

# Orlando di Lasso

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Theodore Beza wrote an introduction to the Latin edition of Calvin's sermons on Job. In this introduction, he remarks that in spite of the little attention that has been paid to the book of Job in the past, "also in Christian funerals, contaminated in a horrible way later on, lections as they call it were taken from this our book of Job for a long time already"<sup>1</sup> These *lectiones*,<sup>2</sup> set to music by the sixteenth century composer Orlando di Lasso, are the topic of this chapter. We will remain in the Renaissance era, but turn our attention from Protestant theology in Geneva to Roman Catholic music at the court of the Duke of Bavaria, Germany. In Calvin, we encountered primarily a theological interpretation of the text; in Lasso we find music aiming to move the heart of the listener.

Among the interpretations of Job discussed in this book, that of Lasso has a special place. It is an interpretation in music rather than in words. Therefore, I will attempt to excavate Lasso's interpretation by means of musicological analyses, giving this study an interdisciplinary twist. The central question of this book is not simply: How are the theological views people derive from the book of Job related to the context in which the interpreters live? The question is much broader: What 'happens' when interpreters from many different contexts read the book of Job? The way in which the book of Job has been interpreted in the visual arts has been researched before.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, the question is what happens when the text of the book of Job is used in a piece of music. Much of 'what happens' in this case will not be of special interest for the theologian as far as content is concerned. That is to say: much of what happens in this interpretation of Job does not directly express a certain theological view. Rather, it shows something about the interaction between a biblical text and its musical context. The analysis of

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Beza, 'Preface to the Latin Edition', in: Baum et al., *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*: "atque adeo in christianis exsequiis, postea horrendum in modum contaminatis, lectiones quas vocant iam pridem fuerunt ex hoc nostro lobo depromptae".

<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, when I refer to the liturgical texts from the book of Job in distinction from Lasso's setting of them, I use a non-capitalised version of 'lectiones'. For Lasso's motet cycles based on these *lectiones*, I use either *Lectiones* for the first motet cycle, or *Lectiones novae* for the second.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Terrien, *The Iconography of Job through the Centuries: Artists as Biblical Interpreters* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

this interaction will prove to be significant for understanding the hermeneutical process—the central issue to be addressed in part III

There are various material results on the theological level as well. First of all, it will turn out that in this extraordinary case, we in fact encounter the form of the book of Job that was most commonly known among the general public for centuries. The selection of texts that makes up the *lectiones* was widely used for private devotion in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, in this particular interpretation of Job, the phenomenon of *selection* proves to be particularly significant. The *lectiones* are all taken from the speeches of Job, the part of the book that, as we saw in the previous chapter, Calvin interpreted in an implicitly critical way. Lasso sets these *lectiones* to music, but as I will show in due course, the theology behind his music is not as far removed from Calvin as his choice of texts to be set to music might suggest. Finally, the technical analysis of Lasso's music has interesting theological implications. It reveals a sovereign God, approached by a humble and submissive believer.

The theological aspects of Lasso's music are discussed primarily in sections 5.5, 5.7, and 5.8. The musicological analysis is presented in the next section and in section 5.6. The musicological sections can be skipped if these prove too difficult for those without a basic musical training.

## 5.2 AN IMPRESSION

The *Lectiones*, the topic of this chapter, is the first motet cycle Lasso composed on these liturgical texts. This first cycle, with the full title *Sacrae lectiones ex Propheta Iob*, was composed around 1560 for the private use of the Bavarian duke Albrecht V. It was published in 1565. It is a typical example of Lasso's style of composing in his earlier years. The second musical setting of the *lectiones* appeared much later in his career. It appeared in 1582 under the title *Lectiones sacrae novem, ex libris Hiob excerptae*. In this chapter, I restrict myself to the first cycle.

It is difficult to provide an impression of a piece of music in writing. Music must be heard, not read about.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, I will give an in-depth discussion of one of the *Lectiones* in order to convey an impression of the compositional techniques Lasso used to elucidate the meaning of the text. I discuss the first *Lectio*, because its text well represents the whole of the cycle, and the means of text expression used in it adequately reflect the musical style of the cycle as a whole. Wherever possible, I will try to explain the properties of the music in such a way that it is accessible even to readers with little or no musical training. I apologise to readers with a more thorough musical education, for whom some explanations of musical figures will be redundant or oversimplified.

The text of the first *lectio* not only represents the compositional style of the music which Lasso wrote on the text adequately, but also provides an fair sample of the content of the *lectiones* as a whole:

<sup>4</sup> As far as I know, there is one recent compact disc recording of only the first cycle, published on the Chamade label (CHCD 5656) by the vocal ensemble Cori Spezzati, under the direction of Olivier Opdebeeck. On this recording, each *Lectio* is followed by the corresponding *responsorium*. This is a viable arrangement, and the artistic effect is certainly beautiful, but as I will show below, it suggests a liturgical context of the *Lectiones* which, historically speaking, is rather unlikely.

Spare me, Lord, for my days are nothing. What is a man that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him? Thou visitest him early in the morning, and thou provest him suddenly. How long wilt thou not spare me, nor suffer me to swallow down my spittle? I have sinned: what shall I do to thee, O keeper of men? Why hast thou set me opposite to thee, and I am become burdensome to myself? Why dost thou not remove my sin, and why dost thou not take away my iniquity? Behold now I shall sleep in the dust: and if thou seek me in the morning, I shall not be. (Job 7: 16–21)<sup>5</sup>

The opening of the first *Lectio* is impressive. All voices start together with long note values on the words “Parce mihi, Domine” (Spare me, Lord). The dramatic effect of these words is enhanced in various ways. First, Lasso introduces a note e-flat ‘foreign to the mode’<sup>6</sup> in the tenor and bass (‘A’ in figure 5.1), which gives the third chord on ‘mi-’ special force. The e-flat returns in the melisma<sup>7</sup> on ‘Do-’ in the tenor (‘B’ in figure 5.1). The melismas on ‘-hi’ and ‘Do-’ in the soprano and tenor re-emphasise the dramatic character of the text. Finally, Lasso achieves an alienating effect through a very irregular cadence<sup>8</sup> at the end of the phrase. The melismas on ‘Do-’ in soprano and tenor, and the g in the bass (‘C’ in figure 5.1) strongly suggest a resolution of the cadence into a C major chord. A cadence on C would have been perfectly apt given the mode of the *Lectio*. However, Lasso resolves the cadence into F, the finalis of the *Lectio*, instead, thus evoking a feeling of alienation in the audience.

The next phrase on “nihil enim sunt dies mei” (for my days are nothing) borrows its dramatic effect from being the exact counterpart of the previous one. Here, we find strictly syllabic text expression, short note values, combined with a low register in the soprano. The phrase is preceded by a rest (‘D’ in figure 5.1), further emphasising the ‘nothingness’ of the text. Finally, exactly opposite to the irregular and henceforth striking cadence at the end of the first phrase, the second phrase hardly has a cadence.<sup>9</sup> The cadence is apparently on F again, but this note is deliberately left out in the soprano (‘E’ in figure 5.1), and in the tenor, the next phrase starts already before the final note sounds (‘F’ in figure 5.1).

The next phrase “Quid est homo, quia magnificas eum?” (What is a man that thou shouldst magnify him?) offers less startling effects. Lasso mimics

<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, I follow Bergquist in taking all English quotations from the book of Job or the *lectiones* from the Douai-Rheims Bible. This English translation of the Bible was prepared in the sixteenth century and thus most accurately reflects the sixteenth century interpretation of the Vulgate text.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of ‘mode’ in sixteenth century music is rather difficult to explain. At first, it may seem some sort of equivalent to the modern concept of tonality. However, in sixteenth century polyphony, it encompasses many other aspects, for example the range (*ambitus*) of the melody, its beginning and end, and a secondary note playing a central role (the *repercussio*). The still definitive guide to modality in sixteenth century music is Bernhard Meier, *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony: Described According to the Sources*, trans. from the German by Ellen S. Beebe, with revisions by the author (New York: Broude Brothers, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> ‘Melisma’ means that more than one note accompanies one syllable. Accordingly, one speaks about melismatic and syllabic rendering of a text in music.

<sup>8</sup> The term ‘cadence’ has various meanings in musicology. In Renaissance music, it means the stereotyped ending of a musical phrase—mostly corresponding to a cesura in the text. For an extensive treatment of cadences in sixteenth century music, see *ibid.*, pp. 89–122.

<sup>9</sup> The technical term for this phenomenon is *cadenza fuggita*, *ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

Par- ce mi- hi Do- - mi- ne:

Par- ce mi- hi Do- - mi- ne:

Par- ce mi- hi Do- - mi- ne:

Par- ce mi- hi Do- - mi- ne:

ni- hil e- nim sunt di- es me- i. Quid

ni- hil e- nim sunt di- es me- i. Quid

ni- hil e- nim sunt di- es me- i. Quid est

ni- hil e- nim sunt di- es me- i. Quid

Figure 5.1: The Opening Phrases of Lectio 1

‘magnification’ by as it were piling up the voices on top of each other. He interprets the phrase in a positive way, expressed in the polyphonic rendering of the phrase with short notes in a high register. This is, again, in sharp contradistinction to “aut quid apponis erga eum cor tuum?” (or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?). Here, there is little or no motion due to repetition of notes and chords (‘apponis’!).<sup>10</sup>

With “Visitas eum diluculo” (Thou visitest him early in the morning) and “et subito probas illum” (and thou provest him suddenly), we enter in a positive

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Meier, pp. 244–245.

hi, \_\_\_\_\_ nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me,

hi, nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, nec di- - mit- tis me, nec

hi, nec di- mit- tis me, nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, nec di- mit- tis me,

hi, nec di- mit- tis me, nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, nec di- mit- tis me,

nec di- mit- tis me, nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis \_\_\_\_\_ me, nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, \_\_\_\_\_

nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, ut glu- - ti- am

nec di- mit- tis me, nec \_\_\_\_\_ di- mit- tis me, ut glu- ti-

Figure 5.2: Fauxbourdon figure on “nec dimittis me”

mood once again. The light of dawn is illustrated by the lack of a bass voice, and the general character of the music is joyful, with short notes in a high register. On ‘subito probas’ short notes are used and the voices are shifted a little, notes strung closely together, so that the audience hears many ‘subito’s in quick succession. On “Usquequo non parcis mihi” (How long wilt thou not spare me), especially the high register on ‘mihi’ catches the ear. The soprano and tenor reach a g<sup>2</sup>, the soprano’s highest note in this Lectio. This g<sup>2</sup>, is again part of an E-flat major chord, which can hardly be an accident, given the parallel with the opening phrase “Parce mihi”.

The words that follow “nec dimittis me” (nor depart from me), provide the

The musical score consists of four staves. The first staff is labeled with 'A' and contains the lyrics 'Pec- ca- - vi\_\_\_\_\_ quid'. The second staff is labeled with 'B' and contains the lyrics 'Pec- - ca- - vi, pec- - ca- - vi,'. The third staff is labeled with 'C' and contains the lyrics 'Pec- - ca- - vi, pec- - ca- - vi,'. The fourth staff contains the lyrics 'Pec- ca- - vi,'. The music is written in a single system with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The first staff uses a soprano clef, the second and third use a soprano clef with a '8' below it, and the fourth uses a bass clef.

Figure 5.3: Commixtio tonorum on “Peccavi”

first instance of a recurring musical figure in the *Lectioes*, the so-called ‘fauxbourdon’ (see figure 5.2).<sup>11</sup> This is a sequence of (descending) parallel sixths or tenths, usually with a third voice in between. In the *Lectioes* it usually has a negative connotation due to the lack of *diversitas* in the flow of the different voices, an important requirement of the Flemish polyphonic style. It seems that Lasso illustrates the text through a play on one of the essential features of a fauxbourdon. One of the theoretically interesting features of a fauxbourdon is that it can be left at any time. Any of the major sixths in the sequence can be the basis of a cadence into the octave. However, each time the fauxbourdon cadences into the octave – on ‘me’ of course – Lasso already starts a new fauxbourdon-like figure. The fauxbourdon is ‘left’, but it gains a sense of inevitability in Lasso’s setting.

The first part of the first *Lectio* ends on the words “ut glutiam salivam meam” (to swallow down my spittle). The high register on ‘meam’ is striking again. Here, the tenor reaches his highest note on a’, and the soprano ascends to g”. It seems that the composer wants to put the subject of suffering into the very centre of the music. I will deal with the meaning of this below, when I discuss the implicit theology of Lasso’s music.

The second part of the first *Lectio* opens with an exposition of “Peccavi” (I have sinned). For sixteenth century composers, the word ‘sin’ is often an occasion to violate compositional rules. We saw such a ‘sin’ already on “nec dimittis me”. The rule of *diversitas* was violated by the sequence of sixths in the fauxbourdon. The sin committed on “Peccavi” is of a rather complicated kind. Meier, in his ground-breaking work *The Modes of Classical Vocal Polyphony: Described According*

<sup>11</sup> Further examples include *Lectio* two, “in amaritudine”, “opus manuum tuarum”, and *Lectio* seven “et in amaritudinibus”. On the fauxbourdon figure, see Clemens Kühn, *Analyse lernen*, Bärenreiter Studienbücher Musik 4 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1992), pp. 45–47; Meier, p. 246.

to the Sources explains how composers deliberately violated the theoretical rules of classical polyphonic music by explicitly introducing the parameters of a foreign mode into the melodic flow of a motive.<sup>12</sup> The setting of “Peccavi” provides an almost standard example of this technique.<sup>13</sup> The first *Lectio* is in mode five. The central notes in mode five are *f'*, *c''*, and *f''*. The two *f*'s are the marking boundaries of the range within which the music will move (soprano and tenor, with an octave in between off course), and the *c''* in between is what Meier calls the *repercussio*.<sup>14</sup> Here, however, Lasso deliberately starts the soprano on *g'* (*A'* in figure 5.3), the note above the final, lets it ascend to *b-flat'* (*B'* in figure 5.3) and returns to *g'* (*C'* in figure 5.3). This minor third is the defining characteristic of mode two, transposed to *g*, one fifth downwards.<sup>15</sup>

On “quid faciam tibi, o custos hominum?” (what shall I do to thee, O keeper of men?), few exceptional things happen. The high register of both the soprano and the tenor are significant on ‘*ti-*’, and so is the E-flat major chord on ‘*cu-*’. The latter suggests that Lasso was at least ambiguous about God’s care, consistent of course with the context of the phrase. The most prominent feature of “Quare me posuisti” (Why hast thou set me) is the wide range of the motive. The bass, who opens the polyphonic setting of this phrase, starts on *c'*, ascends to *d'*, and subsequently descends stepwise – with one exception – to *d*, one octave lower:



The range of the soprano is even slightly wider. The soprano starts on *f''*, rises to *g''*, and with big leaps, descends to *f'*:



In the light of the remainder of the *Lectio*, and perhaps the whole cycle, it is significant that the motive begins in the high register, on “quare me”. As we have seen, Lasso had a strong preference for a high register on ‘*me*’. The subject of the sufferer has a high range, and God who places – “posuisti” – receives a low range. This is significant, as I will explain in section 5.7.

The musical expression of “*contrarium tibi*” (opposite to thee) is unambiguously clear. The word ‘*contrarium*’ is illustrated by ascending versus descending movement in different voices. The soprano opens with a descending figure, accompanied halfway by the tenor with an ascending figure. Soprano and bass follow with the descending figure, accompanied halfway by the alto with an

<sup>12</sup> The technical term Meier uses for this phenomenon is *commixtio tonorum*, or in English, a ‘commixture of the mode’. Meier, pp. 286–289.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 317–318.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39–41. For some readers, it might help to think of the *repercussio* as a precursor of what in modern musical theory is called the *dominant*, although the *repercussio* is by far not always the fifth above the final and fulfils other functions in classical polyphony than the dominant in tonal theory.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

et factus sum mihi metipsum gravis? Cur  
 tibi, et factus sum mihi metipsum gravis? Cur  
 tibi, et factus sum mihi metipsum gravis? Cur  
 bi, et factus sum mihi metipsum gravis?

non tollis peccatum meum, et  
 non tollis, cur non tollis peccatum meum, et  
 non tollis, cur non tollis peccatum meum,  
 Cur non tollis peccatum meum, et

Figure 5.4: Commixtio tonorum on “cur non tollis”

ascending figure and so on. After this polyphonic passage, “et factus sum mihi metipsum gravis?” (and I am become burdensome to myself?) is almost note against note, with little motion and long note values on ‘gravis’. The use of an E-flat chord wholly fits into the bleak atmosphere of this passage. Against this background, the huge leaps of the bass, two fifths and an octave, are all the more significant, although it is difficult to see why they are used to illustrate being ‘burdensome to oneself’. One might interpret it as a kind of ‘musical stumbling’—see figure 5.4.

The phrase “Cur non tollis peccatum meum” (Why dost thou not remove my sin) is again reason for Lasso to play with the rules of the mode. The words “cur non tollis” are repeated twice. The first time, the tenor introduces the



phrase starting on d' ('A' in figure 5.4), descends a half tone to c-sharp' ('B' in figure 5.4), returns to d' and moves to f' ('C' in figure 5.4). In fact, this is again an introduction of mode two, this time in untransposed form. The introduction of mode two is established by the use of c-sharp, the leading tone to the final d of mode two, and the ambitus of the motive d'-f'.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps this is a musical illustration of the temporary 'removal' (tollere) of the b-flat key signature of mode five or simply of the temporary removal of mode five as a whole. Interestingly, the first presentation ends on b-flat ('D' in figure 5.4), bringing the music immediately back to the original mode. The temporary character of the 'removal' of the mode proves significant. God does *not* remove the sin of the sufferer. The motive initially presented by the tenor is then presented a fifth lower by the bass, thereby presenting mode two transposed to g ('E' to 'F' in figure 5.4). However, the last note of the motive, b-flat in the initial presentation, is now e-flat in the bass, introducing a new violation of the mode on the word 'peccatum'.

Lasso's setting of "et quare non auferis iniquitatem meam?" (and why do you not take away my iniquity?) uses a musical device that we have already encountered: the fauxbourdon. Here, it is clearly used as an 'iniquity' against the rule of the *diversitas*.

"Ecce nunc in pulvere dormiam" (Behold now I shall sleep in the dust:) starts in slightly polyphonic style, with the effect that the audience hears "Ecce nunc" four times, rather than only once. From "in pulvere" until the end of the Lectio, the text is expressed in strict note against note style. On 'pul-', an E-flat chord is used; slow movement, little motion, and a low register are used to depict the dust and sleep. The 'dormiam' is most emphatically expressed, however, by an interruption of the musical flow: a rest closes the phrase, even at a moment when one would normally expect the C chord of '-am' to cadence into the final F.

A typically alienating effect is realised on "et si mane me quaesieris" (and if thou seek me in the morning). In slightly quicker movement various accidentals create a strange chord progression. On the first 'e-ris', Lasso places an accidental before the b-flat ('A' in figure 5.5), changing the g minor chord to G major. Immediately after it, on the second 'si', the tenor has an e-flat ('B' in figure 5.5), changing the C major chord to c minor, followed by a D major chord due to a fis in the alto ('C' in figure 5.5). On "non subsistam" (I shall not be.), finally, 'non' has an E-flat chord, stressing the negative affective connotation of the text.

### 5.3 FRANCO-FLEMISH POLYPHONY

Lasso's music is one of the late examples of what is known in musicological literature as 'Franco-Flemish polyphony'.<sup>17</sup> In this section, I will introduce the most important aspects of this phenomenon from the perspective of the history

<sup>16</sup> In technical – solmised – form: the interval re-fa.

<sup>17</sup> There are two recent and excellent introductions to it: Willem Elders, *Composers of the Low Countries*, trans. from the Dutch by Graham Dixon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), and Ignace Bossuyt, *De Vlaamse polyfonie* (Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1994). The latter has been translated into all main European languages. References in this text are to the original Dutch edition.

The image displays a musical score for the phrase "et si mane me quaesieris". It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system includes vocal lines and a bass line. The second system continues the vocal lines and bass line. The lyrics are: "et si ma- - ne me quae- si- e- ris, et si ma- ne me quae- si- e- ris, non sub- si- - stam." The score features irregular chord progressions, with specific chords labeled A, B, and C. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C).

et si ma- - ne me quae- si- e- ris, et si ma- ne

et si ma- - ne me quae- si- e- ris, et si ma- ne

et si ma- - ne me quae- si- e- ris, et si ma- ne

et si ma- - ne me quae- si- e- ris, et si ma- ne

me quae- si- e- ris, non sub- si- - stam.

me quae- si- e- ris, non sub- si- - stam.

me quae- si- e- ris, non sub- si- - stam.

me quae- si- e- ris, non sub- si- - stam.

Figure 5.5: Irregular chord progression on “et si mane me quaesieris”

of music. Before I explore Franco-Flemish polyphony in historical perspective, I should briefly explain both parts of the term.

The first part ‘Franco-Flemish’ designates the geographical region where this kind of music originated. Although few people know this, from the 14th to the 16th century, polyphonic music was dominated by musicians coming from the low countries,<sup>18</sup> nowadays roughly coinciding with the Flemish speaking part of Belgium—the reason why some researchers of the period prefer to speak about

<sup>18</sup> Elders.

'Flemish polyphony'.<sup>19</sup> Most of the leading musicians during this period were born in Flanders, where they received their musical education at one of the cathedral schools of such cities as Antwerp, Bruges, Liège, Cambrai, Tournai, etc. From Flanders, they spread over the whole of Europe with important concentrations in Italy (Venice), Spain (court of Charles V, Phillips II), and Bavaria in Germany (court of the duke).<sup>20</sup> There was a real race among the rulers of the day to have the best *fiamminghi* in their court choirs.<sup>21</sup>

For the explanation of the second term, 'polyphony', we must go back to the 9th century, when multiple voices come to be added to gregorian chant. Until the 12th century, these added voices remain largely parallel – in distance and measure – to the gregorian melody, so that we cannot really speak of polyphonic music prior to that period.<sup>22</sup> From then onwards, however, the additional voices become more and more independent from the gregorian original, which leads to the development of what is known as the 'cantus-firmus Mass' in the 14th and 15th century. This specific type of composition for the Mass consists of a musical setting of all five parts of the Mass ceremony – Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei – on a tenor melody. This melody is called the 'cantus firmus'; it is derived from gregorian chant or a secular source. The other voices of the composition are freely composed by the musician and remain secondary to the cantus firmus. This development occurs mainly in the 15th century and is especially connected with the name of the Flemish composer Guillaume Dufay. The further development of the Mass composition consists of the other voices' becoming more and more independent from the cantus firmus by taking over thematic material from it and eventually gaining equal rank over against the tenor voice.<sup>23</sup>

Having its roots in the religious realm, the Mass remains the locus of polyphonic art par excellence, but it is increasingly accompanied by sacred – albeit less strictly liturgical – genres and purely secular ones. Throughout the 15th and 16th century, the various genres begin mutually to influence each another. For example, when the Flemish composers begin to write in secular genres, the genre of the French chanson, originally rooted in folk music, is influenced by the polyphonic techniques as developed in Mass compositions. On the other hand – and this is particularly significant for our case – the mainly sacred genre of the motet is heavily influenced by the secular genre of the Italian madrigal during the 16th century.<sup>24</sup>

Because the madrigal played a crucial role in the development of Lasso's style, I need to pay some attention to it, but it is embedded in a much broader earlier development which we might call the 'humanisation' of polyphonic music.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Bossuyt, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Elders, pp. 6–15.

<sup>21</sup> These remarks show already that the increasing popularity of the Franco-Flemish polyphonists went hand in hand with the secularisation of the musical sphere. This is in line with our general remarks about the development of intellectual life outside the sacred sphere of the church during the Renaissance period. See also *Ibid.*, pp. 127–136.

<sup>22</sup> Bossuyt, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39–43; Elders, pp. 16–23, 27–48.

<sup>24</sup> Bossuyt, pp. 47–48, 53–54.

This development is particularly connected with the person of Josquin des Prez (approx. 1440–1521). The discussion of Lasso's *Lectio* in section 5.2 has made clear that the construction of a polyphonic piece of music is a highly technical undertaking. Anyone who has listened to J.S. Bach's *The Art of Fugue*, his various fugues for organ or parts of his Brandenburg concertos will acknowledge this. This was all the more so for the Franco-Flemish polyphonists, because they submitted themselves to a set of rigid rules that their counterpoint needed to obey. These rules included the way melodies had to be written (i.e. the flow of individual voices), which intervals between voices were allowed, how musical sentences needed to end, and so on. The aim of these rules was to give polyphonic music its gracefully flowing character and sonorous sound.<sup>25</sup>

However, with Josquin, composing around the turn of the century, this technical view of music became supplemented by the typically Renaissance focus on the human and the rhetorical in text and music. This stimulated a groundbreaking new interest in, first, the way in which the text used in a piece of music was formally expressed and, second, the way in which the content of the text – whether psychological or material – was communicated by the musical expression of it. With regard to the more formal word-tone relationships, this humanist perspective led to a strongly syllabic approach to melody writing—one syllable to one tone. Furthermore, a very strong relationship between word and musical accentuation was developed. Finally, Josquin introduced homophonic parts – all voices simultaneously sing the same text, also called 'note against note' – into the polyphonic textures in order to emphasise certain elements of the texts. Apart from these more formal additions to the toolkit of the writers of polyphonic music, more creative ways were developed to effectively communicate the text through the music. Examples include lower tones for darkness and sorrow, and higher tones for light and joy, falling musical lines for mourning and climbing lines for expressions of joy.<sup>26</sup>

The new developments mentioned above eventually transformed the large technical polyphonic structures into much more down to earth instruments of musical rhetoric, aimed not only at the mind of the listener but also at the heart and affections. This holds especially for the less strict genres like the motet in the sacred sphere and the chanson in the secular realm. The humanist genre *par excellence*, however, was to be the Italian madrigal. Originally a folklorist genre associated with carnival, it developed during the first half of the 16th century into the most experimental intellectual genre of the day. The two composers who brought the madrigal its great fame were the choirmasters of the Venetian San Marco cathedral Adrian Willaert (approx. 1490–1562) and Cipriano de Rore (1515/16–1565). The composers of the madrigal favoured the typical Renaissance love poems of Petrarca as the basis of their compositions. Willaert and De Rore employed all the word-tone techniques introduced by Josquin in their madrigals and in addition, they invented chromatic techniques in order to symbolise various aspects of the text.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bossuyt, pp. 24–28.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 93–97.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 120–121.

When Lasso began to publish his music around the middle of the 16th century, he positioned himself firmly in the Venetian tradition of Willaert and De Rore. The experimental techniques for the musical expression of the text invented in the madrigal found their way into all the other genres, such as the motet and the chanson.

#### 5.4 LIFE AND WORK

Nowadays, Lasso no longer enjoys much popularity, neither among musicologists nor among performers of Renaissance music, although he is formally recognised as one of the most important composers of his time. A complete, critical edition of his about three thousand works does not yet exist. This situation stands in sharp contrast to the fame and popularity he enjoyed in his own time. His works, which comprised all the genres of his time, were printed time and again by the major publishers. Lasso wrote a great number of Masses, Magnificats, motets, madrigals, chansons and villanellas (light weight secular genre) and showed himself a master in all.

Due to the fact that in spite of his greatness, Lasso received little attention in later times, we know relatively little about his life.<sup>28</sup> Uncertainty starts with his name.<sup>29</sup> Lasso is most widely known as 'Orlando di Lasso', which is a form of his name which occurs only rarely in his own time. It seems to be a contraction of his two Italian names: 'Orlando di Lassus' and 'Orlando Lasso'. The most probable form of his original French name was 'Orlande de Lassus', which makes clear that, contrary to appearance, the form 'Lassus' was not a Latinisation of his name, but the original form. The next uncertainty is his birthyear. Scholarly consensus takes 1530/32 as his year of birth in the Flemish town Bergen—now known as Mons in Belgium.<sup>30</sup> About his family and boyhood we know very little. His first biographer tells us that he received his early education in Mons and that he was abducted three times because of his beautiful voice, not uncommon practice at the time.

The third time was definitive. Lasso was snatched by agents of the viceroy of Sicily, Italy, who was a commander in the army of Charles V. Lasso was taken to his master Ferdinand I de Gonzaga. He probably served as a choirboy in De Gonzaga's chapel until his 18th year. From 1549–1554, Lasso served as a household musician in Naples and Rome. After having spent so many years in Italy, Lasso returned to his home country in 1554, initially for visiting his parents who were terminally ill and actually died before he arrived. Then, Lasso moved to Antwerp where he lived as a free person teaching music to the upper class of

<sup>28</sup> The definitive guide is still: Horst Leuchtman, *Orlando di Lasso* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1976–1977). An English translation of the main biographical data as found in Leuchtman (1976–1977) is provided by James Erb, *Orlando di Lasso: A Guide to Research*, Garland Composer Resource Manuals 25 (New York & London: Garland, 1990), pp. 4–31. Other interesting biographical works are Franzpeter Messmer, *Orlando di Lasso: Ein Leben in der Renaissance* (München: Edition Wissenschaft & Literatur, 1982) and the older Charles van den Borren, *Roland de Lassus*, Notre passé. 2me série 5 (Bruxelles: Renaissance du livre, 1943).

<sup>29</sup> Leuchtman, *Orlando di Lasso*, pp. 62–72.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62, 72–81.

the city. During the Antwerp period he started publishing his compositions. His international orientation is immediately evident from his earliest publications. They appeared in Antwerp – with the famous music printer Tilman Susato – Venice, and Rome, and encompassed the major genres of the time, including madrigals, villanellas, chansons, and motets.

The definitive step in Lasso's career followed soon after. Probably in 1556, he was invited to Munich as a tenor of the chapel of the duke of Bavaria, Germany. At that time, his salary already exceeded that of the current choirmaster at the Bavarian court. Lasso remained in Munich, first as a singer in the choir, later as choirmaster, until his death in 1594. Although an employee of the duke, he had a close relationship with his master's family, first with Albrecht V and later on with his son, Wilhelm V. Leuchtman writes:

True, Lasso is an employee; he belongs among the court's household staff. But he stands out as a fine gentleman, a cosmopolitan who through his sophistication impresses the Bavarian Duke. Elevated above the host of his "fellows" or "consorts" as the official language of the time expresses it, he soon commands the compensation of an educated bourgeois councillor, a class for which he lacks the juristic education as well as the family origin and the financial means that he has yet to earn. But soon he will be raised to nobility by Emperor and Pope. Lasso is the Renaissance Composer absolute.<sup>31</sup>

Lasso's close friendship with Wilhelm – already before Wilhelm succeeded his father as duke – is well documented in a preserved correspondence between them.

The remainder of Lasso's life consisted essentially of publishing a massive amount of music, becoming ever more famous throughout the European Continent, making various trips outside Germany, some to the Netherlands for recruiting new members for the chapel's choir, others with the duke to provide music during his journeys. During the earlier years in Munich, various important works were composed, among which are the first series of *Lectiones* (published in 1565), the *Prophetiae Sybillarum* (published only posthumously) and the *Psalms Poenitentiales* (published only in 1584). Later remarkable publications are the second series of *Lectiones* on Job (1582, probably composed in earlier years), the *Lamentationes Jeremiae* (most well known five voices edition; lesser known four voices version: both 1585) and finally his swan song: the *Lagrime di San Petro*, a collection of so-called 'madrigali spirituali' for seven voices.

Of course, the works mentioned are only the longer motet cycles on mostly biblical texts that are most well known nowadays. They are only a fraction of a continuously flowing stream of chansons, motets, madrigals, Masses and Magnificats appearing under such titles as 'Cantiones sacrae' (1562, 1582, 1585) and 'Patrocinium musices' (1574, 1586, 1589).<sup>32</sup>

When I portrayed Calvin as a man of his time, I described the Renaissance as a time of rapid change, where the old stable structure of the church, rooted in a hierarchical divine order began to be broken up in favour of the worldly categories of the empirical, the emotional and the individual. We saw that these

<sup>31</sup> Horst Leuchtman, 'Orlando di Lasso or: Inspired Madness: Humanistic Music in and out of Season', in: Erb, *Orlando di Lasso*, p. xxii.

<sup>32</sup> For a chronological list of works, see Erb, pp. 33–151.

disturbing tendencies in Western culture evoked a counter movement that tried to re-establish a new stable culture and society. I argued that Calvin participated in both movements, the liberation and the consolidation, but eventually ended up in the latter. Lasso, although in a very different way, is as much a man of the Renaissance as Calvin. In his personality as well as his work, a profound ambivalence can be discerned between his pious adherence to the teachings of the church on the one hand, and his whole-hearted participation in an evolving secular sphere on the other. On the one hand, Lasso wrote magnificent settings of the Mass, of the Magnificat and, more especially, of the *Psalmos Poenitentiales*, the *Lectiones* on the book of Job, and the *Lamentationes Jeremiae*, all full of devotion and the sadness that is so typical of Renaissance piety. On the other hand, he set to music very obscene and sometimes truly blasphemous texts. Probably, his best known song 'Matona mia cara' is a good example of the obscene sort, and the chanson 'Il estoit un religieuse' of the blasphemous.<sup>33</sup> This combination of deep devotion and sheer worldliness was not uncommon in the period. The sixteenth century French poet Clement Marot is another example. He links up Lasso and Calvin by the fact that Lasso wrote chansons on his secular – sometimes rather obscene – texts, whereas Calvin used his psalm translation in his Geneva Psalter. The ambivalence of faith and worldliness was exactly where Calvin directed his pastoral activity to, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

On a more technical level, however, the typical Renaissance shift from the divine to the human, from the timeless to the timebound, is particularly evident in Lasso's music. We have already seen how humanism influenced polyphonic music by increasing attention to word-tone relationships in, for example, Willaert and De Rore. In Lasso, word-tone relationships completely determine both the motet and the madrigal. With strong attention to the human and the emotional, Lasso employs the whole power of his music to reach the heart of the listener. In the motet and the madrigal, this is done in a highly technical way, as we saw in section 5.2, and will see again in the next section. In the more popular genres it is done in a more directly appreciative way. The highly technical character of much of Lasso's music may paradoxically account for his unpopularity nowadays. A symbolism originally intended to reach the heart of the audience now disturbs their ears, which are so accustomed to the later standards of key, mode, and complete modulation.<sup>34</sup> Lasso's extravagant style makes for what Erb calls a 'restless' music. The close attention to word-tone relationships causes the flow of the music to change rapidly and frequently. But it makes for extremely beautiful and heart-moving moments if one understands the musical devices implicit in the music.

The ambivalence of gladness and sadness finally characterises Lasso's personality. On the one hand, he was a man full of energy and humour. On the other hand, he experienced moments of deep melancholy. Leuchtman beautifully illustrates Lasso's personality by reference to a play on his name:

Melancholy and irony—two essential components in the picture of Lasso's character. Even the form of his name commands attention. Born as Roland or

<sup>33</sup> Bossuyt, pp. 140–141.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Erb, pp. xvii–xviii.

Orlande de Lassus, in Italy he styles himself Orlando di Lasso. This is more than merely the Italianating of a name that can also be interpreted in French and Latin. Roland is the name of a saint especially beloved in Belgium—and at the same time it is probably the most celebrated hero of the time. One can see in Lasso's self-styling a connection to Ariosto, to the Raging Roland. Ariosto had proceeded from Bioardo's verse epic *Orlando in Love* [*Orlando Innamorato*, c. 1526–31]. Now three Rolands succeed each other: Orlando Innamorato, Orlando Ruioso, and Orlando Lasso. Lasso and his friends and acquaintances never tired of playing over and over upon one sense of his professional name: the tired Orlando. That can only be understood as irony: Hardly a composer of his time was more diligent and hard-working than the man who teased with this adjective. Above all, however, his art is the exact opposite of what one understands by 'tired'. But *lasso* has a second meaning that made it fashionable in contemporary poetry: unhappy. Orlando Lasso = Orlando the Melancholy. In reality he is – transposed from the martial to the poetic – all three together: the melancholic Orlando, Orlando in love, and most especially the Raging Orlando. For the third element in his character is ravishment, that which since the eighteenth century has been called inspiration. [...] In studying Lasso's music it is just this that strikes us, that it does not present itself as a quiet flow, but as abrupt shifts of inspiration, as the unpredictable.<sup>35</sup>

Towards the end of his life, the melancholic Orlando prevailed and he began to regret his earlier sometimes all too frivolous behaviour. His later music more strictly obeys the rules of the Council of Trent's reform of the liturgy and the majority of his publications are of sacred character.

## 5.5 ORIGIN OF THE LECTIONES

The title of the motet cycle *Sacrae lectiones ex propheta Iob* connects these pieces of music primarily with a specific part of the Roman Catholic liturgy: the Office of the Dead. The reading of the book of Job as part of the Office of the Dead is based on a very old practice, going back at least to old Roman funeral rituals from the seventh century CE.<sup>36</sup> However, in later times, the liturgy for the Office of the Dead was not only used during funeral services. Winemiller summarises: "In many monastic uses the Office of the Dead was recited daily, in addition to or sometimes in place of the usual recitation of the Divine Office. Outside of monasteries the Office of the Dead was customarily said prior to a Requiem Mass and burial, as well as on certain commemorative feast days."<sup>37</sup> As Besserman makes clear, the text of the Matins for the Dead gradually came to play a key role in lay piety. This had some unintended consequences: "By the fourteenth century, and in England in particular, with outbreaks of plague in 1349 and periodically thereafter

<sup>35</sup> Leuchtman, 'Orlando di Lasso', p. xxiv.

<sup>36</sup> Philippe Rouillard, 'The Figure of Job in the Liturgy: Indignation, Resignation or Silence?', in: Christian Duquoc and Casiano Floristán, editors, *Job and the Silence of God*, Concilium 169 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> John T. Winemiller, 'Lasso, Albrecht V, and the Figure of Job: Speculation on the History and Function of Lasso's *Sacrae lectiones ex propheta Iob* and Vienna Mus. ms. 18.744', *Journal of Musicological Research* 12 (1993), p. 277. See also Lawrence L. Besserman, *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 56–57.



throughout the century, there was no shortage of opportunities for a cleric to supplement his income by reciting the Office of the Dead or other memorial services."<sup>38</sup> Its main consequence certainly was a widespread – Besserman says “daily” – experience of what became known in France and England as ‘le petit Job’ or ‘Pety Job’, among both the clergy and laity. In addition, this ‘little’ Job was frequently paraphrased in the vernacular. Thus, the selection of texts from the book of Job originating in the liturgy for the Office of the Dead came to represent the whole book of Job during the Middle Ages, where access to the book as a whole was restricted to the very few.

The texts of the *lectiones* follow the Vulgate translation of the book of Job— with only a few exceptions.<sup>39</sup> As indicated above, each of the *lectiones* has been taken from Job’s speeches to the friends, mostly from the first round of the discussion.<sup>40</sup> This might easily lead to the conclusion that the *lectiones* represent the boldly critical parts of the book of Job, where Job accuses God of injustice and arbitrariness.<sup>41</sup> Yet, this would be an all too superficial conclusion. Expressions of Job’s protests against God are certainly not absent, but the boldest accusations have been omitted. As Besserman remarks:

Overall, the movement in the lessons is one of oscillation from repentance to protest and back to repentance. As the compilers of the office intended, the lessons elicit that movement from grief to resignation to repentance and, finally, to hope which those who recite the office are meant to experience.<sup>42</sup>

In this regard, it is significant that chapter 10 of the book of Job is quoted almost in entirety in the *lectiones*, with the exception of the most critical part (10: 13–17), where Job accuses God of having created him (lectio two, Job 10: 8–12) only to torment him severely afterwards.

From the above, a picture emerges of a small though rather representative selection from Job’s speeches in the book of Job. This selection originated in the liturgy for the Office of the Dead, but developed into a particular vehicle of personal devotion. The question that arises is why Lasso wrote a motet cycle on these texts. Diverse reasons have been proposed. For example, it has been suggested that Lasso composed the motet cycle to the memory of his mother, who died shortly before Lasso returned to Flanders.<sup>43</sup> Part of the question of what motivated Lasso to compose this motet cycle is whether it was intended for liturgical use, as the choice of liturgical material suggests. As I said above, the first cycle was composed for the private use of the Bavarian duke Albrecht

<sup>38</sup> Besserman, p. 57.

<sup>39</sup> Bergquist (Peter Bergquist, ‘Preface’, in: Orlando di Lasso, *Two Motet Cycles for Matins for the Dead*, edited by Peter Bergquist, Recent Researches in the Music of the Renaissance 55 (Madison: A-R Editions, 1983), pp. xix–xxi) mentions a small number of cases where Lasso’s text differs from either the Vulgate or the *Liber usualis*, but all these differences can most probably be traced back to the modern version of the *Liber usualis* he used for his comparison. This is evident from Besserman’s integral quotation of a fifteenth century English version of the *lectiones*, which reflects the same Latin text as Lasso used in the *Lectiones* (Besserman, pp. 59–62).

<sup>40</sup> The quotations, preceded by the number of the *lectio*, are: (1) 7:16–21; (2) 10:1–7; (3) 10:8–12; (4) 13:22–28; (5) 14:1–6; (6) 14:13–16; (7) 17:1–3 and 11–15; (8) 19:20–27; (9) 10: 18–22.

<sup>41</sup> Rouillard, p. 9; David Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination: Revelation and Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 207.

<sup>42</sup> Besserman, p. 63.

<sup>43</sup> Winemiller, p. 274.

V, probably even upon explicit commission by the duke himself. John T. Winemiller's defence of this origin brings various important historical aspects of the *Lectiones* to light. First of all, Winemiller points to the fact that the *Lectiones* did not appear in print immediately after their publication, but were prepared in manuscript for the duke in "elegantly prepared" partbook format,<sup>44</sup> together with the – more well known – *Sibyline Prophecies*. The duke's initials 'A.H.,' appear on the metalwork binding them, which makes it reasonable that they were specially prepared for him. Elegant initials appear on each opening line of the *Lectiones* and twelve sibyls accompany the twelve Sibylline Prophecies. Additional evidence for Albrecht's commission of *Lectiones* and *Sibyline Prophecies* is, on the one hand, the parallel between the manuscript in which both cycles appear, and, on the other, the manuscript of the *Psalmos poenitentiales*, of which we are certain that it had been prepared upon the explicit commission of the duke. This manuscript was prepared by the same artists and published a couple of years later.<sup>45</sup>

The publication of a large composition of nine mostly long motets on the *lectiones* was unique in various respects. First of all, this was the first time that Lasso wrote a piece of this size in the genre of the motet. He had written various major motets already, but not yet a series of motets with a common theme. Second, the cycle was unique because no composer had written a musical setting of all the lections from the book of Job for the Office of the Dead. Various composers had written motets on individual lections, but not on all in a unified work. Finally, the cycle was unique in that it provided a polyphonic setting of the *lectiones*, and this again speaks against the idea that the cycle was intended for liturgical use. In liturgical services this was very unusual. The lections were generally performed in homophonic chant, and followed by polyphonic settings of the accompanying responsoria.<sup>46</sup> Add to this everything that has been said above about the role of the *lectiones* in lay devotional practice, and the most natural conclusion is that the cycle was probably not composed with a liturgical purpose in mind, but primarily intended for the private devotion of the duke.

In line with the observations described above, Winemiller argues for the *Lectiones* as an example of 'connoisseurs' music'; in the terminology of the time: *musica reservata*.<sup>47</sup> *Musica reservata* was explicitly intended by the composers of the time as music for the learned upper class, trained to appreciate the complex musical rhetorics employed to express all textual details in the music. Whether or not the experts can agree with the designation of the motet cycle as *musica reservata*, it has become amply clear from my analysis of the first *Lectio* presented above, that close attention to the text is the distinguishing feature of Lasso's music. That this sort of music can only flourish among the well educated and musically trained, is even evident from the incomprehensibility of this chapter to readers without sufficient musical training. Of course, given the cultural, social, and economic setting of this music, it *was* a phenomenon for the happy few. In this respect, it typically represents the emergence of an independent secular sphere in

<sup>44</sup> Winemiller, p. 275. The original manuscript is currently conserved by the Österreichische nationalbibliothek. Partbook format means an edition where each voice is printed separately.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 275–276.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 277–278.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 288–296.

society as described in the previous chapter. No longer was music only written for the church, and by composers who essentially belonged to the clergy. A secular ruler commissioned the preparation of a sacred work for his own private use, composed by a secular individual in service of the ruler.

## 5.6 JOB ACCORDING TO LASSO: MUSICOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In section 5.2, I presented various techniques used by Lasso for the musical expression of the text. In this section, I will first present some techniques that occur in later *Lectio*es. I start with the more easily comprehensible and gradually introduce the more complicated means of text expression. Subsequently, I address the question of what Lasso's music reveals about the way in which he interpreted the book of Job.

A recurring and easily understandable musical figure is the use of triple meter. On particularly sad phrases, three notes take the time of two.<sup>48</sup> This occurs in *Lectio* four, six, seven, and nine. The style of these passages is always the same. There is little motion and long note values – usually in a low register – decorated with strange chord progressions. For example, triple meter is used to set the text “qui quasi putredo consumendus sum,” (who am to be consumed as rottenness) in *Lectio* four. Another example is *Lectio* nine, where the end of the *Lectio* is set in triple meter: “terram miseriae et tenebrarum, ubi umbra mortis, et nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitat.” (A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death, and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth.)

The latter passage is also the prime example of another means of text expression: completely disordered music. In terms of sixteenth century musical theory, disordered music means the absence of cadences – the standard closures that provide the music with its rational structure – the absence of recognisable melodic shapes, and no recognisable order in the attacks of the different voices. These elements are all characteristic of Lasso's setting of the end of the cycle: “nullus ordo, sed sempiternus horror inhabitans”. A similar figure is found in *Lectio* five, on “et numquam in eodem statu permanet” (and never continueth in the same state).

A recurring figure present in the other *Lectio*es is the use of two part fragments. In one case, its meaning is rather obvious. In the final *Lectio*, the sufferer says “Fuissem quasi non essem,” (I should have been as if I had not been), which is expressed by Lasso by ‘almost no music’. The text is sung three times, the first time with only soprano and alto, the second time with only the tenor and bass voice, and the third time with soprano and alto again. One might of course ask why Lasso did not assign this phrase to only one voice. The most probable reason is that for the polyphonists of the sixteenth century, a one part piece of music lacked the minimal requirement of polyphonic music, the presence of one voice against another.

More two part settings of phrases occur, though, and not all can be easily explained as an expression of ‘minimalism’. Some may still be seen as related to

<sup>48</sup> Contra Meier, p. 241, who mentions the use of triple meter for expressing joy only.

The image displays a musical score for Lectio 9, "Fuissem quasi non essem". It consists of two systems of four staves each. The first system includes a vocal line (Soprano), a vocal line (Alto), a vocal line (Tenor/Bass), and a basso continuo line. The lyrics are: "Fu- is- sem qua- si non es- sem, de- ret! Fu- is- sem qua- si non es- sem, de- ret! Fu- is- sem qua- si". The second system continues the lyrics: "fu- is- sem qua- si non es- sem, de- u- te ro trans- la- fu- is- sem qua- si non es- sem, de u- te- ro trans- la- tus ad tu- mu- non es- sem, de u- te- ro trans- la- tus ad tu- mu- lum, non es- sem, de u- te- ro trans-". The music is written in a style typical of early modern lute tablature settings, with a common time signature and a key signature of one flat.

Figure 5.6: Lectio 9 "Fuissem quasi non essem"

notions of 'absence'. For example, in Lectio five, the sufferer asks God to "Recede ergo paululum ab eo" (Depart a little from him), which might be expressed by the music slightly 'receding' into the background due to the smaller number of voices. Still along the same lines may be cases in Lectio five, six, and seven. In Lectio five, the sufferer asks "Quis facere mundum," (Who can make him clean). The rhetorical nature of the question – nobody can bring forth the clean from the unclean – may have been expressed by the small number of voices. Likewise Lectio six, which opens with the question "Quis hoc tribuat," (Who will grant me this), is also a rhetorical question. In Lectio seven, a two part setting is found on "si sustinero" (If I wait). The 'withdrawal' of the text is expressed by the

withdrawal of the music.

A clear example of a rather different use of two part setting is the opening of the prima and secunda pars of Lectio four. On the text, "Responde mihi" (Do thou answer me), the two part setting is clearly used to suggest a dialogue between the soprano and alto on the one hand, and the tenor and bass on the other. The tenor and bass voices 'respond' to soprano and alto voices. Although less obvious, the two part fragment on "Scribis enim contra me" (For thou writest against me), could be interpreted as a musical expression of the opposition between God and the sufferer. Alternatively, one might see the specific use of two part counterpoint as a musical expression of the word 'contra'. All 'contra'-point rests upon the setting of two voices against one another.

Two two part fragments in Lectio eight and one in Lectio three are still unexplained by the discussion offered so far. Two part text expressions occur precisely in the settings of "scio enim [quod redemptor meus vivit,]" (For I know that my Redeemer liveth) and "Quem visurus ego ipse," (Whom I myself shall see). In the first case, "scio enim" is sung once by the tenor and bass voices. In the second case, "Quem visurus ego ipse," is sung twice, the first time by the tenor and bass voices, and the second time by the soprano and alto voices. It is hard to see why Lasso employs such a 'thin' setting of these texts because they seem emphatic expressions of the assurance of God's help on the part of the sufferer. The only explanation I see of these settings is that they fit the overall theology behind Lasso's music to which I will turn shortly. Similarly theologically motivated seems the two part setting of the opening phrase of Lectio three: "Manus tuae Domine [fecerunt me]" (Thy hands, Lord, have made me). The two part setting of this phrase is accompanied by irregular progressions on "fecerunt me" and a violation of the mode in the whole part of the Lectio.

Until now, the musical devices Lasso used for text expression were reasonably easy to follow. Things become more difficult when one proceeds to the various ways in which Lasso employed techniques related to the modes for expressing the text. In section 5.2, I have already introduced two ways in which violations of the mode are used for text expression. First, I showed that Lasso used accidentals foreign to the mode – in Lectio one, primarily e-flat – to lend certain chords particular force, usually for the sake of emphasising the sad affective characteristics of the text. Second, I provided some cases where Lasso deliberately introduced certain melodic motifs foreign to the mode to emphasise aspects of the text, for instance a violation of the mode on the word 'sin'.

Violations of the mode of the first kind abound in the *Lectiones*. Some of the most extravagant occur somewhat surprisingly in mode eight. On the phrase "et in novissimo die de terra surrecturus sum" (and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth) Lasso sets 'die' on an f-sharp minor chord, although the mode is in the third/fourth mode.<sup>49</sup> A little further, on "et in carne mea videbo Deum Salvatorem meum" (and in my flesh I shall see God my Saviour), 'Deum' has a B-flat major chord. On "et oculi mei conspecturi sunt, et non alius" (and my eyes shall behold, and not another), 'alius' is set on a B major chord.

Cases where pieces of melodic material foreign to the mode are introduced,

<sup>49</sup> For the difficulties of assessing the third and fourth mode, see Meier, pp. 165–170.

occur less frequently. There are some striking examples, however. In the second *Lectio*, the bass introduces the text “dimittam adversum me” (I will let go my speech against myself) with a motif starting on b-flat, deliberately ‘speaking against’ the overall mode of the *Lectio*, which is in mode seven—Mixolydian:



di- mit- tam ad- ver- sum \_\_\_\_\_ me,

Melodic material in violation of the mode need not always be used to illustrate notions of violation in the text. The most extensive violation of the mode is found in *Lectio* three. The second part of the *Lectio* is clearly in mode two transposed to g, with a b-flat key signature, defined by the range d'-d'', the final g, and repercussion b-flat. However, the whole first part of the *Lectio* is dominated by the defining notes a' and d'', so that the listener hears something like mode one untransposed, but with a b-flat key signature. This violation of the mode reinforces the otherwise negative mood in which Lasso sets a part of one of the most positive texts of the book of Job: “Manus tuae Domine fecerunt me, et plasmaverunt me totum in circuitu” (Thy hands, Lord, have made me, and fashioned me wholly round about). I referred to the two part fragment on “Manus tuae Domine” already. On “plasmaverunt me”, a capricious figure illustrates God’s act of creation.

An aspect of sixteenth century music that I have not touched on until now is the phenomenon of ‘irregular cadences’. These too are a forceful means for text expression in the *Lectiones*.<sup>50</sup> As I said in section 5.2 already, a mode is, apart from other things, defined by two notes: the final, which is the final note of the work, and the *repercussio*, the second most important note in the mode. One of the primary consequences of the mode is that it determines the nature of the cadences in classical polyphonic music. For example, when a work is in the fifth mode, also known as Ionian, cadences are expected to be on f, the final, and c, the repercussion. When a piece of music is in the second mode, also known as Hypo-Dorian – mostly transposed one fifth downwards to g – one expects cadences on g, the final, and b-flat, the repercussion. In mode two, cadences are also possible on d, the top of the range of the second mode—Lasso seems to have a particular preference for this.<sup>51</sup>

Cadences on notes other than the defining notes of the mode are powerful means of text expression in the view of sixteenth century composers. Lasso is no exception. In *Lectio* one, all cadences are on f or c,<sup>52</sup> except three. One is on a-mi, a very special case that I will discuss shortly, one is on g, and one is on b-flat. Not surprisingly, all three close the phrase “[et quaere non] aufers iniquitatem meam” (and why dost thou not take away my iniquity?), which, as described above, is set with a fauxbourdon figure repeated four times. A ‘correct’ cadence on c comes in between. Thus, in addition to the fauxbourdon figure used here

<sup>50</sup> Meier, pp. 248–285.

<sup>51</sup> In fact, cadences on the *repercussio* b-flat of mode two are rare in the *Lectiones*, whereas cadences on d above the final abound.

<sup>52</sup> Only cadences at the end of a phrase are counted. Full repetitions of the phrase ending with a cadence are counted twice, or as many times as the full phrase is repeated.

Ma- nus tu- ae Do- - mi- ne

Ma- - nus tu- ae Do- - mi- ne

Ma- nus tu- ae Do-

Ma- - nus tu-

fe- ce- runt me,

fe- ce- runt me, et

- mi- ne fe- ce- runt me, et plas- ma-

ae Do- - mi- ne fe- ce- runt me,

Figure 5.7: Opening phrases of Lectio three

to illustrate ‘iniquitatem’, an ‘iniquity’ against the mode occurs in the form of irregular cadences.

Similar things happen in other Lectiones. In Lectio four, irregular cadences occur on ‘abscondare’ (hide) – the mode is ‘hidden’ – and ‘amaritudo’ (bitterness)—the negative connotation of an irregular cadence. In Lectio six, an irregular cadence appears on ‘immutatio’ (change) – literally a ‘change’ of the rules of the mode. Remarkable irregular cadences appear in Lectio two, In Lectio nine, on the two part phrase “fuissem quasi non essem” (I should have been as if I had not been), a cadence on a makes the mode of the Lectio – mode two with g and b-flat as characteristic notes – literally ‘invisible’. A remarkable cadence appears

in Lectio two. An irregular cadence appears on “opus manuum tuarum” (the work of thy own hands) which is already decorated with a fauxbourdon figure. The phrase occurs in this sentence: “Numquid bonum tibi videtur si calumnieris et opprimas me *opus manuum tuarum* et consilium impiorum adiuves?” (Doth it seem good to thee that thou shouldst calumniate me, and oppress me, the work of thy own hands, and help the counsel of the wicked?) A similar phrase is found in Lectio six: “operi manuum tuarum” (to the work of thy hands) on which a fauxbourdon figure and an irregular cadence – this time, a so-called *clausula in mi* – also occur. It is difficult to explain why a phrase with an apparently positive reference to God’s creative power ends with an irregular cadence. As I will suggest below, this fits the overall view of God in the *Lectiones*.

Let me conclude this overview of musical devices in Lasso’s music with a discussion of the cadence mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph, the so-called *clausula in mi*.<sup>53</sup> One need not know the details of cadence theory to have a basic understanding of this type of cadence. In technical terms: normally, in the case of a ‘perfect’ cadence, the bass is one fifth above the final on the penultimate note of the cadence (‘A’ in figure 5.8), returning to the final on the ultimate note (‘B’ in figure 5.8).

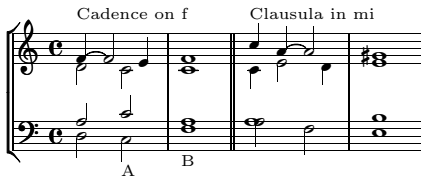


Figure 5.8: An ordinary cadence and a cadence in mi

However, given the nature of the musical scale – popularly phrased: given the ordering of white and black keys on the keyboard – this causes a problem in one case, namely a cadence on e—mi in technical terms. In a perfect cadence on e, the fifth above the final is b. In the perfect cadence, the penultimate note of the tenor would be f, one note above the final. In all modes, the penultimate notes of the bass and the tenor form a perfect fifth, except for the mode with final e, where the penultimate note of tenor and bass form an imperfect diminished fifth—popularly phrased, a dissonant. In classical music theory, this interval was forbidden – it was even called the *diabolus in musica* – and therefore, a cadence on e could not be formed in the usual way.

As one might expect, this irregularity of the cadence on e was assigned a special role for the expression of the text by Renaissance composers. *Clausulae in mi* become bearers of special meaning. Apart from the negative connotations that, as we have seen, are always typical for irregular cadences, *clausulae in mi* are especially used to express the affections of servitude, humility, fright and also prayer. In addition, *clausulae in mi* can be used to express affections of love, especially unhappy love, holiness, and piety.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Meier, pp. 96–99.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 273–277.



In the *Lectiones*, cadences on e occur in two ways, namely in *Lectiones* that are written in the modes with final e – mode three and four – and *Lectiones* based on other modes. *Lectio* six and eight are in mode three/four.<sup>55</sup> How much the *clausula in mi* is dominated by its role in text expression becomes clear from these two *Lectiones*. In *Lectio* eight, four cadences on e occur. Two in the first part, the first and the last cadence of the part, and two in the third part, again the first and the last cadence of the *Lectio*. The final cadence is more or less inevitable, because it would be very unusual to close a work in mode three/four on a note other than the final of these modes, note e. However, both at the end of the work and the end of part one, Lasso avoids a strict *clausula in mi*, apparently because there is no occasion for it in the text. Part one and part three of the *Lectio* end without a formal cadence. The other two cadences on e are real *clausulae in mi*. The first one occurs on “Peli meae consumptis carnibus [adhaesit os meum]” (The flesh being consumed, [my bone hath cleaved to my skin]). Here, the cadence on mi seems to reflect the generally sad affect expressed by the text. The second one closes the setting of “[Scio enim] quod redemptor meus vivit” (For I know that my Redeemer liveth). It seems that in the latter case, the expression of humility and holiness prevails.

In the other *Lectiones*, *clausulae in mi* occur too, always clearly prompted by the text. For example, in *Lectio* three, one occurs on the phrase “Memento quaeso” (Remember, I beseech thee) emphasising the petitionary character of the phrase. In *Lectio* seven, a *clausula in mi* occurs on “Spiritus meus [attenuabitur dies mei]” (My spirit shall be wasted), reflecting the negative mood of the text. Further on, one closes “[cogitationes meae dissipatae sunt,] torquentes cor meum” (my thoughts are dissipated, tormenting my heart). One might say that in the cases where Lasso uses a *clausula in mi* in the *Lectiones* to emphasise the sadness of the text, he does so to stress the subjectivity of the sufferer: “carnibus”, “spiritus meus”, and “cor meum”. At the end of *Lectio* seven, a clear example of a *clausula in mi* expressing humility and holiness is found once more on “Deus meus” (my God).

## 5.7 JOB ACCORDING TO LASSO: THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Many of the theological implications of this case do not so much concern Lasso’s involvement in the interpretation process, but rather the process of ‘selection’ that the text of Job underwent by being included in the liturgy for the Office of the Dead. Much of this selection process remained ‘invisible’ to the interpreter and the audience of the interpretation alike. For them, ‘little Job’ came to represent the book of Job as a whole. All that was available to the majority of the audience was the selection, not the book as a whole.

As various authors have indicated, the selection was remarkable,<sup>56</sup> because it was restricted to Job’s laments, completely ignoring the narrative, the speeches

<sup>55</sup> Bergquist, p. viii. Bergquist assigns both *Lectiones* to mode three, probably mainly on the basis of the ambitus. The dominant role of the repercussio of mode four, a above the final, however, goes against this suggestion. Thus, *Lectiones* six and eight confirm Meier’s view that mode three and four are difficult to distinguish in sixteenth century music.

<sup>56</sup> Brown, *Discipleship and Imagination*, p. 207; Rouillard, p. 9.

of the friends, and most surprisingly, the divine response. This has enormous consequences for the sort of 'Job' that results from this selection, of course. It means that the narrative dimension in the story is completely absent, including the role of Satan, the idea of the wager, and the question whether it is God or Satan who is responsible for the suffering of Job. In fact, one could argue that, in the *lectiones*, the book of Job is completely 'depersonalised'. In the *lectiones*, it is no longer clear for what reason Job spoke the laments taken up in the liturgy, and who responded to these laments. The question of why Job suffered has entirely disappeared. By omitting all these aspects of the book of Job in the *lectiones*, the *lectiones* was made into an ideal instrument in the hands of believers to express their grief, worries and protest about the suffering they experienced. Through the 'anonymous' character of the texts, the audience of the *lectiones* were invited, as it were, to fill in their own name, and make Job's words their own.

Of course, the one-sidedness of the selection also meant that, as far as the *lectiones* from the book of Job is concerned, Job's laments were not balanced against the other parts of the book. It depends on one's theological views whether one considers this a virtue or a vice, but at least two factors can be mentioned that alleviate this problem. In the context of the liturgy for the Office of the Dead, the problem is alleviated by other lections, primarily from the Psalms, in which God's goodness and care are more elaborately confirmed. As I will discuss below, the boldness of Job's complaint is alleviated, in Lasso's setting, by the theology of humility and submission implicit in the music.

As to the question whether the old form of the Office of the Dead lacks balance, it is significant that in the new liturgy for the Office of the Dead of the Second Vatican Council, all lections from the book of Job have been replaced by strong affirmations of faith from the letters of Paul. Only two responsoria save something of the original role of the book of Job. As might be expected, one of these responsoria quotes, "I know that my Redeemer lives."<sup>57</sup> whereas the other is in a sadder mood. In her book about the interpretation of Job through the centuries, Susan Schreiner argues that the Job of protest, doubt, and despair became particularly favoured in the twentieth century, whereas in the pre-modern period, Job's laments were always moderated or even criticised in one way or another—allegory (Gregory) or explicit criticism (Calvin).<sup>58</sup> In the liturgical realm, we see exactly the opposite: the Job of protest was in fact the Job of almost the whole second millennium, until it was replaced by affirmative expressions of faith in the twentieth century.

There is yet another theological aspect of the *lectiones* that precedes Lasso's setting of them, namely the important role of the Vulgate translation. The role of the translation is unique in this particular interpretation of the book of Job, because it matters not only in the sense of transmitting the content of the book of Job to the interpreter, but also in that it determines the form of the interpretation in many respects. The melody, rhythm, and sound of the interpretation were determined by the Latin text of the *lectiones*.

In terms of content, the Vulgate translation is responsible for the faith in the

<sup>57</sup> Rouillard, p. 10.

<sup>58</sup> Schreiner, pp. 156–190.

resurrection in the translation of Job 19:25, where “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last, he will stand upon the earth” is rendered in Latin as “Scio enim quod redemptor meus vivit, et in novissimo die de terre surrecturus sum” (I know that my Redeemer liveth, and on the last day, I shall rise out of the earth). As I have indicated above, Lasso’s text of the *lectiones* differed from the Vulgate text in several respects. The most important difference between the liturgical text and the Vulgate is found at the end of lectio seven. In the Vulgate, the last phrase runs as follows: “Ubi est ergo nunc praestolatio mea, et patientiam meam quis considerat?” (Where is now then my expectation, and who considereth my patience?). This expression of despair on the part of the sufferer is changed in the liturgical text to: “Ubi est ergo praestolatio mea, et patientia mea? Tu es Domine, Deus meus.” (Where is now then my expectation, and my patience? It is thou, oh Lord my God).

So far, all theological aspects of the *lectiones* were beyond Lasso’s control; they were given with the form of the text as Lasso received it. In addition to these, various theological aspects of Lasso’s setting of the *lectiones* can be discerned. Generally speaking, Lasso’s music is characterised by a strong emphasis on the emotional and moral aspects of the text. The aspects of the text that have some relation to emotional categories – sadness, joy, humility, love – or moral categories – right/wrong, sin, violation – usually receive an elaborate musical expression, whereas other aspects receive relatively little attention. Accordingly, one finds that Renaissance composers had a particular preference for the musical setting of biblical texts with strong emotional and moral overtones, for instance, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and the penitential Psalms. On the other hand, one should not take this judgement to imply that Lasso’s art reduces the biblical text to its emotional and moral elements. The devices available to the Renaissance composer were flexible enough to handle a great variety of content. This was due both to the variety of devices developed for text expression and the flexibility of each of these devices to express a wide spectrum of things. For example, the interruption of the musical flow by inserting a rest can be used to express many different things. In Lectio two, it is used to express ‘nihil’ (nothing) as well as ‘dormiam’ (sleep). In Lectio five, it expresses ‘quiescat’ (rest) and in Lectio six, it expresses ‘abscondas’ (hide). Similarly, as we saw above, violations of the mode can be used to express many different things.

On a more specific level, a fascinating by-product of the rhetorics of Lasso’s music is that sometimes, what we would probably consider key phrases receive a minimal treatment in Lasso’s music. An excellent example is the phrase “nihil enim sunt dies mei” (for my days are nothing), in Lectio one. The first sentence “Parce mihi, Domine: nihil enim sunt dies mei” (Spare me, Lord, for my days are nothing) seems to be the key statement of the sufferer, and the remainder of Job 7: 6–12 a further elaboration of it. However, due to the rhetorics of Lasso’s setting, the phrase “nihil enim sunt dies mei” receives a very minimal setting. Of course, precisely due to this minimal treatment, the music may catch the attention of the listeners, but it could also be that it simply escapes their attention.

The reverse of the phenomenon described is of course also true. In a number of cases, Lasso treats certain passages that the majority of today’s interpreters would consider of only secondary importance quite elaborately. This impression

is sometimes strengthened by an interpretive practice that Lasso's music shares with most of so-called pre-critical exegesis: disregard of the Hebrew *paralellismus membrorum*. For example: modern exegesis interprets "Cur non tollis peccatum meum, et quare non auferis iniquitatem meam?" (Why dost thou not remove my sin, and why dost thou not take away my iniquity?) in *Lectio* one as a parallelism, that is as two ways of saying the same thing. Lasso, however, treats both passages separately, and repeats the phrase "iniquitatem meam" four times. The ignorance of Hebrew parallelism is sometimes also evident from the fact that Lasso takes one part of the parallelism positively, while the other negatively. An example, again from *Lectio* one, is "Quid est homo, quia magnificas eum? aut quid apponis erga eum cor tuum?" (What is a man that thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost thou set thy heart upon him?) As we have seen, Lasso interprets the first positively and the second negatively.

Of course these aspects of Lasso's interpretation do not detract from the quality of the music. I merely want to illustrate how the music reflects the framework of interpretation behind it, and the cultural and theological interests directing the interpretation. The theological interests implicit in Lasso's *Lectio*nes is the final topic of this section. Throughout my analysis of the music, I have pointed to several phrases that bear in various ways upon the sufferer's relation to God. It is striking how many 'rule violating' devices Lasso uses to illustrate these parts of the biblical texts. Let me provide a quick overview of them so as to gain a clearer view of the problem at stake. First of all, there are two cases where direct calls upon God are accompanied by irregularities in the music: "o custos hominum" (*Lectio* one, E-flat chord), "Domine Deus" (*Lectio* seven, E-flat chord), and "Deum" (*Lectio* eight, B-flat chord). Furthermore, there are three references to God's creation of man where irregularities in the music occur: "opus manuum tuarum" (*Lectio* two, fauxbourdon figure and an irregular cadence), "operi manuum tuarum" (*Lectio* six, fauxbourdon-like figure and *clausula in mi*), and "Manus tuae Domine fecerunt me" (*Lectio* three, various violations of the mode). A different case, but still in the same sphere, is offered by *Lectio* three, where the *Lectio* ends with the phrase: "et visitatio tua custodivit spiritum meum" (and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit). Here, this apparently positive affirmation of God's care is set by Lasso with very little motion, a minimal fauxbourdon figure, and a *clausula in mi*. Finally, there are two cases where references to God are accompanied by a *clausula in mi*: "Deus meus" (*Lectio* seven), and "redemptor meus vivit" (*Lectio* eight).

The difficult question, of course, is how to interpret these results. Some of the examples might be explained away by arguing that Lasso simply interpreted these phrases in an overall negative way. This might be the case for "o custos hominum", which indeed seems to have a generally negative connotation. The same might go for "Manus tuae Domine fecerunt me", which in spite of its interpretation in positive terms by modern commentators, seems to be taken in a negative way by Lasso. However, more is at stake in the other cases, where references to God usually fit into a positive context. This is apparently the case with "Domine Deus" – which points to God as the only source of patience and perseverance – "redemptor meus vivit", and "Deum [salvatorem meam]"—which expresses the hope of the sufferer for God's act of redemption. The references to creation and

God's *visitatio* too can hardly be interpreted in a negative way. Therefore, the only viable explanation of these fragments is an explanation in terms of an attitude of humility and submission towards God which, as I have already indicated above, was typically connected with the *clausula in mi*. Starting from the widely attested role of the *clausula in mi* for expressing an act of humiliation and submission to God in music, the fauxbourdon figure and two part settings can be added to this as being typically connected with these affections.

This leads to an interesting observation when we compare Lasso's music with Calvin's sermons. Initially, the impression was that the theology of Calvin contrasted sharply with Lasso's setting of the *Lectiones*, because Lasso set those parts of the book of Job to music that Calvin so eagerly criticised. The reason why Calvin sometimes criticised the speeches of Job was precisely for their lack of submission to God's sovereign dealings with mankind. Although Lasso sets the speeches of Job to music, his view of God is not really different from Calvin's. In Lasso too, we find a sovereign God who deserves an attitude of humility, awe, and total submission. References to God's work of creation, care and presence takes the form of 'minimal music' – little motion, two part fragments – where the sufferer, as it were, bows down before God—the fauxbourdon figures are always downwards. This even goes for the passage where the sufferer most emphatically expresses his faith in redemption and salvation: "scio enim quod redemptor meus vivit", and "et in carne mea videbo Deum Salvatorem meum." Handel's believer triumphantly shouts "I know that my Redeemer liveth", and "in my flesh, I shall see God", whereas Lasso's sufferer comes no further than a faithful stumbling, full of awe and humility.

The comparison with Calvin is not only useful for a better understanding of Lasso's case, but also for Calvin's. Now that we know how central a role the selection from the book of Job in the *lectiones* played in devotional practice, and henceforth, the widespread knowledge of 'little Job' among lay believers, various aspects of Calvin's interpretation are illuminated. *First*, the consequences of the new role of Scripture come all the more clearly to the fore. Calvin's audience – which for the major part had only recently adopted the Reformed faith – was now confronted with the book of Job as a whole instead of 'little Job'. Instead of reciting the small selection as part of private devotion, they encountered the text in the form of a detailed explanation of the book in daily sermons. In addition, reciting the text as part of private devotion was probably discouraged as belonging to papal superstitions. *Second*, given the widespread acquaintance with the liturgical selection from the book of Job among lay believers, it is remarkable that in his sermons, Calvin seems not at all to presuppose any knowledge of the book of Job on the part of his audience. As far as I have able to notice, he never refers to the *lectiones*, not even in the sermons which have the texts of the *lectiones* as their topic. *Finally*, given the positive role that the speeches of Job played in liturgy and devotional practice, it is all the more surprising that Calvin, who must also have been well acquainted with the traditional function of Job, was so critical about the speeches of Job in his sermons. All in all, we see that Calvin's exposition of the book of Job, viewed in connection with its historical background, marks a radical break in the use of Scripture by lay believers, a break that even seems deliberately to do away with the old practices altogether.

## 5.8 HERMENEUTICAL REFLECTION

In the previous section, I already paid attention to various theological implications of the nature of the *lectiones* as a 'selection' from the book of Job. In this section, I would like to discuss the hermeneutical implications of the phenomenon of 'selection'. The notion of 'selection' or 'quotation' immediately brings to mind Derrida's analysis of 'quotation' in written communication. In chapter 3, the *Testament of Job* was a typical example of what Derrida and his followers have called 'intertextuality'. Texts are taken out of their original context and woven together into a new one together with other bits of text. In this chapter, we have a typical example of a text from which a small selection is taken, which comes to represent the whole.

For Derrida, the possibility of 'being quoted' and 'representing the whole' is not an accidental feature of only some texts, but rather a fundamental characteristic of all written communication. When we use a piece of text in a quotation, allusion or citation, the reference to the original creates an illusion of the presence of the original. At the same time, the very nature of the reference *as* reference implies the absence of the original.<sup>59</sup> We see this phenomenon of the 'written' beautifully illustrated in the *lectiones*—the 'little Job' of the Middle Ages. *On the one hand*, the *lectiones*' being a quotation of Scripture safeguards its authoritative nature. By virtue of the authoritative status of the text, the medieval readers or those who recite it as part of their private devotion, are fully justified in making Job's expressions of protest and suffering their own. *On the other hand*, the *lectiones*' being a quotation underlines the difference between the book of Job as a whole and the selection that represented the whole during the medieval period.

While being an interesting way of looking at the *lectiones*, Derrida's 'deconstruction' of the phenomenon of selection may also be seen as an artificial and anachronistic way of construing the relationship between the book of Job as a whole and its selection in the *lectiones*. After all, it seems artificial to interpret the *lectiones* in terms of a selection because, most of the time, its interpreters were not aware of its relation to the original book at all. The selection gradually received an authoritative status of its own, based upon its liturgical function, and, last but not least, its suitability for the concrete needs of the community.

Accordingly, it is important to notice that the idea that the meaning of a text is determined by being brought into being by its first author – a position I will discuss in chapter 8 – is in fact a very modern conception. Until the late fifteenth century, it was very uncommon for people, especially lay people, to read books in their entirety, simply because they were unavailable as such. Thus, a 'hermeneutics of authorial intention', in the sense of a hermeneutics according to which what the text means is what its first author had in mind, could only be developed after mechanical book printing had become widely used. An important issue for the history of the interpretation of Scripture follows from this. Modern histories of pre-critical exegesis – Schreiner's study, cited in this and the previous

<sup>59</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. from the French by Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 29–31; Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in: Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. from the French by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 325–327.

chapter, is a good example of this<sup>60</sup> – often write a history of the interpretation of a biblical book by concentrating on those rare cases in which a medieval interpreter discussed the whole or a large part of the biblical book under consideration. Thus, Schreiner describes the interpretation of the Book of Job in the medieval period by discussing Gregory the Great's *Moralia*, Maimonides *Guide of the Perplexed* and Aquinas' *Expositio super Iob ad litteram*. It may well be, however, that in spite of its name, Besserman's study *The Legend of Job in the Middle Ages* tells us more about the *interpretation* of the book of Job in the Middle Ages than Schreiner's study of those cases in which few intellectuals interpreted the book as a whole.

Taking these various aspects of the selection process behind Lasso's interpretation of Job together, it is clear that the role of context in Lasso's interpretation is not limited to the role of the interpreter, but is extended to the form, status, and function of the text. Hermeneutical questions easily presuppose a stable text that moves through different contexts of interpretation, with questions being raised as to whether or not the interpreters read the text in different ways, or whether or not they know the 'real' meaning. However, in Lasso's *Lectiones*, we have a clear example of a situation in which not only the role of the interpreter is determined by the context of the interpretation, but in which the text itself is also determined by the context. One cannot properly understand what happens in Lasso's interpretation of Job if one does not take into account what text he used, and what role this text played in his context.

Finally, the analysis of Lasso's *Lectiones* provides further material for reflection upon what I called an *aesthetic mode of interpretation* in chapter 3. In my discussion of the *Testament of Job*, I argued that the narrative form of the *Testament* made for a particularly 'open' interpretation of the book of Job, enabling readers to go along with the *Testament's* analysis of evil and suffering when they wish to, while departing from it in other cases. In the *Lectiones*, we have another case of an aesthetic transformation of the book of Job. The question is whether the *Lectiones* are as open to different appropriations as the *Testament* is. At first sight, this seems to be the case. A piece of music like the *Lectiones* is appreciated by listeners in many different ways. If one attends a concert performance of Renaissance music, one will see that listeners enjoy the music in a variety of ways. Many will merely enjoy the beautiful sound without even knowing the content of the text. Others attentively watch the incredible capabilities of the performers, and yet other listeners read their programmes carefully while listening to the music. This enumeration of different listening attitudes still leaves the different levels of religious commitment accompanying the listening experience out of consideration.

In spite of these very different ways of listening to Renaissance music that we find in today's concert halls, I would like to defend the view that Lasso's music is not as open as it seems. For today's listeners, Renaissance music is open to different appropriations precisely because the listeners lack information about it in many areas. First, very few people nowadays read Latin, whereas in Lasso's context, the majority of the listeners to his music had a profound passive and active proficiency in that language. Lasso's listeners did not need to follow the text of the music in a textbook, translate it, and possibly investigate the relationship

<sup>60</sup> Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom be Found?*.

between text and music. They understood the meaning of the text immediately in the original language. It is much less easy to ignore a text being spoken in a language one is familiar with than to ignore a text in a foreign tongue. This explains much of the ignorance of the text on the part of today's listeners.

Furthermore, today's listeners have almost completely lost the sensitivity to the musical language employed in this music, for example the use of modal techniques. To us, or at least to me, many aspects of Lasso's techniques of composition appear as techniques – or, negatively formulated: as 'tricks' – that even need to be reconstructed in terms of rather fragmentary knowledge we have of the theories used by Renaissance composers. Especially our understanding of modal techniques is hindered by the fact that our current experience of music, whether we are familiar with classical or popular music, is wholly determined by the principles of post-Renaissance tonality, a way of thinking about tone, scale and mode which is radically different from the modal system practiced before. This makes it very difficult for us to 'feel at home' in this kind of music. Nevertheless, we should realise that many elements of this music that count for us as 'artifice', belonged to the, perhaps even implicit, cultural heritage of the time.<sup>61</sup> We must carefully scrutinise the melodic flow and the nature of the cadences to discover the irregularities that make up a major part of Lasso's means of expressing the text. However, Lasso's contemporaries probably had such a natural sensitivity to the properties of the mode, the (ir)regularities of melody and cadence that they were able to relate text and music to each other as a matter of course.

The *Lectiones* are not only less open to different appropriations than the *Testament* for accidental reasons. The hermeneutics intrinsic in these two different sorts of aesthetic interpretations of the book of Job makes for a particularly open interpretation in the *Testament* on the one hand, but a rather focused interpretation on the other. One could describe the interpretation of Job in the *Testament* as a creative retelling of the book of Job. Rather than aiming at an interpretation that keeps as close to the original book as possible, the *Testament* focuses on those aspects of the book of Job which evoke further reflection, for example the role of Job's wife, the reason why Job had to suffer. The *Testament* is *not* intended to mimic the book of Job. Quite the contrary. This kind of creative interpretation is frequently found in aesthetic transformations. Naturally so, because there is always a major role for imagination in art.

Without denying the major role played by imagination in Lasso's *Lectiones*, it could be said that what we have here is an aesthetic interpretation of the text of Job with the explicit aim to keep as close to the text as possible. Lasso does not aim to fill gaps, or do interesting things of which it does not matter whether or not they are true. The aim of the musical rendering of the text is to express the meaning and message of the text as accurately as possible. This is what the theorists of the time – Zarlino for example – called the *imitazione della parola*.<sup>62</sup> What is intended is, as it were, a magnifying of the text in the music.

<sup>61</sup> This makes me hesitate about Winemiller's argument that the *Lectiones* were written for the private devotion of the Duke because there is so much "artifice" in them. What counts as 'artifice' is influenced considerably by one's cultural background. Winemiller, pp. 290–296.

<sup>62</sup> Walther Dürr, *Sprache und Musik: Geschichte – Gattungen – Analysemodelle*, Bärenreiter Studienbücher Musik 7 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1994), p. 53.



For an appropriate understanding of what is at stake, it might help to contrast Lasso's 'imitation' of text in music with the so-called 'program music' at the end of the nineteenth century, for example well-known works like the *Pictures at an exhibition* by Modest Mousorgsky or the *Carnaval des Animaux* by Camille Saint-Saens. What is at stake is not simply the portrayal of what is said in the text in the music. One might find some instances of text expression in Lasso that resemble the imaginary portrayal of the words of the text, for example, quick movement on the phrase "[Contra folium,] quod vento rapitur, [ostendis potentiam tuam]" ([Against a leaf,] that is carried away with the wind, [thou shewest thy power]) in *Lectio* four. However, this is not the heart of the matter. What happens in Lasso's – and other Renaissance composers' – music is in fact the elevation of traditional rhetorics of speech to the level of a rhetorics of music. Classical rhetoric as it was taught to every well-educated person in the late Middle Ages is an elaborate method, system, and toolkit for the art of speaking and writing well.<sup>63</sup> It contains a structured method for ordering one's thought (*inventio*), ordering one's speech or text (*dispositio*), and decorating one's speech or writing (*elocutio*) with the language appropriate to an effective communication of the message, building upon the works of such great rhetoricians as Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian. The firm theoretical basis of the polyphonic music of the Renaissance period, with its beautiful sonorous sound, its 'relaxing' harmonies, the stable structure of the imitative counterpoint – briefly: the art of 'sounding well' in all the details – is to be attributed to the conscious development of a rhetorics of music parallel to the rhetorics of speech. A detailed system of exercises, advices and requirements was developed to ensure the effective communication of the musical and textual message of the composition. Therefore, Lasso's music is not simply a creative transformation of the texts of Job, but rather a profoundly rule-based rendering of the rhetorics of the text in terms of the rhetorics of music.

Let me go into some detail to make a bit clearer what I have in mind. Classical rhetorics taught how one should choose one's words in such a way as to reflect the message one intends to convey most accurately. If the mood of the text is sad, one needs to speak slowly, with a low register. If one is expressing one's anger, one must speak loudly.<sup>64</sup> If one wants to catch the attention of the audience, one might deliberately violate the rules of politeness, so that the audience wonder what the speaker means with the violation of the rules.<sup>65</sup> Also, a speaker might catch the attention of the audience by suggesting a certain course of the speech – for example: announce that the lecture is going to be finished – and change the course of the lecture afterwards—e.g. go on for another quarter of an hour.<sup>66</sup> Lasso's music works in a similar fashion. In the fauxbourdon figure which we

<sup>63</sup> What I am describing below are very much the default components of classical rhetoric that one easily comes across in recent introductions to classical rhetorics, or in the well known works on rhetoric by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintillian. These works were still the basis of the rhetorical training in the medieval study of the arts. For a very fascinating introduction to classical rhetoric, I would recommend Cicero's *De oratore*, which is easily available in translation. This work from Cicero is interesting because the rhetoric which is being taught to the student is practiced at the same time.

<sup>64</sup> Cicero, *De Oratore libri tres*, 3, 210–212.

<sup>65</sup> Heinrich F. Plett, *Einführung in die rhetorische Textanalyse*, 5th edition (Hamburg: Buske, 1983), p. 25.

<sup>66</sup> Cicero, 3, 200–209.

encountered a number of times, Lasso draws attention to the sad or humble mood of the text by violating the rules of a 'polite' flow of the music. The chords in the music do not differ pleasantly, as in a well written piece of music, but are in a parallel position. Something similar happens with the irregular cadences. Well trained listeners expect cadences to have a stereotypical form on particular notes of the mode. The attention of the listener is caught through the violation of the rule. As we have seen, even these violations of the rule are again rule based most of the time, such as is the case with the *clausula in mi*, and the fauxbourdon figure.

Of course, I do not suggest that the rule-based character of Lasso's music leaves no room for creativity, or that it makes for a closed listening experience which allows only one appropriation. What I want to show is that in Lasso's music, we have a clear example of an aesthetic mode of interpretation which is not, as in the *Testament of Job*, aimed at creating room for readers to enter or leave at will, but rather at moving the listener to the heart of the text and letting him or her experience the truth of the text as effectively as possible. If I am not mistaken, we are nowadays most familiar with the 'open' character of artistic interpretations of reality. Art is generally seen as providing 'interesting insights' or something like that. For this reason, some contemporary theologians favour 'narrative theology' or theologies in which the 'imagination' plays a major role, above theologies that adhere explicitly to certain doctrinal positions.<sup>67</sup> It is important, however, to see that art need not be particularly open to different appropriations at all. Aesthetic transformations of a message may serve equally to narrow down the message to its bare essentials, focusing rather than relativising it.

<sup>67</sup> Two notable examples are the 'school' of Hans Frei, for example George Lindbeck and Garrett Green, and an older classic: Dennis Nineham, *The Use and Abuse of the Bible: A Study of the Bible in an Age of Rapid Cultural Change*, Library of Philosophy and Religion (London and Basingstroke: Macmillan, 1976).