

“RECHT BITTER UND DOCH SÜßE”:
TEXTUAL AND MUSICAL EXPRESSION OF MYSTICAL LOVE
IN GERMAN BAROQUE MEDITATIONS OF CHRIST’S PASSION¹

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The texts of many German Baroque meditations of Christ’s Passion contain mystical elements. Musicological literature and concert programs often point out the worldly overtones of such texts and their musical settings. Expressions of the love between the crucified Jesus and the faithful soul in such works as Heinrich Schütz’s *Cantiones Sacrae*, Dieterich Buxtehude’s Passion cantatas and Johann Sebastian Bach’s Passions and cantatas have been said to evoke associations with worldly love.² It is the aim of this article to investigate the origins and theological backgrounds of these expressions of mystical love in poetry and music. In order to allow a comparative analysis of text and music, the mystical love discourse in both media will receive the same analytical approach. Both will be laid out as analyses of the constituting elements of affective expression. My theological sources are taken from the private

¹This article, which was first read as a paper at the conference “Passion und Affekt” of the Wolfenbütteler Arbeitskreis für Barockforschung, forms a summary of my dissertation *Von Laura zum himmlischen Bräutigam. Der petrarkistische Diskurs in Dichtung und Musik des deutschen Barock* (Ph.D. diss. Utrecht University 2003). I wish to express my gratitude to Anne Leahy for her corrections of my English and to Norbert Bartelsman for digitally processing my musical examples.

²See, for instance, Walter Blankenburg, “Mystik in der Musik J.S. Bachs,” in Walter Blankenburg and Renate Steiger, eds. *Theologische Bach-Studien I*. (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1987), 57; Alfred Dürr, *Die Johannes-Passion von Johann Sebastian Bach. Entstehung, Überlieferung, Werkeinführung* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1999), 661; Heide Volckmar-Waschk, “Die Cantiones Sacrae” von Heinrich Schütz: *Entstehung-Texte-Analysen* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), 157ff.

library of Johann Sebastian Bach, which contains many representative examples of Lutheran devotional literature.³

Between the late fifteenth until well into the seventeenth century, European love poetry was influenced by Petrarchism. Because Petrarch's beloved Laura was a married woman, the Petrarchan love discourse concentrates on the expression of the ambivalent feelings associated with an unattainable love. Principal themes are the love complaint, love yearning, and the aches of love. Sonnet 132 from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* is a typical example of the Petrarchan poetic style, which was often imitated in all Western European countries:

S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?
 Ma, s'egli è Amor, per Dio che cosa e quale?
 Se bona, ond'è l'effetto aspro mortale?
 Se ria, ond'è sì dolce ogni tormento?

S'a mia voglia ardo, ond'è 'l pianto e lamento?
 S'a mal mio grado, il lamentar che vale?
 O viva morte, o diletto male,
 Come puoi tanto in me, s'io no 'l consento?

E s'io consento, a gran torto mi doglio.
 Fra sí contrari venti in frale barca
 Mi trovo in alto mar, senza governo,

Sí lieve di saver, d'error sí carca,
 Ch'i' medesimo non so quel ch'io mi voglio;
 E tremo a mezza stae, ardendo il verno.

³For an extensive overview of Bach's theological library see Robin A. Leaver, *Bachs theologische Bibliothek: eine kritische Bibliographie* [Bach's Theological Library: A Critical Bibliography], Beiträge zur theologischen Bachforschung 1. (Neuhausen/Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1983).

Can it be love that fills my heart and brain?
 If love, dear God, what is its quality?
 If it is good, why does it torture me?
 If evil, why this sweetness in my pain?

If I burn gladly, why do I complain?
 If I hate burning, why do I never flee?
 O life-in-death, O lovely agony,
 How can you rule me so, if I'm not fain?

And if I'm willing, why do I suffer so?—
 By such contrary wind I'm blown in terror
 In a frail and rudderless bark on open seas,

Ballasted all with ignorance and error.
 Even my own desire I do not know;
 I burn in winter and in high summer freeze.⁴

Throughout his poetry, Petrarch depicts his loved one as an almost angelic figure, himself as a restlessly longing lover, and love as an emotional paradox: in the sweet sufferings of love sickness, tears and sighs are accompanied by bliss. Although both courtly and mystical poets of the Middle Ages had used similar imagery in the expression of love,⁵ Petrarch was the first poet to make *dolendi voluptas* (pleasant agony) the primary theme of his love poetry. His work greatly influenced love poetry from the Italian Renaissance onwards. The manifold imitations of Petrarch's poetic expression of bittersweet love, however, soon led to the conventionalization of love imagery. Already in fifteenth-century Italy, Petrarchism had become a well-defined idiom of metaphors and rhetorical devices: mannerist and baroque love poetry is characterized by accumulations of antitheses and oxymorons—icy fire, pleasant madness, voluntary imprisonment, *dolce amaro*.

⁴Translation taken from Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 5.

⁵For more about Petrarch's poetic predecessors, see Forster, 95; Hans Pyritz, *Paul Flemings Liebeslyrik: Zur Geschichte des Petrarkismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 124–34.

The musical madrigal, which also experienced great popularity from the fifteenth century onwards, was closely connected to Petrarchan love poetry. This genre, which was characterized by a free poetic form, employed Petrarchan texts almost exclusively. The madrigal's musical idiom shared the visual and rhetorical qualities of its texts, the Petrarchan oxymorons of love sickness and the imagery of physical beauty gaining conscientious musical equivalents in pictorial word paintings and highly affective modes of expression.⁶ Just like the poetic motifs that they depicted, these madrigalisms developed into an ever more standardized idiom, which has sometimes even been described as clichéd,⁷ during the second half of the sixteenth century.

Heinrich Schütz studied with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice from 1608 to 1612. He concluded his study with the publication of a collection of madrigals. The second work in this collection, "O dolcezza amarissime d'amore" ("Oh most bitter sweetness of love," *SWV2*), demonstrates the conjunction between pictorial and affective expressions of love in the madrigal. In the first lines, the Petrarchan oxymoron of bittersweetness is represented musically in an affective double motif (Appendix, Example 1).⁸ Slow tempo and sharp dissonance are combined with rising melodies and movement in parallel thirds. On the text "d'amore," rhythmically complementary motifs in sixteenths appear in the alto and tenor voices, crossing the on-going accumulation of dissonance both musically and affectively.

⁶About the distinction between pictorial and affective madrigalisms, see Gary Tomlinson, *Monteverdi and the End of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 385.

⁷For example, see Alfred Einstein *The Italian Madrigal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 648.

⁸The "Doppelmotiv" was first described by Hans Joachim Moser, *Heinrich Schütz. Sein Leben und Werk* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1954), 230. About this fragment see also Siegfried Schmalzriedt, "'Quel dolce amaro': Manieristische Ästhetik und Kompositionsweise in Schütz' Madrigalbuch von 1611" in Dietrich Berke and Dorothee Hanemann, eds. *Alte Musik als ästhetische Gegenwart: Bericht über den internationalen musikwissenschaftlichen Kongress Stuttgart 1985* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1987), 41; Wolfram Steinbeck, "Lyrik und Dramatik im italienischen Madrigal: Zur Sprachvertonung und Musiksprache bei Schütz und Monteverdi" in Anne Ørbæk Jensen and Ole Kongsted, eds. *Heinrich Schütz und die Musik in Dänemark zur Zeit Christians IV. Bericht über die wissenschaftliche Konferenz in Kopenhagen 10-14 November 1985* (Kopenhagen: Engstrøm & Sødring, 1989), 220ff.

Whereas the dissonance and slow tempi can be considered expressions of sadness and pain, the parallel thirds and rising melodies seem to signify the sweetness and joy of love. The auditive medium of music here allows for a Petrarchan mode of expression that emulates the madrigal's text: in this affective madrigalism, love's aches and love's joy can actually be perceived simultaneously. Such well-considered, stylized text expressions are typical for the late madrigal.

Petrarchan poetry and the madrigal were not only commonly popular in the Italian Renaissance—they were also simultaneously disseminated throughout Europe. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, large numbers of both genres were imported into Germany, and then published—or new ones created by cooperating poets and composers.⁹ This simultaneous importation, distribution, and composition of love poetry and madrigals was also reflected in German art theory. In baroque music theory—*musica poetica*—the expression of text and musical rhetoric had prime importance. The madrigal was described in both poetics and in music theory as a genre that distinguished itself on the one hand through its expressive possibilities and, on the other, by a close internalized connection between poetry and music.¹⁰ Treatises

⁹Examples are Martin Opitz's madrigal texts for Heinrich Schütz, Kaspar Stieler's for Christoph Bernhard, and Paul Fleming's, Gottfried Finckelthaus's, Martin Opitz's, and Justus Georg Schottelius's for Andreas Hammerschmidt; poet-composers Hans Leo Haßler and Johann Hermann Schein wrote their own madrigal texts.

¹⁰For instance, see Caspar Ziegler: "Ich muß aber zum Beschluß erinnern / das kein einziges genus carminis in der Deutschen Sprache sich besser zu der Musick schicke / als ein Madrigal. Denn darinnen läst sich ein Concert am allerbesten ausführen / und weil die Worte so fein in ihrer natürlichen construction gesetzt werden können / so kömbt auch die Harmony umb so viel desto besser und anmuthiger. Zwar / es sol sich ein Sonnet zur Composition auch nicht gar übel schicken: Aber das wil von dem Poeten vorhero sehr wohl ausgearbeitet und mit gröstem Zwange ungezwungen seyn. [...] Weil nun ein Madrigal viel freyer ist / und sich der Reime halber so sehr nicht binden darff / auch der natürlichen Art zu reden näher kömt / so mein ich / sol es einem Componisten auch viel leichter und besser auff seinem Chartelle / als ein Sonnet / fallen" (*Von den Madrigalen Einer schönen und zur Musik bequemsten Art Verse Wie sie nach der Italianer Manier in unserer Deutschen Sprache auszuarbeiten* [Wittenberg, 1685], 16f.).

concerning *musica poetica* cited many elements of the madrigal style as examples of effective musical text expression.¹¹

In addition to its stylistic importance for the expression of love in poetry and music, Petrarchism had an extensive influence on the contemporary understanding and concept of love. In poetical and music theory treatises, love was described with Petrarchan imagery as a bittersweet affect. Enumerations of metaphors under the entry “love” in the poetic “treasure house” (*Schatzkammer*¹²) *Aerarium Poeticum* by Michael Bergmann (1676), for instance, all originate from Petrarchan poetry. Love is a bittersweet affect, and Bergmann lists a long chain of Petrarchan metaphors, which include:

The sweet yoke of love. The inner battle. A well-tasting poison.
The sickness without advice. The glow / flames / torture of
love. The bitter-sweet pain of love. You take / oh bride! my
peace from me / you tear my heart towards you... You taste the
sweet food of love. The hot arrows of the small archer / they
sting far too deep in me / since it has been so They have
gradually melted my body and senses. His heart breaks inside
his bosom. My heart remains yours / your heart remains mine.¹³

Like Petrarchan poetry, this discursive treasure house contains elements of a sacred as well as a worldly love language; the last citation, for instance, is based on verses 2:16/6:3 of the Song of Songs. The imagery under other entries similarly shows the Petrarchan

¹¹For instance, see Joachim Burmeister's *Musica poetica* (Rostock, 1606), Christoph Bernhard's *Tractatus compositionis Augmentatus* (1648) and Athanasius Kicher's *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome, 1650), German translation by Andreas Hirsch, Schwäbisch Hall, 1662).

¹²The *Schatzkammern* were poetic and discursive encyclopedias published either within poetic treatises or independently and contained lists of metaphors and expressions taken from the work of famous German poets. These lists were conceived as a practical source of inspiration for beginning poets. Having this function, they were of crucial importance for the formation of poetic discourses; Ferdinand van Ingen has labeled this process “structured intertextuality” (“Strukturierte Intertextualität. Poetische Schatzkammern und Verwandtes” in W. Kühlmann and W. Neuber, eds., *Intertextualität in der Frühen Neuzeit. Studien zu ihren theoretischen und praktischen Perspektiven* (Frankfurt: am Main, 1994), 279–308).

¹³Selection from Michael Bergmann, *Deutsches AERARIUM POETICUM oder Poetische Schatzkammer* (Jena, 1676), 718–28.

origin of love discourse. Lovemaking is described as a “sweet battle,”¹⁴ tears as “love’s attributes” or “the sources of desire” flowing from “the wide brook of wooer’s eyes.”¹⁵ Eyes, “the light / in which Love lights its fire,” are, according to Petrarchan habit, compared to suns or stars, but also—in the tradition of the Song of Songs—to dove’s eyes.¹⁶

The *musical* affect of love was considered to be bittersweet as well. In his famous treatise *Musurgia Universalis*, Athanasius Kircher describes this “restlessness of mind” (“Gemüts=beunruhigung”) extensively, as one of the main human affections to be expressed in music.¹⁷ Kircher considers love, joy, and sadness as the three primary affections, for whose musical expression he gives comprehensive directions. The *affectus doloris* and the *affectus laetitiae* are in straight opposition to each other; the five remaining affects, which Kircher arranges in antithetical order, can be classified within the emotional range between these two. The *affectus amoris*, however, contains an implicit antithesis. Kircher describes at length how the “passions” of a lover are “opposed to each other”:

Therefore one can find miraculous *affectus* in lovers / are sad and yet are glad / are cheerful and grieve at the same time / do something bad / and yet are cheerful / something good / and have fears. [...] From here originate the Contrari= *motus* and *affectiones* in lovers / hope and give up hope / hate and love / be happy and sad / yearn and pain / laugh and cry / talk and be silent / blush and turn pale / inflame and freeze / as the thoughts are with the loved one / yes / and this is even more astonishing / they hate and love the loved one at the same time / love because of the beauty / hate because of their misfortune / like a secretive thief and a cunning murderer. Therefore they

¹⁴Bergmann, 614.

¹⁵Bergmann, 750ff.

¹⁶Bergmann, 515–20.

¹⁷Athanasius Kircher, *Musurgia Universalis* (Rome, 1650). A large part of the *Musurgia Universalis* describes the expression of affect in music (*musica pathetica*). Exactly this part of Kircher’s treatise became known in Germany through Andreas Hirsch’s summarizing translation (Andreas Hirsch, *Kircherus Jesuïta Germanus Germaniae redonatus sive Artis Magnae de Consono & Dißono Ars Minor Das ist Philosophischer Extract und Auszug aus Athanasii Kircheri Musurgia universali in 6 Bücher verf.*, Schwäbisch Hall, 1662). Concerning the “restlessness of mind” see Hirsch, 318.

are at the same time scared and comforted / would like to love
and not to love / not / because they do not want to die / would
like / because of the value of loving / but yet they let themselves
be stolen and killed / so that they will be free while being
captured / alive while dead.¹⁸

Kircher's conception of love is typically Petrarchan: the lover simultaneously experiences love's lust and love's pain, he is involuntarily surrendered to his own contrary emotions and does not know whether to love or to hate the object of his or her affection. This passage reads almost like a Petrarchan poem; especially the last sentences are reminiscent of Petrarch's sonnet 134.¹⁹ In musical expressions of love, Kircher goes on, parameters of joy should be accompanied by parameters of sadness; as role models of musical love expression he mentions secular and sacred madrigals by Abbatini, Gesualdo, and Palestrina.

The definition of love by Hamburg music theorist Johann Mattheson shows that this musical love concept was commonly held until the eighteenth century. Mattheson, too, describes love as the simultaneous experience of differing emotions, whose musical expression should follow its paradoxical nature:

When we consider, furthermore, that love actually results from a scattering of the spirits, we should thus logically direct ourselves towards this in composition, and set out to work with similar proportions of sounds (*intervallis n. diffusis & luxuriantibus*).²⁰

¹⁸Hirsch, 319–21.

¹⁹The last lines of Sonnet 134, "Pace non trovo" ("I find no peace") read:

Veggio senza occhi, e non ho lingua, e grido;
e bramo di perir, e cheggio aita;
et ho in odio me stesso, et amo altrui.

Pascomi di dolor, piangendo rido;
egualmente mi spiace morte e vita:
in questo stato son, donna, per vui.

[I see without eyes, and have no tongue and scream;
and long to die and crie for help;
and hate myself, and love others.

I feed myself with sorrow, laughingly I crie;
I similarly dislike death and life:
In this state I am, lady, because of you.]

²⁰Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739), 16.

This “scattering of the spirits,” the parallel experience of contrary affections, refers to the Petrarchan simultaneity of joy and sadness. Mattheson clarifies his definition of love on the following page, where he remarks that “being sad and being in love are two very closely related things.”²¹

Kircher compares the musical *affectus amoris* to the *affectus pietatis* and to love for God (“*amoris in Deum*”), thus linking the musical expression of worldly love to that of religious love.²² During the German reception of Kircher’s treatise, this connection found a cultural-historical background in the rediscovery of the texts and imagery of medieval mysticism. From the late sixteenth century onwards, personal devotion and the emotional experience of each individual believer became increasingly important in Lutheran theology.²³ As a result of this shifting theological emphasis, mystical imagery and metaphors gained new interest and were now also used in Lutheran devotional texts. The new theological context, however, required a new interpretation of medieval mysticism. The most important aspect of this revision of mystical theology lay in the understanding of mystical unification (*unio mystica*). Whereas Catholicism in the Middle Ages had allowed the borders between God and man to be temporarily lifted in a *unio mystica* that melted both identities into one,²⁴ such an interpretation was impossible in Lutheran thinking. Even the reconciled and justified Lutheran could never completely merge in love with Jesus: whereas man was per definition still sinful in nature—*simul justus et peccator*—Christ’s nature unified the human and the divine. Consequently, a *unio*

²¹Mattheson, 17.

²²Kircher, p. B142.

²³See Martin Brecht ed., *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 113–203; Johannes Wallmann, *Der Pietismus* [Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte. Ein Handbuch, vol. 4, 1] (Göttingen Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), chapter 1.

²⁴See Elke Axmacher, “Mystik und Orthodoxie im Luthertum der Bachzeit,” in Renate Steiger, ed., *Theologische Bachforschung heute. Dokumentation und Bibliografie der Internationalen Arbeitsgemeinschaft für theologische Bachforschung 1976–1996* (Glienicke : Galda und Wilch, 1998), 218: “Der Mystiker, so heißt es insbesondere bei den Vertretern der dialektischen Theologie häufig, hebe die Grenze zwischen Gott und Mensch auf Mystik wird damit zur gefährlichsten, weil sich selbst verbergenden Gestalt menschlicher Hybris, der Sünde gegen Gott schlechthin, die im Seinwollen-wie-Gott besteht.”

mystica in the sense of a transcendent unification eliminating the borders between God and man was unattainable in Lutheran mysticism.²⁵ Contrary to medieval mysticism, which allowed a mystical merger through visions and ecstasy (*raptus mysticus*), the Lutheran *unio mystica* was dialectic: even in mystical unification, man remained man and God remained God.

The desire for a complete mystical union thus created ambivalent feelings for the Lutheran believer. However joyful the prospect of a complete unification with Christ, such a merging of human and divine natures was impossible during the course of sinful earthly life. It could only be foretasted in the communion,²⁶ and completed after a Christian life pattern and a remorseful death.²⁷ For these reasons, the painful yearning for *unio mystica* received more emphasis in Lutheran than in medieval mysticism. Lutheran mystical poetry can be distinguished from medieval mystical lyric by the dark and sad overtones originating from the desire for a “unification of the not unifiable.”²⁸

Lutheran mysticism found a discursive counterpart in Petrarchism, which was similarly based on the expression of ambivalent feelings of love. The contemporary Petrarchan love discourse, which also expressed emotions of bittersweet love desires, formed an adequate mode of expression for Lutheran mystical longing. As Petrarchan and mystical idioms became increasingly intertwined during the

²⁵See Klaus Ebert, ed., *Protestantische Mystik: Von Martin Luther bis Friedrich D. Schleiermacher. Eine Textsammlung* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag, 1996), 55, 66f.; Wolfgang Philipp, “Unio mystica” in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* Digitale Bibliothek 12 (2000), 33883–88. See also Johann Gerhard, *SCHOLAE PIETATIS LIBRI V. Das ist: Fünff Bücher Von Christlicher vnd heilsamer Vnterrichtung* (Jena, 1625), I. Buch, 41: “denn die Sünde scheiden Gott vnd vns voneinander / das solcher geistliche Vereinigung nicht mehr kann statt haben.”

²⁶For an extensive overview of Lutheran communion mysticism see Van Elferen, chapter 5.4.

²⁷See Brecht, 129: “Die Wiederherstellung der Gottebenbildlichkeit und die Wiedergeburt sind stark betont. Auf diese Weise wird die Realisierung des christlichen Lebens angestrebt. Zwar gibt es die Liebesgemeinschaft schon im Diesseits, aber eigentlich vollendet sie sich im ewigen Leben.”

²⁸Elke Axmacher, *Praxis Evangeliorum. Theologie und Frömmigkeit bei Martin Moller 1547–1606*. Forschungen zur Kirchen und Dogmengeschichte, vol. 43 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 214.

seventeenth century, the medieval mystical discourse was not only poetically updated, but also theologically refined according to Lutheran standards. The following poem by Philipp von Zesen expresses the faithful soul's waiting for Jesus, the bridegroom. This theme is expressed in images of lovesickness, and underlined rhetorically with exclamations:

1. ER küsse mich und laße spüren
den angenehmen lippen=tau:
Er laße mich den mund berühren /
auf den ich gäntzlich hoff und bau.
Das hertze mier für angst zerbricht /
Wo mier das widerfähret nicht.

[...]

3. Ach! ach! wie krank ich bin für liebe /
o liebster Buhle / komm doch bald /
und mich nicht länger so betrübe /
Du meines lebens Aufenthalt!
Das hertze mier für angst zerbricht /
Wo mier das widerfähret nicht.

4. Ach! komm zu hülfe meinem hertzen!
Ach! ach! wie bist du mir so gram:
Ach lindre meine liebes=schmertzen!
o Jesus! schönster Bräutigam.
Das hertze mier für angst zerbricht /
Wo mier das widerfähret nicht.²⁹

1. Come, kiss me, and let me feel
the pleasant dew of lips:
Let me touch the mouth /
onto which I build all my hopes
My heart will break for fear /
When I cannot experience this.

[...]

²⁹Philipp von Zesen, *Deutscher Helicon* (Hamburg, 1641), 168f.

3. Oh! oh! how sick I am for love /
 Oh dearest beloved, do come quickly /
 and sadden me no more /
 You, my life's residence!
 My heart will break for fear /
 When I cannot experience this.

4. Oh! come to the rescue of my heart!
 Oh! oh! how you are so angry with me:
 Oh lessen the pangs of my love!
 O Jesus! most beautiful bridegroom.
 My heart will break for fear /
 When I cannot experience this.

The complete linguistic system of Petrarchism is employed here in a Lutheran expression of mystical desire; the only distinction from secular love poetry is the identity of the loved one.

A similar mixture of mystical and Petrarchan modes of expression can be noticed in contemporary theological discourse. Theologian Heinrich Müller, whose texts influenced Buxtehude and Bach, stresses that "sighs and tears" are signs of true love for God. In making this statement, he refers to the Psalms and to the Song of Songs:

As the hart panteth after the water brooks / so panteth my soul after thee, O God. When the Holy Spirit is in your heart / then, through the word (which is also called a fire) he will light such a fire in your soul / that she starts to burn for the love of God: From this fire many strong sparks will shoot / those are the sighs and tears / which flow from God into God / and often the soul's thirst after God and heaven is so big / that the person does not know / what and how he is / without feeling inside an ardent desire for God / and a grave sorrow for all creatures.³⁰

I want to search for him in my **bed** / Song of Songs 3. in my heart / in which he has his bed: with fervor I want to search for him / with sighs and with tears / he will let me find him in the

³⁰Heinrich Müller, *Himmlicher Liebes-Kuß Oder Übung deß wahren Christenthums fließend aus der Erfahrung Göttlicher Liebe* [...] (Frankfurt a. M., 1669), 266f.

end: then he will hold me in the arms of faith / and not let me go. He loves my soul / He is my Jesus. **I will not leave my Jesus.**³¹

The Psalm verses referring to the desire for God are contemplated in isolation, and emotionally intensified with love imagery. The longing for God, which is depicted explicitly as love desire, is thereby lifted to the foreground. Various important topics in Lutheran theology—love, faith, devotion—are thus led back to the loving desire of every individual believer. Because such desire was the primary theme of contemporary love poetry, the two discourses were integrated almost inseparably in German baroque mystical texts.

Since the Passion and death of Jesus formed the ultimate, though paradoxical proof of the trinitarian God to mankind, love was the core of Martin Luther's *theologia crucis*. Through the justifying sacrifice of his son, God showed man his endless, reconciling grace and love; the loving agony of Christ was therefore the key to the Lutheran concept of reconciliation (*Versöhnung*). This grace-filled love also formed the foundation for the Lutheran meditation of the Passion: "so that we look upon the Passion of Christ as a clear mirror of his heartfelt, burning love for us."³²

With theology's turn towards the internalization of devotion and its renewed reception of medieval mysticism, love came to be heavily emphasized in Passion theology of the seventeenth century.³³ Mystical love imagery was used to underline this theme in theological discourse. The love shown to the believer in Christ's Passion was emotionally ambiguous: the crucifixion of Christ meant at once sorrow and redemption, undeserved grace and joyful reconciliation, and

³¹Heinrich Müller, *Geistliche Erquick=Stunden Oder Dreybundert Haus= und Tisch=Andachten* (Frankfurt a.M., 1672), 968f.

³²Johann Gerhard, *Erklärung der Historien des Leidens unnd Sterbens unsers HErrn Christi Jesu nach den vier Evangelisten Also angestellet daß wir dadurch zur Erkenntnis der Liebe Christi erwecket werden unnd am innerlichen Menschen seliglich zunehmen mögen* (Jena, 1611), fol. Ciiij.

³³About the theological importance of love in Lutheran Passion meditations of the seventeenth century, see Elke Axmacher, "Aus Liebe will mein Heyland sterben" in *Untersuchungen zum Wandel des Passionsverständnisses im frühen 18. Jahrhundert* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänslers-Verlag, 1984) (Beiträge zur theologischen Bachforschung, vol. 2), 206ff.

the believer experienced both remorse and love because of Jesus' death. The Lutheran love discourse, based as it was upon a synthesis of mystical and Petrarchan idioms, expressed precisely this affective ambiguity. The continuous simultaneity of joyful and sad affects in Petrarchism corresponds with the emotional substance of Lutheran Passion exegesis; in both cases, the primary theme is a bittersweet love.

Changing perspectives within Lutheran Christology supported the use of this love discourse in Passion meditations. Elke Axmacher has shown that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Christ was seen less and less as a human God, and increasingly as a divine man. From this changing viewpoint, his crucifixion and death were interpreted as the self-sacrifice of a loving human, who showed his divine nature in his willingness to practice charity to the point of ultimate consequence.³⁴ The theological emphasis on Christ's humanity and his love led to a corresponding humanization of the theological discourse on this subject. In baroque Passion meditations, the mystical concept of the "heavenly bridegroom," which represents the union of Christ's human and divine nature, was combined with motifs taken from secular love lyricism. Theologians like Philipp Nicolai, Johann Gerhard, Heinrich Müller, and Erdmann Neumeister described the crucified Jesus as a loving bridegroom who died on the cross out of deeply felt love for his bride, the faithful soul. Similarly, Passion poems were designed almost like worldly love odes. The following poem by Salomon Franck, one of Johann Sebastian Bach's text writers, illustrates this development:

Auf die Wunden JESUS.

1. Du Liebster / der mein Hertz verwund't/
 Wie hat die Liebe dich getroffen?
 Wie stehen deine Wunden offen?
 Hier ströhmt ein Meer / das ohne Grund/
 Darein du meine Sünden senckest
 Und ihre gantze Macht ertränckest.

³⁴See, for example, Axmacher, 206: "Er tut dies alles Kraft einer reinen, aufs höchste gesteigerten, ja übersteigerten Menschlichkeit, die als Göttlichkeit bezeichnet wird."

3. Nur deine Wunden laben mich/
 Wann mich der Sünden Gifft erhitzet/
 Wann meine matte Seele schwitzet/
 Mein Bräutigam / ich küsse dich/
 Ich sencke mich in deine Wunden/
 Hier wird mein Heyl und Leben funden.³⁵

On the wounds of Jesus

1. Dearest / who has wounded my heart/
 How love has hit you
 How your wounds are open
 A sea / without a bottom is flowing here
 In which you sink my sins
 And drown all their power.

3. Only your wounds can heal me/
 When the poison of sin inflames me/
 When my tired soul is sweating/
 My bridegroom / I kiss you/
 I sink myself into your wounds/
 Here my salvation and life can be found.

Typically mystical motifs like the bridegroom metaphor and the believer's sinking into the wounds of Christ are used here within the framework of the Petrarchan love-death metaphor: the mystical bridegroom is wounded for love, and the faithful soul yearns for unification with her loved one. A comparison with a Passion meditation by Johann Gerhard demonstrates that this interpretation of the Passion gospel corresponds with contemporary theology. Gerhard's statement that Jesus' wounds are the result of his loving desire for the soul of the believer match Franck's rhetorical question as to their origin—"Wie hat die Liebe dich getroffen?":

Therefore he speaks *Cant. 4. My sister, my spouse* / that is / you faithful soul / who through faith is engaged to me and who has become my spiritual bride before God the Lord / **thou hast ravished and wounded my heart** / [...] because Christ's heart was wounded from love / therefore he suffered from such wounds and weals on his body.³⁶

³⁵Salomon Franck, *Geistliche Poësie* (Weimar, 1685), 23f.

³⁶Gerhard, *Erklärung*, 78.

In describing Christ's wounds as the tangible consequence of his love to mankind rather than as the result of flagellation, Gerhard modifies the idea of simultaneity of joy and sorrow in love into a religious hyperbole. Similarly, Gerhard also interprets Christ's thirst on the cross as a sign of a lover's desire: Jesus was thirsty because his heart was wounded by the fire of love. This physical sign of love should then arouse love (*Gegenliebe*) in the heart of the contemplator:

Because the fire of ardent love was burning in his heart /
 therefore he spoke / **I am thirsty** / [. . .] For us he longed /
 therefore he spoke / **I am thirsty** / hear: for our salvation /
 therefore this heavenly bridegroom speaks Cant. 4. **Thou hast
 ravished my heart** / or wounded / **my sister, my spouse**.
 Because his burning heart was wounded for love / therefore
 there followed thirst and desire for our salvation [. . .] And
 because Christ was so thirsty for us / our soul should logically
 also be thirsty for him in return.³⁷

In his depiction of love, the central affective theme of his Passion meditation, Gerhard combines motifs taken from the Song of Songs and medieval mysticism. He describes the suffering and death of Jesus as an overwhelming declaration of love to mankind, which has the certain effect of stirring *Gegenliebe*. As Jesus suffers from intense love aches during his Passion, his love is explicitly bittersweet. Christ's passing, finally, is understood by Gerhard as a mystical kiss. Thus, the sad acquires a joyful explanation:

this inclination of the head has indicated / that even in his last
 moment he wanted to give us a kiss / and once more show us
 his heartfelt love / and soon after that he passed away softly
 and silently.³⁸

A century later, Johann Jakob Rambach still argues along the same lines that the emotional effects of contemplating the Passion—contrition and *Gegenliebe*—should also be expressed physically. Rambach describes how Jesus cried and sighed for love during the

³⁷Gerhard, 324f.

³⁸Gerhard, 332.

events of the Passion;³⁹ the contemplation of the Passion should likewise evoke guilty and loving tears and sighs from the believer:

that the tears and sighs of Jesus Christ may thus become a fertile seed / from which there may grow and flow many tears of contrition and sacred sighs.⁴⁰

Sacrifice to this love no other tears, than those, which flow from the pure source of love. [. . .] No other tears should come into your eyes than tears of love.⁴¹

These contemplative texts concerning the Passion clearly demonstrate how difficult it is to mark the borders between theological topics, biblical quotations, references to medieval mysticism, and applications of Petrarchan imagery in the religious love discourse of the German baroque. Although the precise linguistic origins of this discourse are often not unambiguously traceable, it is important to note that both sacred and secular love were commonly characterized in similar imagery as bittersweet emotions. Christ's agony was understood as Christ's love desire and as a sign of his ardent love. Against the background of this theological love discourse it is easy to understand that Lutheran poets took love lyricism as the starting point for their sacred poetry. Both thematically and stylistically, the Petrarchan idiom could adequately express the bittersweet love described in human emotional terms in contemporary Passion theology. Christ's love-motivated death consequently became linguistically reflected as a love-death. It is not that the theological *concept* of this love originated from Petrarchism, but its discursive *expression* combined Petrarchan and mystical imagery.

Musical expressions of mystical love were realized in a manner similar to poetic and theological ones. Composers used the same means to signify the love between Jesus and the faithful soul as they did to depict worldly love between man and woman. Furthermore,

³⁹Johann Jakob Rambach, *Betrachtung der Thränen und Seufzer JESU CHRISTI In zweyten Predigten Am X. und XII. Sonntage nach Trinitatis, 1725, in der Schul=Kirche in Halle angestellet* (Halle, 1731), 24 and 88.

⁴⁰Rambach, 9.

⁴¹Rambach, 27.

the musical love discourse of the German baroque derived from the conventionalized idiom of the madrigal and was therefore based on the Petrarchan love concept, just like the contemporary poetic love discourse. Madrigalistic double motifs, and pictorial and affective madrigalisms were now used to depict the physical beauty of the sacred loved one, as well as the joys, the desire, and the agony of mystical love. Thus many madrigalistic conventions, originally musical metaphors of worldly love, evolved into signifiers of religious love.

Dieterich Buxtehude's cantata cycle *Membra Jesu Nostri* has often been described as one of the most emotionally impressive musical Passion meditations of the seventeenth century. The text of this seven-part *Passionssalve* is based on the medieval Passion poem "Salve mundi salutare" by Arnulf von Löwen, which praises the feet, the knees, the hands, the side, the breast, the heart, and the face of the crucified Christ.⁴² By inserting Bible verses, Buxtehude divided the original text into seven separate cantatas of one Bible verse and three text stanzas each. The third part of the *Membra Jesu nostri*, "Ad Manus," is directed towards the bleeding hands of Jesus (score in Appendix, Example 2). The Bible text of the opening choir paraphrases Zech. 13:6: "Quid sunt plagae istae in medio manuum tuarum?" ("What are those wounds in your hands?"). The choir is divided into three segments, each consisting of one solo part and one choir part, so that the central question is asked six times all in all.

In the solo parts, Buxtehude employs the madrigalistic love emblem noted in Schütz's expression of the *dolce amaro* in "O dolcezza amarissime d'amore": sharp dissonance and a slow speed coincide with soft parallel thirds. The simultaneity of the bitter and the sweet here serve to express a very specific type of love torment, namely the sad tenderness felt for the lovingly dying Christ. Buxtehude's use of this madrigalism in the expression of a religious

⁴²An extended form of this poem, which was falsely attributed to Bernhard of Clairvaux, was much read and translated in the seventeenth century. Paul Gerhardt's famous "O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden" paraphrases the seventh stanza of this poem (see Elke Axmacher, *Johann Arndt und Paul Gerhardt. Studien zur Theologie, Frömmigkeit und geistlichen Dichtung des 17. Jahrhunderts* [Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 2001], 189ff.).

text shows that the musical setting of a text can theologically deepen it: the affective ambivalence of this composition adds a tender overtone to the agonized exclamation in the text.

The homophonic choral segments serve as rhetorical intensifications of the solo parts. Only in the last repetition of the text phrase does the general dissonance of the piece flow into a consonant cadence. In this final harmonic solution, the seeming bitterness of the crucifixion is musically shown to be sweet in reality: the blood of Christ is the paradoxical proof of his love and the sign of redemption.

In his cantatas and Passions with mystical themes, Johann Sebastian Bach took the seventeenth-century musical conventions for expressing love as a starting point and integrated them into his own compositional style. Bach combined musical parameters of sorrow and joy in such a way that they practically merged into a musical “affect of the bittersweet.” Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* contains many elements typical of contemporary Lutheran Passion theology. Both libretto and music of this work interpret Christ’s Passion as proof of his overwhelming love, and both intensify this affective interpretation of the gospel with mystical imagery. The text of the soprano aria “Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben” (No. 49) concentrates on the love of Christ as the central motivation for the Passion:

Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben,
 von einer Sünde weiß er nichts,
 daß das ewige Verderben
 und die Strafe des Gerichts
 nicht auf meiner Seele bleibe.
 Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben,
 von einer Sünde weiß er nichts.

For love my Saviour is now dying,
 of sin and guilt he knows nothing,
 so eternal desolation
 and the doom of the judgement
 shall not rest upon my spirit.
 For love my Saviour is now dying,
 of sin and guilt he knows nothing.

As Elke Axmacher has shown, the emphasis on the emotional meaning of this love sacrifice for the individual believer is typical of Lutheran theology of the Baroque period. She has argued that this aria can therefore be considered to be the theological core of the *St. Matthew Passion*.⁴³ Bach's musical setting of this text is equally characteristic for contemporary Passion theology. By consistently combining musical means associated with sorrow with elements that were understood as joyful, the composer places the affect of love in the musical foreground. Musical parameters in this aria that were linked to sad emotions in baroque music theory are the minor key (a), the almost motionless melodies, the calm tempo, the rhythmically decelerating syncopations,⁴⁴ the harmonically "weak" sixth and six-five chords, and the lack of a continuo part.⁴⁵ Finally, despite the ABA form of its text, the aria is not a formally rounded da capo aria.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the triple time, the harmonic consonance, the parallel thirds in the oboe parts (cf. the examples by Schütz and Buxtehude above), and the flowing sixteenths of the flute and soprano parts point to the joyful affections stirred by the recognition of Christ's love. In this way, Bach creates a constant musical simultaneity of sorrow and joy representing the ambivalent

⁴³Axmacher, *Aus Liebe*, 177f., 203, 207.

⁴⁴Kircher, p. a598: "Certainly nothing is more fit for the expression of languishing moods than nicely syncopating voices."

⁴⁵According to baroque music theory, the sixth chord has a weakening affective working because the third rather than the tonic of the chord lies in the bass. See Rolf Dammann's elaborations on this subject in Rolf Dammann, *Der Musikbegriff im deutschen Barock* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1995), 286f. The lack of a general bass part in this "bassetchen" aria seems to have a similar affective function here, as the continuo bass was considered the fundament of a composition. Additionally, the general bass was seen as an allegorical representation of God or faith—fundaments of a Christian life. See, for example, Albert Clement, *Der dritte Teil der Clavierübung von Johann Sebastian Bach. Musik-Text-Theologie* [Middelburg: AlmaRes, 1999], 131–34; Renate Steiger, "SUAVISSIMA MUSICA CHRISTO. Zur Symbolik der Stimmlagen bei J. S. Bach," in *Musik und Kirche* 61 (1991): 318–24. In this way, the "bassetchen" aria once again musically depicts Jesus in his human suffering. It must be noted, however, that Bach also employs the technique of "bassetchen" aria to refer to heaven (the absence of a musical fundament representing the absence of earthly ground in heaven) in the *Ascension Oratorio* and the Ascension cantatas. This interpretation of "bassetchen," too, could play a role in "Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben," as Christ's death assures the believer's place in heaven.

⁴⁶Bach also employs this formal expression of incompleteness in "Wenn kömmt du, mein Heil," aria 3 of cantata *BWV 140 Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*.

emotions caused by Jesus' death: his dying promises life, his love generates both anguish and joy.

All these elements are already present in the flute solo at the beginning of the aria (Appendix, Example 3). The sixteenth-note sequences represent the abundance of Christ's love; at the same time they form chromatically descending *gradatio* figures expressing Christ's agony.⁴⁷ The many sharps in this passage seem to be intended as depictions of the crucifixion.⁴⁸ Both oboes underline the affective connotation of the flute part: parallel thirds express Christ's love, but their descending movement (*passus duriusculus*) simultaneously also signify his suffering.⁴⁹ In bars 9–11, “dissonant” parallel fourths and diminished fifths in the oboes, as well as a fermata in the flute form a climax of the ambivalent emotions caused by Christ's innocent suffering. In bars 11–13, a cadence in thirty-second notes gives a literal resolution for the musical and theological tension in this fragment.

The most prominent parallel motion in thirds and sixths in this aria occurs on the word “sterben” in bars 49–53. The seeming paradox between this musical signifier of sweet emotions and love on the one hand, and the textual theme of dying on the other, corresponds with Lutheran Passion theology, in which Christ's death was considered result and proof of his love.

In his musical expression of the love that is the theological theme of this aria, Bach creates an accumulation of musical paradoxes, characterizing both the ambivalent conception of love and the Lutheran Passion theology of his time. While the baroque love concept was at the same time bitter and sweet, the love-death of Christ meant, moreover, simultaneously departure and redemption—

⁴⁷Athanasius Kircher states that the *gradatio* could be used to express divine love: “The climax or *gradatio* [. . .] is often used in affects of divine love and desire for the heavenly kingdom” (Kircher, p. B145). See also Dietrich Bartel, *Handbuch der musikalischen Figurenlehre* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1997), 117–21.

⁴⁸See, for instance, the “Crucifixus” in Bach's *B-minor Mass* (BWV 232); regarding the theological significance of the figure in Schütz's work, see Hans-Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Heinrich Schütz: musicus poeticus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), 26.

⁴⁹Again, the “Crucifixus” from the *B-Minor Mass* is a typical example. Regarding the theological significance of the *passus duriusculus*, see Clement, 164ff.

as seen in the text of No. 20 from the *St. Matthew Passion*, “Therefore his helpful suffering should be truly bitter and yet sweet to us.”

German baroque musical expression of mystical love developed parallel to and in connection with poetic traditions. The poetic conventions of Petrarchan poetry and its musical equivalents were transmitted simultaneously in Germany. Both in poetry and in music, the expression of mystical love followed the conventions of secular love idioms: while poets employed Petrarchan imagery to express mystical love in sacred poetry, composers used the musical love metaphors of the madrigal style in setting mystical texts. Such religious use of madrigalistic conventions in the expression of love is already noticeable in the works of many seventeenth-century composers.⁵⁰ In his vocal works Johann Sebastian Bach found ways of integrating bitter and sweet affects into a musical discourse of the bittersweet. This bittersweet musical affect is realized in the consistent combination of musical parameters with opposing emotional connotations. Bach’s compositional technique, which is based on general affective characteristics of text and music rather than on the depiction of single words, provides a bittersweet starting point for making the musical expression of love—whether secular or sacred—correspond with the contemporary love conception. As in poetic and theological discourse, the love of the Passion was therefore also musically conceived as “pleasant agony.”

⁵⁰Besides in Schütz’s and Buxtehude’s compositions, religious use of madrigalisms expressing love can be noted in the work of such composers as Christoph Bernhard, Andreas Hammerschmidt, Johann Hermann Schein and Matthias Weckmann.

a - rum?

quid sunt pla - gae i - stae in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum, in

a - rum?

quid sunt pla - gae i - stae in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum? in

a - rum?

quid sunt pla - gae i - stae in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum? in

a - rum?

Quid sunt pla - gae i - stae, in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum? in

a - rum?

Quid sunt pla - gae i - stae, in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum? in

6 5

21

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

in me - di - o ma - nu - um tu - a - rum?

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Example 3. Johann Sebastian Bach, "Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben" (St. Matthew Passion, No. 49), mm. 1-13.

The image displays a musical score for the first thirteen measures of the aria "Aus Liebe will mein Heiland sterben" from the St. Matthew Passion. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Flauto traverso solo, Oboe da caccia I, Oboe da caccia II, and Soprano. The Flauto traverso solo part is marked *staccato*. The Oboe da caccia I and II parts are also marked *staccato*. The Soprano part begins with a fermata. The second system starts at measure 7 and includes staves for Flauto traverso solo, Oboe da caccia I, Oboe da caccia II, and Soprano. The Flauto traverso solo part is marked *staccato*. The Oboe da caccia I and II parts are also marked *staccato*. The Soprano part begins with a fermata. The word "Aus" is written below the Soprano staff at the end of the system.