

*R; Matthew Lazar: An
Examination of Two of the
Lament's of Arianna
by Montiverdi*

AN EXAMINATION OF TWO OF THE LAMENT'S OF

ARIANNA BY CLAUDIO MONTEVERDI

Matthew Lazar

Lasciate mi morire!
E chi volete voi, che mi conforte
in cosi dura sorte, in cosi gran martire
Lasciate mi morire!

Leave me here that I may die.
And should you wish, what comfort could you give me
in so heavy a misfortune, in so great a martyrdom.
Leave me here that I may die.

Dove e la fede, che tanto mi giuravi?
Cosi ne l'alta sede tu mi ripon de gl'avi?
Son queste le corone ondem'adorni il crine?
Questi gli scettri sono? Questi le gemme e gl'ori?
Lasciarmi in abbandono, a fera che mi stracci e mi divori?
Ah Teseo mio, lascerai tu morire.
Invan piagendo, invan gridando aita.
La misera Arianna ch'a te fidossi e ti die' gloria e vita?

Where are the promises which you so abundantly swore to me?
Where is the lofty throne on which you promised to seat me?
Is this the crown that was to be placed on my head?
Are these the gleaming sceptres? Are these the jewels and
golden ornaments?
Left abandoned for wild beasts to rend and devour.
O Theseus mine, he leaves me that I may die.
Useless is my weeping, useless are my cries for aid.
Do you think of the miserable Arianna who trusted you so
well, to whom you owe your fame and your life?

The four-part madrigal cycle 'Lamento d'Arianna' originated as an arioso of the heroine in Monteverdi's opera L'Arianna. It became so popular that the composer reworked it for five voices and included it in his sixth book of madrigals.

Monteverdi, master that he was, combined the various aspects of music making (phrase lengths, text treatment, etc.) into one unified symbol, so that any attempt at isolating and treating these and other characteristics individually is bound to seem somewhat disjointed and artificial. Nonetheless, in order to focus our attention on specifics we knowingly take that which is in flux and risk treating it as a non-dynamic phenomenon. So much for the apologia; on to the music.

The most striking aspect of 'Lasciate mi morire' once we get beyond the pure sensuality of the sounds themselves (chromatic harmonies, the richness of sonorities, and the like) is the form of the piece - ABABA. This is an extension of Monteverdi's treatment of the text, itself an ABA, which with the repetition of the last two thirds or so of the text becomes an ABABA.

Part A, 'Lasciate mi morire' (Leave me that I may die) is an almost solipsistic statement-plea directed exclusively inwardly. The B section 'E chi volete voi...in cosi gran martire,' however, has in it the presence of 'the other' as well. While granting that these statements are clearly rhetorical, it is equally clear that these ideas are no longer exclusively self-directed.

Next; a definition of the boundaries of these sections. The first A lasts from measures 1-8. B starts with the last three eighth notes of m.8 and extends through the first half of m. 15. The second A, a repeat of the first half of A' lasts from m. 15 1/2 through m. 19 1/2. The second B begins at the start of m. 19 (III) and continues through m. 26. This is not an exact repeat of B'. (It's changes will be discussed further on.) Finally, m. 27-35 (the end of the piece) we have the closing A which, with the exception of two minor changes is identical to the opening.

Before continuing we should mention certain stylistic characteristics of the piece. Monteverdi manipulates textures by varying the number of voices in the different sections. There are three-voice and five-voice segments, and imitative and chordal sections. The number of voices however, is not the determining factor in Monteverdi's choice of imitative or non-imitative textures. The lowest voice functions primarily as a bass, indeed, is even listed as such in the score, although in the second half of the A section the movement is more horizontal. Further, there are plagal-like cadences indicating the composer's awareness of the past as well as the future. And finally, the chromaticism which is of the starkest nature (to be dealt with fully, later on). All in all, the characteristics of a late transitional madrigal.

The opening A, m. 1-8, repeats the plea 'Lasciate mi morire' twice. The effect of the words is achieved through both harmonic and rhythmic means. The opening tone-painting dissonance of 'Lascia' (to leave) is enhanced by the spacing


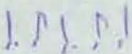
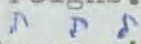
of the voices (the upper two voices and the lowest one), and the 2-3 suspension between the canto and the bass, still further heightened by the quinto's having already reached the bass' point of resolution - G. Rhythmically speaking we are truly left in the air by the sheer length of the notes on 'Lascia' - a dotted half in the upper voices and a half note in the bass, as well as their position vis-a-vis the bar-line (tactus). Similarly, the harmonic rhythm stresses beats 1, 2, and 3 of the first measure, a little less on beat 4 (owing to the nature of the resolution of a suspension) and finally next again on beat 2 of the following measure (m. 2).

The skip downwards, and as such inwards towards the other voices, of a fourth in the canto and quinto makes the plea that much more so personal, especially with the suspension on the 'mo' of 'morire' (last eighth note of m. 2). (The effect of a major chord - A major - on 'morire' is one of enhancement, not diminution. After all, this is not a simple case of happy-major and sad-minor.) The finality that 'morire' carries with it is further expressed, rhythmically by mo ri re (the harmonic rhythm slows down).

The second more urgent plea begins with the stark D against the sustained A major as the beginning of a filled in descending fourth. This is imitated in the tenor, and following that, the bass. While the bass begins its downward fourth, the canto in a quasi-inversional motive ascends and fills in a minor third, B-D, followed by (m. 5) the alto's E-G and the quinto's G-Bb (though not as literal an imitation - the G# is lacking). Throughout this second

half of A the harmonic rhythm stays constant as quarter notes drive onward for over four measures. What slows us down are the feeling that we are approaching the cadence (achieved by the movement to g minor - the F to F# in the alto, m. 5), the whole note motion in the bass, and most important, the canto's *mo ri re*.



The first four measures of the first section are in A (g is a contrapuntal prolongation) while in the second half we move back again to A (where we've really been all along) and finally to our tonic, D, in m. 8. The most important suspensions that we find here are the 2-3s in m. 1, 2, and 7 where Monteverdi illustrates in an harmonic framework the 2-3, 4-3, and 7-6 suspensions are essentially the same. The 2-3 (quinto D, tenor E) becomes the 4-3 (quinto D, alto and bass A) with the addition of the root, and the 7-6, which is merely an inversion of the 2-3 (quinto D, tenor E below it).

The first B section beginning with the first half of m. 8 and lasting through the first half of m. 15 is set for the lower three voices. The most striking element here is Monteverdi's treatment of the text through the harmonic rhythm. Adding the tenor  figure to its imitation in the alto and bass, we have the sum total of seven straight eighth notes, followed by  to slow it down. The choppyness of the thought fragments (lines 2 and 3 of the text) is reflected in the start and stop motion described above. The only calm moment is appropriately enough 'conforte' - m. 10, 11 - where the calm of even quarter notes reigns. Immediately, however, in m. 12, we are back to the  in *co-si* kind of motion. The

only other quarter note motion in this first B section is in m. 15 where the rhyme between 'martire' and 'morire', accompanied by the musical 'rhyme' of A major and A major is of predominant significance.

The first section prolonged A and finally, at the cadence, moved to D. This section first has a g feeling to it (m. 9 through beat 2 of m. 11). But when the F major of m. 12 is expanded to a d minor $\frac{6}{3}$ we feel right at home in d through m. 14. Finally, with the B natural in m. 15 (more about that chord later) we move back to A.

The outstanding tonal expression here is in m. 15 ('gran'). We find a stunning 9-8, 4-3 suspension on what appears to be an incomplete b minor chord, while the most frequent suspension are of the 7-6 variety (m. 9,13). These along with the harmonic rhythm help slow us down as the cadence nears.

The next section starts out as a repeat of the opening thoughts but half-way through, after four measures, the B section interrupts rhythmically (compare m. 8  to m. 19 ) and harmonically (we get to d minor much sooner this time. The first time it is on beat three of m. 5 while here the d is thrust upon us in m. 19-21. Even though this surprise is a function of the abbreviated A section it is a tonal shock, and interruption, nonetheless).

As in B' there is a bi-polar tonal center in operation (in B' we have g-D, while here in B" it is d-A). Continuing the parallel structure, we now have C major (m. 22, expanding to an a minor $\frac{6}{3}$ in m.23) and finally, in m. 25, the movement to E major. In this section Monteverdi makes use of all five

voices and the tonality, as was indicated earlier, has shifted down a fourth. As a result the bass is quite low in its range and Monteverdi is able to fully utilize the ranges of the other voices. The same rhythmic ploys are used here as in B', the same types of suspensions. Indeed, the writing is identical but for those things that arise when one adds two extra voices, and some startling new sounds. Compare m. 20 with m. 9 - the half-diminished 7 is now filled out; m. 23 with 13 - we know that this is not a half-diminished 7 but rather an a minor 7 chord; and particularly m. 25 and m. 15 - the C# removes the ambiguity of the F# and A (B and D in m. 15) and tells us that what we had there was basically a b⁶ and what we have here is an f#⁶, a form of step-wise motion with a plagal-like cadence and even some quasi-fauxbourdon stuck in for good measure (specifically measure 25, the bottom four voices). What Music!

Because of the parallelisms with the previous sections the ear, forgetting the modulation at the start of B", expects the opening of the final section to begin with E. What a jolt it is when we are forced back, in m. 27, to A, back to the inevitability of the grief-stricken plea - "Lasciate mi morire". (This moment becomes all the more powerful once we realize that it is here, m. 26-27, that the only real cadence (with no overlapping phrases) occurs. There are two differences between this last plea and the opening one (aside from those that grow naturally out of the differences between a beginning and a recapitulation - m. 26, 27 for example). The most obvious difference is the length

of the last chord. More subtle, however, is the C# in the quinto, m. 28 last eighth note (cf, m. 2,18). The C# replaces the D and thereby removes the possibility of a suspension, implanting within us the acceptance of the finality of this phrase.

What remains to be pointed out are those wonderful moments in the music that make a piece of music so special, so personal. Moments that it is ^{simply} not enough to explain for their significance lies not in how they got there but rather what it is that they do, what they mean to the participant. The C# instead of the D in the quinto of m. 28 has already been pointed out. There is the overlapping of two phrases of text in the bass (m. 10 - 'voi che mi') functioning as a kind of glue between the two musical phrases. There is the marvelous sonority of beat 2, m. 7 with the held canto E against the moving F in the tenor, and also the alto D and tenor imitation (against the A major chord) in measures 3 and 4. Finally, there is the way the feeling of A pervades and dominates (it is the dominant after all) the whole piece so that after the first cadence in D in m. 8 the tension is built up to the final cadence (tonally speaking) and the final D cadence means that much more, not only a resolution of that phrase but essentially of the whole piece as well.

"Dove," third of Arianna's four laments, is a largely chordal work in which the bass (and the tenor when the bass is absent) functions exclusively harmonically. The main events of the piece occur in its tonalities (the treatment of the text does not, however, seem to suffer). The piece is through-composed in accordance with the text. Monteverdi does, however, repeat the last third or so of the text and this is, of course, reflected in the music. (The last two sections are strikingly similar in design.)

There are basically two large divisions in the piece - measures 1-27 and m. 28-55 (the end) which correspond to a division in the poem between an advancing stance - demanding answers (in the first half) and one of retreat, aloneness (in the second half), and six smaller ones. Section one lasts from m. 1-12 (lines 1 and 2 of the text) except for the tenor which begins the next section in m. 12. Section two which begins with the tenor in m. 12 and continues through the first half of m. 19 (lines 3- 5 1/2 of the text). The third section begins with the tenor in m. 19 and continues through m. 27 (last half of line 5 in the text). Section four is just the three measures of 28-30 (the first three words of line six in the text). The fifth section begins at m. 31 and extends through m. 42 (lines 6 1/2-8 of the text) while its parallel, section six begins in m. 43 and culminates with the end of the piece in m. 55 (while utilizing the same text as section five). These groupings are by no means rigid and their many subsections sometimes overlap, as we shall see.

Measures 1-6 (first line of the text) is harmonically a prolongation of D (I, contrapuntal iv, I) with an elaborate

exchange of voices in the g minor section (m. 3-5). All parts move together with the exception of the tenor. Measures 7-12 (line 2 of the text) is harmonically the same as the opening six measures. The bass movement is from D to F# (D⁶) to g₃ and back again to D, although in this phrase Monteverdi manipulates a melodic fragment as well (The tenor line in m. 6,7 is picked up and elaborated upon by the canto (m. 7-10) and is in turn imitated almost exactly by the tenor (m. 8-11)). The exchange of voices is present here as well, though to a lesser extent.

The second section is quite declamatory, with the music pretty much going with the text. Again, it is the tenor who, out of step, this time heralds each new idea (m. 12,14,15,16). This section is an enormous, simple step-wise (contrapuntal) prolongation of D. Very rhythmic, *[F.]*, the questions in the text are fired off one after the other, first by the tenor and then imitated in the other voices. The repetition of the rhythm in m. 12,13 and then again in a slightly modified more intense form (both rhythmically and by virtue of its being repeated three times) in measures 14-16, make for quite a powerfully expressive interpretation of the text.

Although the next line of text (line 5) might suggest the end of the old section and the beginning of a new one, Monteverdi is too sensitive a composer not to realize that the poet's goal for the last two lines has been 'Lasciarmi', and so, just as, in this interpretation, the thoughts form a sort of run-on sentence, so does the music. After all this driving, rhythmic insistent music (*PPP + D. P*) we are left up in the air with a dotted half note on (what else) 'Lasciare'.

10

e chi vo-le-te voi che mi con-for-te in co-sì du-ra sor-te in co-sì

15

du-ra sor-te in co-sì gran mar-ti-re La-ra sor-te in co-sì gran mar-ti-re

20

scia-te mi mo-ri-re e chi vo-le-te voi scia-te mi mo-ri-re e chi vo-le-te voi

che mi con-for-te in co-sì du-ra sor-te in co-sì che mi con-for-te in co-sì du-ra sor-te che mi con-for-te in co-sì du-ra sor-te

25

gran mar-ti-re La scia-te mi mo-ri-re in co-sì gran mar-ti-re La scia-te mi mo-ri-re in co-sì gran mar-ti-re La in co-sì gran mar-ti-re La scia-te mi mo-ri-re

30

La scia-te mi mo-ri-re La scia-te mi mo-ri-re La scia-te mi mo-ri-re La scia-te mi mo-ri-re

Lamento d'Arianna

Lasciatemi morire

1

Prima parte

(Lento)

Canto *pp* La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re La -

Quinto *pp* La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re

Alto *pp* La - scia - te - mi

Tenore *pp* La - scia - te -

Basso *pp* La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re La -

La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re

La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re

La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re

mi La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re e chi vo -

La - scia - te - mi mo - ri - re

Dove, dove è la fede

Terza parte

(Andante)

Canto *f* Do - ve do - ve è la fe - de Che tan - to mi giu - ra -

Quinto *f* Do - ve do - ve è la fe - de Che tan - to mi giu - ra - vi Che

Alto *f* Do - ve do - ve è la fe - de Che tan - to mi giu - ra -

Tenore *f* Do - ve do - ve è la fe - de Che

Basso *f* Do - ve do - ve è la fe - de Che tan - to mi giu - ra -

5

vi Co - si ne l'al - ta se - de Tu mi ri -

tan - to mi giu - ra - vi Co - si ne l'al - ta se - de Tu mi ri -

vi Co - si ne l'al - ta se - de Tu mi ri -

tan - to mi giu - ra - vi Co - si co - si ne l'al - ta se - de

vi Co - si ne l'al - ta se - de Tu mi ri -

10

pon de gl'a - vi *p* Son que - ste le co -

pon de gl'a - vi *p* Son que - ste le co -

pon de gl'a - vi *p* Son que - ste le co -

Tu mi ri - pon de gl'a - vi *p* Son que - ste le co - ro - ne

pon de gl'a - vi *p* Son que - ste le co -

ro - ne On - de m'a_dor - ni il cri - ne? Que - sti li See - tri

ro - ne On - de m'a_dor - ni il cri - ne? Que - sti li See - tri

ro - ne On - de m'a_dor - ni il cri - ne? Que - sti li See - tri

On - de m'a_dor - ni il cri - ne? Que - sti li See - tri so - no?

ro - ne On - de m'a_dor - ni il cri - ne? Que - sti li See - tri

CRUSC.

so - no? Queste leggemee gl'o - ri? Lasciar - mi in a - ban - do - no A

so - no? Queste leggemee gl'o - ri? Lasciar - mi in a - ban - do - no

so - no? Queste leggemee gl'o - ri?

Queste leggemee gl'o - ri? A fe -

so - no? Queste leggemee gl'o - ri? La - sciar - mi in a - ban - do -



fe - ra che mi strae - cie mi di - vo - ri La - sciar - mi in a - ban -

La - sciar - mi in a - ban - do - no A fe - ra che mi strae - cie mi di -

A fe - ra che mi strae - cie mi di -

ra che mi strae - cie mi di - vo - ri

no A fe - ra che mi strae - cie

1) Nell'originale:  2) Nell'originale: 

14

25

1)

30

- do_no A fe - ra che mi strac - cie mi di vo - ri Ah Te - seo Ah Te - seo mi - o

- vo - ri che mi strac - cie mi di vo - ri Ah Te - seo mi - o

- vo - ri Ah Te - seo mi - o

A fe - ra che mi strac - cie mi di vo - ri Ah Te - seo mi - o

e mi di - vo - ri Ah Te - seo mi - o

35

Lascie - rai tu mo - ri - re in van pian - gendo in van gri - dan - do a -

Lascie - rai tu mo - ri - re in van pian - gendo in van gri - dan - do a -

Lascie - rai tu mo - ri - re in van pian - gendo in van gri - dan - do a -

40

i - ta La mi - se - ra A - rian - na ch'a te fi - dos - si e ti die' gloria

i - ta La mi - se - ra A - rian - na ch'a te fi - dos - si e ti die' gloria

i - ta La mi - se - ra A - rian - na ch'a te fi - dos - si e ti die' glo -

1) Nell'originale: manca qui la pausa di $\frac{1}{2}$

VI

Ah Te - seo Ah Te - seo mi - o

Handwritten musical score for the first system, measures 45-50. It features five staves with vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are: "Lascie-rai tu mo-ri-re in van pian-". The music includes dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *p* (piano), and articulation marks like slurs and accents. The vocal parts are in treble clef, and the piano part is in bass clef.

Handwritten musical score for the second system, measures 51-55. The lyrics continue: "- gen-do in van gri-dan-do a-i-ta La mi-se-ra A-rian-". The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The vocal parts are in treble clef, and the piano part is in bass clef.

Handwritten musical score for the third system, measures 56-60. The lyrics are: "na ch'a te fi-dos-si e ti die' glo-ria e vi-ta.". The music includes dynamic markings and articulation marks. The vocal parts are in treble clef, and the piano part is in bass clef.

The quarter note motion in the bass does not at all detract from the sustained effect on top (in reality it enables us to survive this potential chaos and continue onward).

Especially poignant is the tone painting here, not only the 2-3 suspension between canto and bass in measures 17,18 but the extraordinary C# in the bass against the C natural (which it must be and not the editorial C# which is far too glib and was probably added simply to agree with that expressive C# in the bass) in the quinto. And Again in m. 17 with the C# still in the bass and the C natural now in the canto, (Picture how, in the hands of a lesser composer, the dotted, driving motion in the first half of this phrase, would have inanely been culminated) before finally ending up (m. 19) on E, the tonal center of the following section (#3).

And so, after 18 measures of D we are thrust into an unsettling E^{6/5}_{4#5} only to be torn asunder (rather tenderly, if we are to believe the music) by 'wild beasts'. In this contrasting non-chordal section, two motives are interwoven over the pedal tone in the bass (what more harmonic function can a bass serve). The tenor introduces one of them (m. 19) with 'a fera'; a descending line from the E down to the G#. The other lines which appears to be a derivative of the tenor's line is introduced by the alto in measure 20. It starts on a D (one of the two notes that the tenor has missed - F# is the other in this mode with a raised third and a flat 6 and 7) then up to E before filling in the octave (minus the initial D and the F# which we don't get until the end of the phrase in measure 26), on the text 'Lasciare'. But wait, this line is familiar, and well it should be. It was already introduced

by the canto in m.17, at the end of the previous section, and so it is the tenor who is imitating in cleverly subtle overlap of phrases. More significant, however, is that when we hear this phrase distinctly for the first time (in m. 20,21 in the alto) we find only C naturals. This, of course, supports our decisions in m. 17,18 in favor of the C naturals (and better music, as well).

In this section we find many 7-6s (m. 19 between canto and tenor, and m. 22 between quinto and alto) and 2-3s (m. 21, 22 between quinto and tenor, and m.24,25 between alto and canto. (Although these are not suspensions - the notes are repeated rather than tied - they are intervallically the same as is their musical function.) And finally, the $\begin{smallmatrix} 6 & 5 \\ 4 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ between tenor and quinto in measures 26 and 27. Here, in measure 27 we have our first full cadence (no internal cadence), which divides the piece in half. (This type of play between 'normal' and internal cadences plays a crucial role in Monteverdi's technique and in his ability to always keep interest in his music at its freshest.)

The second half of the piece begins here with a mournful cry for the beloved, Teseo. After all that the very first sound we hear is a solitary C from the bass. That it becomes the third of an a minor sonority as the other voices enter only enhances the already achieved deceptive effect. The pathos of the moment is captured and reflected in the descent of the bass, particularly the choice of Bb, and through to A major, by the 7-6 suspension between the canto and the bass in m. 28,29, and especially by the repeat of the text in the canto with its upward leap to

the D and then down again a sixth to the F and E which gives us an, in this case, more expressive ⁶ with an anticipation ₄ rather than another simple 2-3 suspension.

Although there is a connection both in text and music, between the preceding three measures (28-30) and the coming section, I have considered it a section unto itself due to the overpowering similarity between this coming section and the one which follows it. These final two sections are identical in text and in treatment of text, the repeat begins after Ah Teseo mio). Further, the style of this lament, with its lower four parts acting as a sort of foil for a most melodic canto line, does not reoccur.

Section five is scored for the middle three voices, quinto alto, and tenor (the tenor as indicated earlier moves most definitely in an harmonic fashion) and its beginning bears a striking resemblance to m. 28-30. Specifically, the lowest voice duplicates the bass notes (of m. 28-30) an octave higher, while the progression starts out as simply C major (measure 28 started out with a simple C, you recall, and by extension, C major as well) and then expands to a minor ⁶ ₃ before descending, again, through Bb to A major.

The intensity and futility of Arianna's weeping is reflected both in the speeded up harmonic rhythm (F F F) of the canto in m. 33-35, especially heightened by the imitation in the lower voices, and by the intensely chromatic harmonies - A - d with a touch of D (beat 3 of m. 34, F# in the quinto) then the stunning B - e - E, and finally a basically a tonality. Once again, Monteverdi interprets the text as a run-on thought and pushes the music onward, in m. 36. This

time it is the tenor who continues, with 'La misera', and the ensuing imitation the quinto and alto. Here it is the tonality, however, which bears the main burden of thrusting forth and continuing the musical thought (with the neighbor motion of the $G\# - V_6$). The ensuing cadence in d (m. 38) doesn't last for long as the irony and the ambiguity of Arianna's trust is expressed by the conflicting $C\#$ and C natural we heard previously. This time, however, the conflict is not repeated as it was in m.17,18. (Monteverdi never abuses us with too much of a good thing.)

The final section is almost identical to ~~section~~ to section five. The text and its treatment are the same. There are five voices now instead of three and, as a result, some lines get divided up into more than one part. (Compare m. 33 quinto of 'in van piangendo' to m. 45, the tenor. Notice particularly the way in which the rhythms are changed allowing the top voice, here it is the canto, to maintain the contour of the line as it was stated in the previous section.) Another change of course is that of key. In the previous section we began in C and moved to A. In this section we begin in F and move to D, thus enabling Monteverdi to duplicate the previous section and still end up in the desired key - D. The only other change is the elongation of m.41 into measures 53 and 54, thus facilitating a slowing down and enabling us to enjoy the conclusion of the piece.