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Imitation, adaptation, arrangement: current compositional practices in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance exemplified by a comparison between French chansons of Orlando di Lasso and Jean de Castro

Imitation, adaptation, arrangement: these techniques of re-using existing material or adapting it to new goals and functions are among the most typical procedures of Western music from Gregorian chant to the eighteenth century, when a composition became more and more a finished and unassailable product, a true 'opus' (that's why German musicologists rightly speak of 'Opusmusik'). The originality of a musician as a 'composer', as someone who was bringing order to a world of sounds, was linked not so much with his finding something completely new, as with making connections with something existing, with trying out new combinations, with making references, sometimes very ingenious ones, to compositions of contemporary or previous composers.

Until the ninth century the increasing repertory of Gregorian chant had to be memorized, because an efficient musical notation had not yet been invented, and even after the introduction of the so-called 'neumes' from the ninth century on, only the direction of the melody was notated and not the exact pitch. Hence the need to invent new melodies based on existing ones, the so-called 'centonization', from 'cento', meaning 'patchwork': a new chant was made up of selections from pre-existing musical units. This procedure is of basic importance in the repertory of the Tracts, the chants occurring before the gospel on days of penitence (especially during Lent), all of which make use of standard phrases.

Even after the introduction of the staff and the rise and flowering of polyphony, a 'score' was merely a guideline for performance, but at the same time a challenge to other composers to use the music for other works. One of the most typical examples of this manner of composing is the motet of the thirteenth century: based on a small fragment of Gregorian chant, first new voices were added (a duplum or second voice, a triplum or third voice, even a quadruplum or fourth voice) in Latin, French or in both languages. Afterwards voices were omitted or replaced by others, or the same were preserved with changes in text and language. Interactivity and interchange within this extremely fascinating repertory were very common. Motets seem to be exemplary of 'works in progress', comparable with what Pierre Boulez and others did and are still doing in the second half of the twentieth century.

Despite the increasing individualisation of composing practice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, arrangement and adaptation continued to be used frequently and on a very high level. At that time imitation did not imply a lack of personality or of inspiration. On the contrary. Imitation in the broadest sense of the word was regarded in the first place as a form of tribute to an admired model and not as plagiarism. The famous fifteenth century theoretician Johannes Tinctoris advised composers to take on their travels some good musical themes from existing works, in order to have at their disposal at every moment something useful to start a new composition of their own! Especially famous is the repertory of the so-called 'parody mass', in which musical settings of the ordinary of the mass are based on existing polyphonic works; this can be illustrated with the outstanding production of such first-rate composers as Orlando Lasso and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. The flemish composer Adriaan Willaert, for 35 years maestro di cappella of St. Mark's in Venice (between 1527 and 1562), based most of his parody masses on motets by his teacher Johannes Mouton, who instructed him in the principles of music during his (Willaerts) stay in Paris.

Undoubtedly one of the most, if not the most frequently, imitated composers of the whole 16th century was Orlando di Lasso, "le plus que divin Orlande", "the more than divine Orlande" as the famous French Renaissance poet Pierre de Ronsard called him. Thanks to the internationalization of music printing, his music enjoyed a degree of circulation unknown up to that time.

However, it was not so much the quantity and variety of his music that was praised by composers, theoreticians and poets of the day, but rather its quality and in particular its expressivity and humanity. Accordingly, it is not surprising that innumerable composers held him up as the ideal example to be imitated, and even to be emulated. The degree of intensity of this *imitatio* is astonishing, permeating the most diverse reaches and all phases of the compositional process.

(1) Some composers borrowed texts from Lasso's motets. This is clear from the many cases where, besides his original, only one setting of a text exists. For example, Alexander Utendal, singer, vice-Kapelmeister and outstanding composer at the court of Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol in Innsbruck, appropriated Lasso's texts for two secular, humoristic motets (*Hispanum ad coenam*, in which the composers, both originary of the Low Countries, mock at the Spanish occupier, and *Deus qui bonum vinum creasti*, a song of praise of the wine as a parody of a liturgical prayer).

(2) Some composers drew from specific Lasso's collections for their own editions, either in imitation of the admired example or in competition with the master, or perhaps a bit of both. Alexander Utendal again provided a striking example: at the insistence of his patron archduke Ferdinand, the composer presented his collection of *Septem psalmi poenitentiales* of 1570 as a kind of artistic counterpart tot the famous and 'secret' Penitential Psalms Lasso about 1559 composed as 'private music' for his patron, duke Albrecht of Munich. Utendal 'outdid' his model by applying the new theory of the twelve modes, propagated by the Swiss humanist writer Henricus Glareanus in his tract *Dodecachordon* (1547), while Lassus had held to the old system of the eight modes.

(3) One of the most common examples of the *imitatio* is the technique of the contrafactum, in which the music of a composition is preserved, but the text has been changed. Besides the publication in Germany of German contrafacta based on Lasso' French chansons, in France itself Lasso' chansons were the preferred models for religious contrafacta made by the strict Huguenots. Their admiration for the musical qualities of his work was such that they chose to recast his sometimes dubious and bawdy texts in order to adopt his music, rather that to turn to other composers who had not lowered themselves to such scandalous ditties capable of sullying Christian ears and inciting the youth to moral depravity!

(4) The most current imitation practice was of course, as I already mentioned, the so-called parody, whereby a secular or sacred composition served as the point of departure for a mass composition. Here again Lasso multifaceted oeuvre was an almost inexhaustible source of inspiration. At least fifty-five masses were composed on Lasso's models by other composers than Lasso himself.

(5) Less common was the process of "reworking", in which a composition originally written for four or more voices was "arranged" for three, the so-called 'tricinium' (a composition for three voices). This imitation technique seems to have enjoyed a remarkable vogue amongst the nobility and the well-off bourgeoisie in Antwerp at the end of the sixteenth century. One of the outstanding specialists in this genre was the flemish composer Jean de Castro, a fervent admirer of the art of Orlando di Lasso. In his debut, a collection of music for three parts, edited in Antwerp in 1569, he included several popular genres at that time, namely French chansons, Latin motets and Italian madrigals. He later concentrate exclusively on these genres. Unlike Lassus he composed only a few masses. Jean de Castro appears to have worked chiefly as a freelance composer, without an official position, firstly in Antwerp and in Lyons (in France) between 1569 and 1586 and later in Cologne from 1591 until 1599. His only official connection to a court was limited to only a short period in his career, namely from 1588 until 1591 at the Düsseldorf court of Johann Wilhelm, Duke of Jülich-Kleve-Berg. He probably died in 1599 or 1600.

As an illustatrion of the sixteenth-century technique of arrangement, I would like to compare the three-part French chansons by de Castro with the chansons for four and five voices by Lassso on the same texts which de Castro took as a starting point for a close, but very personal and musically very interesting 'arrangement'. This arrangements however are no slavish copies of Lasso's four- and five- part examples, simply omitting one or two voices, but they are rather well-considered adaptations of a composer who succeeds in developing his own style during the first part of his career in Antwerp. Indeed de Castro's Lasso-imitations belong exclusively to his earlier production, and are to be found in three publications which appeared between 1569 and 1575.

I especially would like to discuss some basic principles that de Castro used in his arrangements of 31 chansons by Lasso.

The most striking similarities are:

1.The choice of the same mode, and
2.The identical structure.

1. The choice of the same mode. In some cases the chanson by de Castro finishes on a different note than the finalis, but in the modes concerned this is not exceptional. (*Mon coeur se recommande a vous* ends on D, the fifth in the G Dorian mode, *En un lieu* ends on G, the fifth of a mode with C as the finalis, *Le vray ami* ends on A, the fourth in a mode with finalis E).

2. The identical structure. Apart from the choice of the mode, de Castro also borrows the overall-structure of Lasso's chansons. Through-composed chansons of Lasso remain that way in De Castro's versions. Repetitions in Lassus' chansons have been retained by De Castro. For example when Lasso applies an ABA-form or when he repeats the same music for successive verses, De Castro does the same.

Concerning the mode and the overall- or macro-structure, de Castro followes Lasso's example. The further elaboration of the chansons varies, as will be shown in the following examples. Starting from some basic principles of the parody, it is clear that de Castro seldom borrows literally, in the sense of a "vertical quotation", which means the literal citation of a polyphonic fragment (as usually occurs in a parody mass). De Castro's imitation is mainly restricted to one of the more free forms of parody, namely the borrowing of melodic motives which he manipulates in his own way, deviating from the model.

The following examples from the beginning of a number of chansons will illustrate De Castro's working method:

a. In *Petite folle* (ex. 1) De Castro closely follows Lasso's example. The four entries in the four voices of Lasso's version (on f in the contratenor and the bass, on c in the superius and the tenor) have been retained by De Castro in the three voices, but starts in fact with the second entry, namely the bass of Lasso's chanson, which he places in the second voice one octave higher. The entries on c follow in the superius and the tenor (the same as Lasso). De Castro's fourth entry corresponds with the first entry of Lasso. The continuation on the text *estes vous pas contente* has not been taken on.

b. De Castro clearly refers to Lasso in *Sur tous regretz* (ex. 2), extending however the initial motive: on the one hand he uses the augmentatio (extensively lenghtening the first note of the superius), on the other hand there is the extreme extension of the melisma to highlight th first words *Sur tous regretz*. The overemphasis on certain details will be discussed later.

c. De Castro's reference to Lasso in *Vous qui aimez les dames* (ex. 3) is much more free. Starting with a related motive, similar to Lasso as regards the rhythm and the ascending movement, De Castro delays the appearance of Lasso's melody until the fourth bar, where we can see in the superius the entry of Lasso's tenor.

d. The texture of the beginnning of the chanson generally corresponds with Lasso. Strictly seen two textures are possible: a horizontal (imitation) or a vertical texture (homophony). Sometimes De Castro exchanges the textures, as in *Je l'ayme bien* (ex. 4). In the upper voice he borrowed Lasso's four-note motive, presenting it however in augmentation and with a rather harmonic lower part (tenor: d − c sharp − d − g). The sequel is mainly imitative. The opposite can be seen in *Veux tu ton mal* (ex. 5): the homophony of Lasso has been changed to an imitative texture, for which the cadence-like motive from the bass has been borrowed. Homophony and homorythm occur much less in De Castro's chansons than in those of Lasso. The reason seems to be that in a three-part setting the harmonic possibilities are rather limited (less complete chords), hence counterpoint is the appropriate technic to keep the tricinia more interesting.

At first view De Castro's approach to the French chanson does not heavily deviate from Lasso's. However, as will be seen, De Castro's ideas in connection with rhytm, micro-structure and the text-music relation differ quite much from those of Lasso.

As to the microstructure, Lasso clearly writes in broader melodic units, while De Castro splits up the phrases in short, often repeated units. Although Lasso is known to build up phrases based on micro-motives (certainly in his chansons), De Castro goes much further in this splitting up-technique. Some examples will illustrate this feature.

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The comparison of the upper voice of the beginning of *Le rossignol plaisant et gratieux* (ex. 6) of the versions of both composers immediately reveals what I mean. De Castro splits up the poetic line with several small entities: *Le rossignol − le rossignol − plaisant et gratieux − et gratieux*. The same treatment occurs in the other voices. Evidently the contrapuntal texture, in which the imitative web disguises the frequent caesuras, guarantees a continuous musical flow.

Melodically, Lasso aims at more balanced phrases. De Castro preferes short, witty, nervous motives. This is exemplified in the final part of the chanson *Ce faux amour* on the text *d' avoir vaincu celuy qui vainc les dieux* (ex. 7). Lasso repeats this whole final part. De Castro merely repeats the four-note motive *D'avoir vaincu*, interrupted by rests, to build up the final phrase. Lasso's upper voices present the main line *D'avoir vaincu celuy qui vainc les dieux* in a more fluent melodic line, mainly built up of seconds and slowly descending to the cadence. The lower voices support this line initially with a vivid rhytmic pattern, also repeating the four note-motive *D'avoir vaincu*, but without interruptions, which results in a continuous melodic flow. De Castro's four-note motive is derived from the bass motive of his model, which as a consequence consists of larger intervals (thirds, fourths and fifths).

Notable differences can be pointed out in the rhytmical structure as well. Rhytmically De Castro's music is more restless than Lasso's. De Castro favours small note values (semiminimae) much more than Lasso does. A close look at some examples reveals the following three character-istics:

a. De Castro's rhythm is more dominated by syncopation than Lasso's. Particularly the pattern short-long-short is preferred by De Castro, with the other voices often in a complementary rhythm, again a interesting method to enliven three-part writing. Example 8: the line *En tous lieux comme ton servira* in *Du corps absent*.

b. De Castro often concludes a phrase by way of the rhytmical pattern short-short-long-long (two semimimimae and two minimae), instead of a slowly extended phrase towards the cadence. This may result from De Castro's preference for short note values. Lasso also uses this procedure, though much less frequently. I cite only on example: in *Est-il possible* on the texts *Pour avoir votre grace* and *Ou mon coeur se trespasse* (ex. 9).

c. In Lassus' case the dactylic rhythm, typical of the French chanson, is an impulse to a movement which immediately, or at least shortly afterwards, decelerates. When using the dactylic rhytm De Castro will rather continue with the quicker part of the rhytmical pattern, namely the last two short note values, for example on the beginning of *A ce matin ce seroit bonne estreine* (ex. 10).

Another important difference lies in the way in which both composers set the text to music in view of the representation of the content, whether depicting or affective. Although Lasso regularly emphasises details, this technique remains subordinate to the general atmosphere of the composi-tion. Unlike Lasso, de Castro sometimes over-emphasises the madrigalistic detail. The result is music full of contrasts and nervosity, often rather detailed than contributing to the general atmo-sphere of the chanson, more focused on the 'micro-' than the 'macro'-structure, as typical for many late-16th-century composers, especially of Italian madrigals. Examples are abundant:

a. exuberant melismas occur on:
- *vivant d'espoir* (living in hope) in *Du corps absent* (note also the manifest octave leap) (ex. 8).
- *loing* (far away) in *Mes pas semés* (ex. 11)
- on words as *chanter* (to sing) in *Las voulez-vous* (ex. 12).

b. extreme rhytmical contrast.

Compare the slow movement on *Las voulez-vous* with the quick melisma on *chanter* at the beginning of *Las voulez-vous qu'une personne chante* (ex. 12).

Finally I will give some observations on the level of the harmony and the accidentals, a level on which De Castro's work again seems to be more bizarre than Lasso's. De Castro inserts more accidentals, Lasso uses them more deliberately, in view of a subtle representation of an affective detail. Lasso reserves the 'strange' chords for more exceptional effects. For example Lasso uses a chord on b flat on *Las* in *Ce faux amour* (ex. 13) and on *triste* in *Le rossignol plaisant* (ex. 14), in both cases quite effective within the context. De Castro neglects these expressive details. I cite some examples of De Castro's harmonic colouring, that, compared with Lasso, again appears more capricious:

- the beginning of *Vous qui aimez les dames* (alternation of f-sharp- f and c sharp-c) (ex. 3),
- the beginning of *Du corps absent* (ex.15),
- the beginning of *Mes pas semez* (ex. 11).

With this comparison I hope to have illustrated some aspects of the principle of arrangement, as exemplified by the French chansons of Orlando di Lasso and Jean de Castro. In adapting Lasso's four and five-part chansons to a three-part setting, a possible impoverishment of the harmony is compensated by an increase of contrasts in the microstructure and in the rhythm, by an emphasis on expressive details and by the insertion of alterations. With his arrangements De Castro possibly contributed to the spread and the popularity of the French chansons of Lasso. It would be unjust to label De Castro a mere plagiarist of Lasso, the more so because the principle of imitation in the 16th century was looked differently than it is now. However, in this postmodernist era, which is not averse to a return to the aesthetics of earlier periods, a rehabilitation of these Lasso imitations and of musical arrangements as a whole need to be considered.

As conclusion I would like to present another excellent example of the principle of imitation and arrangement, taken from the motet repertory of the sixteenth century, namely a motet based on the text *Adesto dolori meo*, from the book of Job. Three motets have been composed on this text: one by Clemens non Papa, one by Giaches de Wert, chapelmaster at the Gonzaga court of Mantua and especially famous for his madrigals, and the third one by the already mentioned Alexander Utendal. The musical genealogy is clear from the melodic motif on the initial words *Adesto dolori meo*. Clemens non Papa, whose motet was published in 1553, already based his motif on the fourth which he fills in diatonically. In his motet, edited in 1566, de Wert strengthens the expressive quality of the words by adding a semitone within the fourth. Utendal in his turn fills in the fourth with all the possible chromatic tones in his motet published in 1573, following the most recent procedures of the Italian madrigal with which he certainly became acquainted through the works of de Wert.

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Ex. 1   De Castro, *Petite folle*

Lasso, *Petite folle*

Ex. 2   De Castro, *Sur tous regretz*

Lasso, *Sur tous regretz*

Ex. 3

De Castro, *Vous qui aimez*

Lasso, *Vous qui aimez*

Ex. 4

De Castro, *Je l'ayme bien*

Lasso, *Je l'ayme bien*

Ex. 5 — De Castro, *Veux-tu*

Lasso, *Veux-tu*

Ex. 6 — De Castro, *Le rossignol*

Lasso, *Le rossignol*

Ex. 7   De Castro, *Ce faux amour*

Lasso, *Ce faux amour*

Ex. 8   De Castro, *Du corps absent*

Lasso, *Du corps absent*

Ex. 9   De Castro, *Est-il possible*

Lasso, *Est-il possible*

Ex. 10   De Castro, *A ce matin*

Lasso, *A ce matin*

Ex. 11   De Castro, *Mes pas semés*

Lasso, *Mes pas semés*

Ex. 12

De Castro, *Las voulez-vous*

Lasso, *Las voulez-vous*

Ex. 13

Lasso, *Le rossignol*

Ex. 14   De Castro, *Ce faux amour*

sis - ter il luy fault: Las! il me brul - le, ô que son feu est chault

sault, re - sis - ter il luy fault: Las! il me brul - le, ô que son

re - sis - ter il luy fault: las! il me brul - le, ô que son feu est

Lasso, *Ce faux amour*

me   Sus à l'as_saut,   Sus à l'assaut!   re_si_ster   il   luy   faut,

_ _me! Sus   à l'as_saut, Sus   à l'assaut!   re - si - ster il   luy   faut,

me!   Sus à l'assaut,   sus à l'assaut!   re _ si _ ster il   luy   faut,

l'ar _ me   Sus à l'as_saut,   sus à l'assaut!   re_si _ ster il luy   faut,

Ex. 15   De Castro, *Du corps*

Du   corps ab - sent   le coeur,   du   corps

Du   corps   ab - sent le   coeur,   le   coeur je te pr - sen - te,

Du   corps   ab - sent, du corps ab

Lasso, *Du corps*

Superius   Du   cors   ab _ sent   le   coeur   je te pre _ sen _ _ te, Qui

Contratenor   Du   cors_____ ab _ sent le coeur_____ je te_____ pre_sen _ _te, Qui

Tenor   Du   corps   ab _ sent le coeur   je   te_____ pre_sen _ _te,

Bassus   Du cors_____ absent le   coeur   je te presen _ _te,   Qui

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Summary

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Imitation, adaptation, arrangement: current compositional practices in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance exemplified by a comparison between French chansons of Orlando di Lasso and Jean de Castro

'Imitatio', the principle of emulating the work of great artists (predecessors as well as contemporaries), was one of the most important aesthetic principles during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, in art as well as in music. Orlando di Lasso (1532-1594), the most famous composer of the 16th century, must obviously be considered as one of the most outstanding 'models' for imitation. Lasso himself based several of his works, particularly masses, but also Magnificats, on existing works by other composers whom he held in great admiration (like Josquin Desprez, Adriaan Willaert, Cipriano de Rore, Nicolaas Gombert, Philippus de Monte, a.o.). At least 70 masses, so-called 'parody masses', were based on works by Lassus. Not yet thoroughly studied are the many 'arrangements' of Lasso's chansons, madrigals and motets by his contemporaries. One of the specialists of arranging works by Lasso was Jean de Castro (ca. 1540/45-ca. 1600), who wrote an impressive number of three-part chansons, madrigals and motets modelled after works for four to six voices on the same text by other composers, preferably Lasso. The compositional principles which formed the basis for these arrangements will be explained and illustrated by means of a comparison between the original (the 'model') and the 'parody' (the 'arrangement'). This paper will contribute to our understanding of the conception of a musical 'work' (an 'opus') in the 16th century, in which 'originality', a typical concept of the romantic era, was not (yet) a self-evident prerequisite for composing.