

“RECHT BITTER UND DOCH SÜßE”:

TEXTUAL AND MUSICAL EXPRESSION OF MYSTICAL LOVE
IN GERMAN BAROQUE MEDITATIONS OF CHRIST’S PASSION¹

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

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

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