰ Watkins too suggested that some Gesualdo's chromatic passages may be the result of a «transposition», understood as such also in his own times (as would be proved by a remark of Giovanni Battista Doni, who qualifies an excerpt of *Mercè grido piangendo* from Book V as a Lydian harmony «omnibus Chordis signum # usurpatum». See WATKINS 1991², pp. 198-199 and footnote 30.

The image shows a musical score for five voices: Canto, Quinto, Alto, Tenore, and Basso. The score is in 3/2 time and features a chromatic shift in the vocal lines. The lyrics are "Bel - tà, poi - ché t'as - sen - ti,". The Canto, Quinto, and Alto parts have a melodic line that shifts chromatically. The Tenore part has a rest followed by a melodic line. The Basso part has a bass line that shifts chromatically.

Ex. 20
Beltà, poiché t'assenti (vi: 2, bb. 1-4)

Of course, we do not pretend that these deviations explain every Gesualdo's chromatic event (one of the most serious mistakes of the past is perhaps the idea to find a sole explanation for a great and varied array of occurrences): nevertheless, they *do* explain some of them. Some others – especially single or short-term-extended chromatic intervals – may be easily understood (following John Turci-Escobar rather than Dahlhaus) as temporary leading-tones sometimes resolved and sometimes «thwarted» (TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004, p. 166) (as happens in the renowned opening of *Moro, lasso, al mio duolo*), or as alteration of the third of certain cadential sonorities (TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004, pp. 156-158).

Still others, in turn – above all the chromatic areas of some length –, can be better appreciated, we believe, via the previous metaphor of raising or lowering the diatonic crossbar at a certain point of the musical discourse (the metaphor clearly has its roots in Dahlhaus's judgment of Gesualdo's chromaticism, but considers the chromatic semitone that hinges the diatonic and the chromatic area as an actual interval, and not as a virtual unison, and so preserve its dynamic character). We will call this raising or lowering 'chromatic shift'. A shining example of the practice is found in *Io pur respiro, in così gran dolore* (Ex. 21): «dispietato core» is 'simply' set a semitone upper its 'diatonic reality', so to speak – in fact, once the first chromatic shift has been 'metabolised', everything goes on 'as if' the passage were diatonic.

18

C. pur vi - vi, o di - spie - ta - to co - re?

Q. vi - - - vi, o di - spie - ta - to co - re?

A. vi, o di - spie - ta - to co - re?

T. vi pur vi - vi, o di - spie - ta - to co - re?

B. vi, o di - spie - ta - to co - re?

Ex. 21

Io pur respiro, in così gran dolore (VI: 10, bb. 18-22)

Normally, the quality of the accidentals (sharps or flats) indicates if the passage has been ‘raised’ or ‘lowered’: but this is not always the case,³¹ and sometimes the direction of the shifting should be inferred from the musical context; in Ex. 22, for instance, the ‘diatonic reality’ seems to be a half-step lower, despite the sharps (the ‘real’ non-cadential ending is on C, and not on B, according to a tonal type \sharp -C; the chromatic inflection is probably due to the intrinsic *dulcedo* of the word «amore», with an exchange of *durus* and *mollis* musical orthography).

³¹ WATKINS 1991², p. 196 remarks «a decided though not exclusive preference for sharps» in «Gesualdo’s most extreme harmonic passages».

C. ch'ar - de ch'ar - de sol d'a - mo - re.

Q. ch'ar - de sol ch'ar - de sol d'a - mo - re.

A. fug - gi, ch'ar - de ch'ar - de sol d'a - mo - re.

T. ch'ar - de ch'ar - de sol d'a - mo - re.

B. fug - gi, ch'ar - de sol d'a - mo - re.

Ex. 22

Tu segui, o bella Clori, in così gran dolore (vi: 20, bb. 12-15)

At times, however, is it really difficult to determine if the 'diatonic reality' of what we hear should be imagined 'up' or 'down' (see for example Ex. 23, where the neighbouring motion on the F-sharp in the Bass could 'stay for' a figuration on F as well as on G³²).

C. ne ar - do per te, mio be - ne,

Q. ne ar - do ar - do per te, mio be - ne,

A. ar - do per te, mio be - ne,

T. ar - do per te, mio be - ne mio be - ne mio be - ne,

B. ne ar - do per te, mio be - ne,

Ex. 23

Ardo per te, mio bene, ma l'ardore (vi: 14, bb. 5-9)

³² For the record, we favour the latter, as if the syllables *be* and *ne* in the Bass were set on the same G.

For all these reasons, it could help to sketch a set of definitions in order to point out also the textual implications of Gesualdo's chromatic usage.

The first, necessary step is the distinction between:

- (1) chromatic passages that occur *within a textual-musical phrase*, and
- (2) other chromatic episodes that create a contrast *between subsequent textual-musical phrases*.

A clear example of the former category can be seen at the very beginning of the sixth book (Ex. 24), where the melodic contour of the initial subject is intrinsically chromatic and results in an intense and anguishing contrapuntal phrase.

The image displays a musical score for a madrigal. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a vocal line (Soprano) and a lute line (Guitar). The vocal line begins with the lyrics "Se la mia mor - te bra -" and continues with "Se la mia mor - te bra - mi,". The lute line provides accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line with "mi, cru - del" and "cru - del cru-del,". The lute line continues with "cru - - - del" and "Se la mia mor - te bra - mi,". The score is written in a 2/2 time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

Ex. 24
Se la mia morte bramami (VI: 1, 1-13)

Ex. 25 shows a different case: the repetition a tone higher of a diatonic phrase implies a chromatic shift from B-flat to B-natural between Alto and

Tenor. This kind of sequential repetition is a typical manifestation of Gesualdo's 'contrasting chromaticism', and it reaches its most expressive results when jointed to the 'internal' chromaticism just mentioned, as in Ex. 26.

25

a che più tar - do a che più tar - do?

a che più tar - do a che più tar - do?

a che più tar - do a che più tar - do?

a che più tar - do a che più tar - do?

a che più tar - do a che più tar - do?

Ex. 25
Occhi, del mio cor vita (v: 9, bb. 25-30)

47

a. Deh, gra - di - te, 'l mio ar - do - re deh, gra - di -

a. Deh, gra - di - te, 'l mio ar - do - re deh, gra - di -

a. Deh, gra - di - te, 'l mio ar - do - re deh, gra - di -

a. Deh, gra - di - te, 'l mio ar - do - re deh, gra - di -

a. Deh, gra - di - te, 'l mio ar - do - re deh, gra - di -

Ex. 26
Se vi duol il mio duolo, (v: 8, bb. 47-55)

Ex. 27
 “Mercè!”, grido piangendo (vi: 11, bb. 22-28)

Besides this distinction, another must be added, about the tonal implications of chromaticism: the distinction between:

- (1) chromatic shifts that *move from* a more or less regular tonal context, and
- (2) chromatic shifts that, on the contrary, *reinstates* a regular tonal environment once this has been removed by a previous chromatic passage.

As can be appreciated from Ex. 27, this distinction may well overlap with the previous one: a chromatic shift *between* two subsequent phrases, in fact, can be compensated by a chromatic reinstatement of the proper tonal space during the second phrase. Here, after a truncated cadence on E (the regular final of the piece) at the end of the poetic line «Ahi lasso, io vengo meno» (bar 22), the phrase on «Morrò dunque tacendo?» opens abruptly with an F-sharp sonority with major third (i.e. with a sonority shifted a half-step above its more obvious possible diatonic content): so, a chromatic insertion operates *between* two subsequent textual-musical units, and in doing so it creates a strong sense of removal. The ‘normal’ tonal space is then *reinstated* by the chromatic descent from F-sharp to F-natural that occurs *within* the same phrase and reaches a D sonority, allowing a customary, although feeble, Phrygian cadence on E. Once again, it is the specific meaning of each single word that holds the fate of the musical choices: while the sudden F-sharp sonority conveys well the sense of the word «morrò», the following chromatic reinstatement softens the impact of such insertion and fits well the textual image of a *silent* death.

This means, in sum – as we hope the previous examples have been able to demonstrate –, that most (if not all) Gesualdo’s chromaticism is a foreground phenomenon. Even though every occurrence of it is normally the utterance of a profound music-poetic instance, and even though it has surely a tremendous

impact on the listener, from a structural point of view – and, as far as we are concerned, from the point of view of the modal structure – it has a very weak significance: the basic mode is not affected by any chromatic insertion or deflection, which lives entirely its radiant life in the immediate surface. If observed as poetic devices, as deviations from/attenuations of a predictable goal, or as short-term raising/lowering of easily discernible, more obvious ‘diatonic realities’, therefore, many cadences and non-cadential articulations ostensibly outrageous to the basic mode of each piece immediately reveal themselves what they really are – dynamic, coloured, poetic, and sometimes obsessive strokes of genius by a composer who undoubtedly knew what he was doing.³³

7. Final remarks

The last statement could also function as a conclusion of the essay – with it, we took eventually our position in the so-called ‘Gesualdo controversy’.³⁴ Before the finale closure, however, a few words remain to be said about some specific modal aspects that have been left hitherto unaddressed.

The first is the question whether the tonal types employed by Gesualdo ‘resist’ modal representation in the same way and order as in other Renaissance composers. All things considered, the answer can be positive: under the moving foreground, in Gesualdo’s music modes seem to be established as firmly and coherently as in other coeval composers, as it is demonstrated by the almost complete regularity of Tenor ranges, the conduct of the (few) imitative *exordia*, and also, antithetically, by the intentional *commixtiones* for recognizable expressive purposes. Also the order of that resistance appears to be similar, at least as regards book V and VI modal usage: the most problematic types are, as usual, ♯-E and ♯-A (in general, yet, even these are *less* problematic than their Palestrina’s, Lasso’s or Ingegneri’s counterparts).³⁵ A final picture, however, can be gained only taking into account also the non-modally ordered collection published by Gesualdo – that is, madrigal books I, II, and III, as well as his sacred music – and so is best deferred until the completion of those analyses.

The second aspect is whether the chromatic inflections affect equally every tonal type/mode, or whether some types/modes are more likely to be ‘chromaticised’ than others. The chromatic alterations found in book V and VI make obvious (not surprisingly, at this point) that the former is the case. The amount of chromaticism is more a poetic than a musical (structural) device, and so it does not depend on the basic mode of a piece. Of course, the percep-

³³ Which is also the conclusion of TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004.

³⁴ WATKINS 1991², pp. 365-383 provides a useful summary of the matter up to James Haar’s severe criticism (according to which Gesualdo’s music, compared to «Marenzio’s mastery of harmonic material as a standard [...] looks and sounds sadly amateurish»: HAAR 1986, p. 145). See also TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004, pp. 281-284.

³⁵ See MANGANI – SABAINO 2008; SABAINO 2008, and INGEGNERI (forthcoming), *Introduction*.

tive impact of flattening is stronger in *durus* modes, and conversely the impact of sharpening in *mollis* ones: but Gesualdo leads frequently his listener to both extremes regardless of the modal category in which he is currently composing.

This observation, finally, takes us to the question whether Gesualdo's expressiveness results also from studied modal selections, or if relies mainly on the treatment of dissonance and chromaticism. An answer, this time, is not straightforward, because it is all but clear why Gesualdo chose a specific mode for an individual text, giving on the one hand the close resemblance of the poetic imagery, played on a few, characteristic and recurrent oxymora, and on the other hand the quantity of distortion that chromaticism introduces in the substance of any selected mode. Once again, an unveiling of the problem may come from a thorough analysis of the early and middle books of madrigals, where chromaticism is very much less invasive (and textual content a bit more varied), and so cannot ultimately be solved here. Besides, it raises also the question of which possible (if any) modal ethos Gesualdo could have attributed to each mode – something similar to asking which theorists were his possible point of reference in this as well as in other musical matters (Zarlino? Vicentino? Some Neapolitans?). The question, for sure, has a lot of interesting implications (for instance: is Gesualdo's concern for chromaticism somehow related to Vicentino's experiments, as it is normally believed,³⁶ or is totally unrelated from them, given (1) the absence from Gesualdo's music of any trait of that 'antiquarian chromaticism'³⁷ so characteristic of Vicentino's treatise, and (2) his preference for the twelve-, and not for the eight-mode system?). However, these implications too go beyond the scope and boundaries of the present investigation, and thus should be properly addressed elsewhere.

³⁶ EINSTEIN 1949, p. 705. See TURCI-ESCOBAR 2004, p. 26, footnote 72.

³⁷ The term was coined by PRIVITERA 2000, and identifies the chromaticism embedded in the Greek theory of the *genera* and the use of the so-called 'chromatic tetrachord' in sixteenth-century music.

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