

## ***Archaic Features in Masses by Morales***

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An examination of Morales's Masses reveals a composer comfortable with not only the styles of his contemporaries, but also preoccupied with the compositional methods of earlier generations. This is particularly true of masses that rely on *cantus firmus* treatment. Although the *cantus firmus* Mass survives to the end of the era in the hands of sacred composers like Palestrina, it is particularly uncommon during Morales's time, as his contemporaries like Willaert and Jacquet of Mantua are writing predominantly in the newest style of Mass that involves polyphonic borrowing of motets. Morales, for a significant portion of his Masses, manifests an interest in older stylistic ideas that have made his Masses difficult with which to come to terms and which account in part for the comparative neglect of these works. By the end of the Renaissance, stylistic variety commonly included many of the features identified here as archaic. But at the time Morales was writing, these styles were almost exclusively the province of an earlier generation.

It must be noted that the regard High Renaissance composers paid to the past is not yet understood. Particular melodies were revered for decades, certainly, and quotations from one composer to another are an important line of enquiry. But that is a different matter than the incorporation of compositional features that have more in common with the generation preceding Morales than with his own.<sup>1</sup> This study considers three Masses with so many references to the past that they can be appreciated as deliberate archaisms.

The *Missa Tu es vas electionis* is a *cantus-firmus* Mass occupying a unique position even among the most archaic of Morales's works. Celebrating the conversion of St Paul and surely written for Morales's patron Pope Paul III, it is dedicated to that pope and leads off the second volume of the Morales Masses printed by Dorico (1544). This Mass could have

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1 Howard Brown's seminal article "Imitation, Competition, and Homage": Imitation and Theories of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 35 (1982): 1-48 demonstrated a different kind of borrowing between composers, one that is beyond the limits of this study but may be valuable for the understanding of Morales's motivations.

been written around 1535 when Morales entered the papal choir, and an archaic Mass such as this puts Morales firmly out of step with his contemporaries. But it is not only the long-note *cantus firmus* construction that sets this Mass apart. One can find throughout it stylistic aspects that can best be described as conscious anachronisms.

All movements begin in perfect *tempus*, minor *prolation*, with some inner sections in *tempus imperfectum*. The only other Morales Mass to use significant amounts of perfect *tempus* is the four-voice *Missa L'homme armé*, another Mass in this study and also a long-note *cantus-firmus* Mass. The majority of final cadences of sections or movements consist of open fifths, or only a third, and the sole movement to end with a complete triad is the final *Agnus*. This sparing use of the triad is not unique to this Mass, but it is unusual in Morales, and quite rare among his contemporaries. The cadences with a descending 5<sup>th</sup> in the bass, described anachronistically as authentic cadences, are exceptionally rare here, and give way to older forms of cadences with linear motion.

In the majority of sections the chant appears in long notes, unelaborated, located most usually in the tenor voice but migrating on two occasions to the *altus*. Wherever the chant is absent, the texture consists of imitation, often based loosely on the borrowed melody but sometimes free material of Morales's devising.

All but one statement of the *cantus firmus* is complete, and frequently there are two (*Et in Terra, Patrem, Et iterum, and Agnus II*). When a double *cursus* occurs, the two statements are identical in pitch and rhythm with but one exception, that of the second *Agnus*. In this section, the second appearance of the *cantus firmus* is diminished, yielding a ratio of 2:1.

This exact Pythagorean diminution as well as the equal-note layout is reminiscent of isorhythmic aspects. Proportional diminution and identical statements of the *cantus firmus* are related to isorhythmic treatment in music of the late 15<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>2</sup> and seem to be a historical reference in Morales. All five movements of the *Missa Tu es vas* are not set to the same rhythm in the manner of some of the very early cyclic Masses, but within a movement or section the treatment is identical. Late isorhythm, like in Du Fay's *Nuper rosarum flores*, was sometimes simplified to the point that color and *talea* coincided, so that proportional rhythmic manipulations, rather than a complicated interaction between

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2 Thomas Brothers, "Vestiges of Isorhythmic Tradition in Mass and Motet, 1450-1475," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 44 (1991): 1-56

pitch and rhythm, is sufficient to indicate the technique.<sup>3</sup> It is this type of reference to isorhythmic practices found here. Another parameter that refers back to isorhythm is the determination of perfect *modus*, usually implicit in the presence of triple breve rest groupings. This is not always possible to determine, and in the *Missa Tu es vas* there are no *breve*-rest patterns indicated by a triple grouping in the Dorico print. All voice parts are particularly sparing of rests, so this too is of little help in suggesting groupings. Several of the *cantus firmus* dispositions are divisible by three, and both the *Et iterum* and the *Agnus I*, in perfect *tempus*, begin with a triple long in the *cantus firmus*. The *Agnus II*, the movement with the greatest links to isorhythm, divides the chant into equal triple longs for its first *cursus*. Thus we may suspect that, at least in some sections, Morales is thinking in terms of perfect *modus*.

This Mass is very young for these references to isorhythmic “vestiges,”<sup>4</sup> and yet it exhibits many of the same characteristics seen in the works of Du Fay, Busnois, and Josquin. And there are yet more archaic aspects here. The phrases are generally lengthy and lacking the sense of direction of Morales's usual style. Also atypical are the melodic lines, which are not tightly structured, but wander inconsistently, often extended by sequences. Nervous rhythms predominate here, and coloration produces additional rhythmic complexity. The qualities of the melodic lines bear striking resemblance to some fifteenth-century practices, most particularly Du Fay, Ockeghem and the young Josquin.

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3 *ibid*

4 *ibid*



Superius  
men, A - - men, A - - men, A -

Altus  
men, A - - - men, A - - -

Tenor  
men, A - - - men, A - - - men,

Bassus  
men, A - - - men, A - - - men, A -

6  
men, A - - men.

men, A - - men, A - - men, A - - men.

A - - - - men.

- men, A - - men, A - - men.

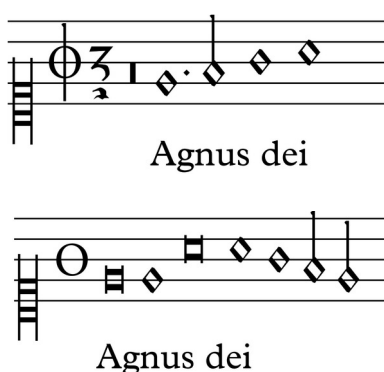
Ex. 2. C. Morales, *Missa Tu es vas electionis, Credo*, bb. 164-174

The *L'homme armé* Mass for 4 voices, which I believe also to be a late Mass<sup>7</sup>, contains no quasi-isorhythmic manipulations of the *cantus firmus*, as seen in the *Missa Tu es vas*. Much of the interest lies in its tight motivic integration, including an ostinato that appears in original and inverted form. But archaic features are here as well, most extraordinarily a grouping of the *Kyrie-Sanctus-Agnus* in terms of repetitions of melody and structure, set

7 Alison McFarland, "Within the Circle of Charles V: New Light on the Biography of Cristóbal de Morales," *Early Music* 30 (2002): 325-338, and "The Tale of Three Woodcuts: Modeling of Antico in the Mass Prints of Morales," in *Sleuthing the Muse: Essays in Honor of William F. Prizer* (New York, Pendragon Press, 2012), 31-43.

against the *Gloria* and *Credo* which themselves allude to being a pair by the similarity of their *cantus firmus* disposition. This type of grouping is one of the earliest techniques of unifying Mass movements into a cycle.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere in the Mass are reminders of the past: Morales follows Josquin's *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales* in deploying a second *cantus firmus* to the beginning of the *Credo* by adding the *Credo* I chant. And a significant similarity between this Mass and the *Christe* of the *Missa L'homme armé* by Compère has been noted.<sup>9</sup>

One last important feature is a proportional *mensural* relationship between the two *Agnus* sections. In the Dorico print, *Agnus* I has a sign of O and *Agnus* II has cut-O3/2.



**Ex. 3. C. Morales, *Missa L'Homme armé*, Mensuration Signs in *Agnus* I and *Agnus* II, Soprano Line**

The indicated difference in speed is largely offset by the speed of the notes values, and the proportion hence has no real effect on the performance of the music and appears to be an archaic learned device that may have been for the amusement of the learned. Games with *mensuration* and proportion are commonly seen in the earlier Renaissance.<sup>10</sup>

Although newer compositional styles make up part of the *Missa Ave Maria*, archaisms are still present. There is significant inclination toward paraphrase in the participation of multiple voices in motivic statements of the antiphon: however, frequent sections assert a structural or even a scaffolding *cantus firmus*, and even in the paraphrase passages, the second tenor presents a complete statement of the chant. This hybrid *cantus firmus*/paraphrase structure bears more similarity to the generations before Morales

8 Philip Gossett, "Techniques of Unification in Early Cyclic Masses and Mass Pairs, *Journal of the American Musicology Society* 19 (1966): 205-31

9 James Haar, "Palestrina as Historicist: The Two L'Homme armé Masses," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 121 (1996): 191-205, p. 193

10 See, among many examples, the proportional *cantus firmus* in Du fay's *Missa Se le face ay pale*, *Gloria* and *Credo*.

than to his own time. The motivic permeation here, coupled with the close spacing of the unusual low ranges (ATTB), creates a remarkable dense fabric:

Throughout much of the Mass, the cantus firmus takes on a variety of forms. At one extreme is a double statement of the cantus firmus in a 2:1 diminution, and at the other, it has been reduced to a motive and used as an ostinato. Most of Morales's chant-based Masses treat the liturgical melody with great precision and absolute faithfulness, but some sections of this Mass represent a significant departure for Morales, involving substantial elaboration of the chant, and occasionally even free rhapsodic treatment. Throughout, stylistic variety of the chant-bearing voice as well as the surrounding voices complicates the underlying structure. Even though this Mass expresses some stylistic aspects of its time, Morales continues to manifest older ideas as an integral part of his compositional language.

From the beginning we see the pattern that holds throughout much of the work: motives from the borrowed melody permeate several of the voices, but the second tenor retains the most complete statement of the chant. The *Christe* is structured with even more reliance on the second tenor as the primary chant-carrying voice, but the chant is treated motivically with repetition of segments instead of a straightforward presentation of the melody. *Kyrie II* offers yet another alternative. Here the *Ave Maria* phrase becomes a long-note ostinato, repeated at different pitch levels, and it also permeates the other voices.

Morales treats the chant with uncharacteristic freedom in the *Gloria*. After the strict ostinato of the *Kyrie II*, the same *Ave Maria* phrase is elaborated with lengthy interpolations. Chant motives make fleeting appearances in all voices, and there is little more of a coherent statement in the second tenor than in any other part. This section comes the closest to clear paraphrase of any in the Mass. In the last twenty measures of the section, however, the structure reverts to cantus firmus, with the statement of the chant in the second tenor; but Morales brings in the complete statement in the middle of the text phrase *Domine Fili unigenite*, an extraordinary choice for a composer known for rational organization. The *Qui tollis* section serves as another example of Morales's diversity of technique. Morales varies nearly every phrase, with techniques like cantus firmus against an imitative complex, non-imitative polyphony, and ostinato. The antiphon

is present throughout, although sometimes reduced to melodic references rather than exact pitches.

The paraphrase structure vanishes initially in the *Credo*, by virtue of Morales adding a second chant. *Ave Maria* is still present in the second tenor, in two complete statements laid out in long notes, while the surrounding voices are occupied with the beginning of *Credo I*. A return to the hybrid paraphrase/cantus firmus structure marks the *Et incarnatus*. It begins in near-homorhythm, common enough at this point in the Mass, and proceeds to points of imitation. A complete statement of the borrowed melody, in the usual second tenor, is interrupted only by the phrase *Crucifixus*, in which it does not participate.

The final section of the *Credo*, *Et in spiritum*, returns to the now familiar hybrid structure. After a complete statement of the borrowed melody, distinguished by some longer notes than the surrounding texture, the cantus-firmus voice undergoes a change in character, from melodic to motivic, and its speed equals the other voices. All material from the *Ave Maria* melody seems to disappear: but the material forming a point of imitation is, in fact, chant motives in inversion. Morales rarely submits a melodic phrase to this kind of manipulation, but it is seen in composers of the earlier Renaissance.<sup>11</sup>

The *Sanctus* receives not only the most conspicuous scaffolding cantus-firmus treatment, it is also underlaid with the antiphon text in the second tenor. The chant is stated twice in an exact 2:1 ratio of durations. This proportion is notated in the Dorico print: only one statement of the cantus firmus is printed, and the mensuration for this voice is cut-C over the same sign facing backward. According to Bermudo, this is another manner of denoting *dupla* proportion.<sup>12</sup> The texture surrounding the cantus firmus is non-imitative polyphony. The scaffolding tenor with its indicated diminution is surely a deliberate archaism. As in the *Missa Tu es vas*, proportional diminution and identical statements of the cantus firmus are techniques seen in works of the early Renaissance with isorhythmic traces.

The emphasis on motive is seen to its greatest extent in the *Hosanna*. There is a single, literal, statement of the cantus firmus, underlaid with the antiphon text, but the rest of the fabric is imitative, creating a stark contrast with the independent polyphony of the

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11 A famous example of melodic inversion is seen in the *Agnus Dei* of the Busnoys *L'Homme armé* Mass.

12 Juan de Bermudo, *Il libro primero de la declaracion de instrumentos* (1549), Fol. 52 col 2.



*Sanctus*. In a nearly perfect fusion of old and new, Morales combines motivic unity and variation in a compact space of some twenty measures, and all this over a cantus firmus. The *Benedictus* is nearly as motivically concentrated. It is a reduced texture section and although the second tenor is present, it doesn't carry the antiphon. The two tenors create a canon, built on a free motive, with elaborations and numerous entrances that create an ostinato.

Although motives from the antiphon do appear in other voices, the structure of *Agnus I* is primarily cantus firmus. Its layout, however, is not entirely rational, and not typical, for Morales; two statements of the *Ave Maria* phrase are separated by free interpolated material, and the chant does not progress beyond its first three lines. *Agnus II* eliminates the usual chant-carrying voice, and except for the opening statement of *Ave Maria* in the first tenor, the texture consists of tight points of imitation on free material. Again, the focus is on economy of motive. Only two motives make up the bulk of the free material, one of them emphasizing the descending fourth that opens the borrowed antiphon, and, like the *Hosanna* and *Benedictus* sections, each motive is subject to various elaborations after its opening notes.

One of the two added voices in *Agnus III* is canonically derived. The direction above the first tenor reads "canon in eodem," best understood as "in the same condition," and a *signum* indicates where the second tenor is to enter. The canon between these voices is exact until the final cadence, and the material is a literal statement of the antiphon, again underlaid with its own text. Morales uses Latin canons in others of his Masses too, and it is, like many other aspects detailed here, clearly reminiscent of the early Renaissance.<sup>13</sup>

Together, these three Masses demonstrate several structural aspects of Morales's fascination with older techniques. The scaffolding cantus firmi of the *Missa Tu es vas*, *Missa L'Homme armé* a 4, and in parts of the *Missa Ave Maria*, as well the proportional puzzle and the vestiges of Mass pairing of *L'Homme arme*, look back further than does *Missa Ave Maria*, in which archaisms can still be found although it is organized in a more

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13 There are numerous examples of Latin verbal canons in the fifteenth century, including the Du Fay *Missa Se le face ay pale*, *Gloria ad Credo*, and the Busnoys *Missa L'Homme armé*, *Agnus Dei*, as well as throughout Josquin's *Missa L'Homme armé super voces musicales*. An excellent study on the subject is Emily Zazulia, "Verbal Canons and Notational Complexity in Fifteenth-century Music," PhD diss, University of Pennsylvania, 1999

freely constructivist and motivic fashion and seems to represent a microcosm of his compositional procedures.

I have suggested elsewhere that Morales draws frequent parallels between his music and that of the preceding generation.<sup>14</sup> When his entire body of Masses is considered, Morales has the most in common with Josquin, in terms of subjects set, types of structure, and even direct quotations from the earlier composer. In the archaisms of this study, Morales may be continuing his fascination with the Josquin generation and reaching even further back. Techniques including canon, verbal canon, proportional games, and remnants of isorhythmic structure would have been known to Josquin but pursued even more in the generation of Du Fay and Ockeghem. These kinds of structures are so little used in Morales's day that they are strikingly conspicuous here.

Archaisms can be found throughout Morales's works, but these three Masses are the most obvious expression of the impulse. That all three of them are found in the second volume of the two Morales Mass prints, the one dedicated to Pope Paul III, must be intentional. Paul, the former Alessandro Farnese, was known as a humanist in his youth, and Morales may have hoped to address this aspect of his patron with these Masses, whether or not his musically-literate pope appreciated a trip through a hundred years of Mass history. Morales's relationship with the past not only distinguishes him from his contemporaries, but defines significant characteristics of his style.

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14 Alison McFarland, "Cristobal de Morales and the Imitation of the Past: Music for the Mass in Sixteenth-Century Rome." Phd Diss, UCSB, 1999

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