

Inter natos mulierum. *Pieces for St. John the Baptist from the Cistercian Convent of Las Huelgas*

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In the famous 14th-century Las Huelgas Codex (Burgos, Monasterio de Las Huelgas, ms. 11),¹ hereafter called Hu², we encounter predominantly Marian repertoire; pieces praising other saints are scarce.³ For the groups Apostles, Evangelists, Martyrs and Confessors there is only one sequence. Other important saints are given little music as well. The manuscript preserves three pieces for St. Catherine, two for St. Thomas of Canterbury and St. John the Evangelist, and one each for St. Nicholas and St. Mary

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- 1 The signature of this codex has changed recently from ms. IX (formerly s.s.) into ms. 11. The important new dating of the codex as well as the study of the notation and the repertoire is forthcoming in David Catalunya's dissertation *Music, Space and Ritual in Medieval Castile* (PhD diss., Universität Würzburg, 2016). I thank David Catalunya for having generously shared with me portions of his yet unpublished discoveries.
 - 2 A list of manuscript sigla can be found at the end of this article.
 - 3 There are three existing editions of this codex: Higinio Anglès, *El Còdex musical de Las Huelgas* (música a veus dels segles XIII–XIV: introducció, facsimil i transcripció), Publicacions del Departament de Música del Biblioteca de Catalunya, vi, 3 vols (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1931); Gordon A. Anderson, *The Las Huelgas manuscript: Burgos, Monasterio de Las Huelgas*, Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae, vxxix, 2 vols (Neuhausen, Stuttgart: Hänssler Verlag, 1982); Juan Carlos Asensio Palacios, *El Códice de las Huelgas* (introducción, edición y transcripción musical e índices: J. C. Asensio Palacios; introducción, edición y traducción de los textos: Josemi Lorenzo Arribas), Patrimonio Musical Español, viii (Madrid: Fundación Especial Caja Madrid, 2001). Another important reference is: Nicolas Bell, *The Las Huelgas Music Codex. A Companion Study to the Facsimile* (Madrid: Testimonio, 2003). In this article I follow Anglès numbering of the pieces in Hu.

Magdalene. Compared to that, the eight pieces bearing witness the vivid cult of John the Baptist far outnumber the musical testimonies for other popular saints. However, it has not been entirely clear precisely which pieces belong to the Baptist's liturgy, since the literature on the manuscript introduces some confusion in this matter. While Anglès and Gordon Anderson do not refer to the topic of the pieces in their indices at all, the two inventories by Bell and Asensio include some mistakes. The inventory in Bell's companion does not label two pieces (Hu 178 & Hu 185) as Johannine (there is no mention on their subject) and wrongly classifies the motet *Mulier misterio*/MULIERUM as Marian.⁴ On the contrary, the monophonic *Benedicamus* trope *Iste est Iohannes* on fols. 155v156r (Hu 179) and implicitly its textual contrafactum on f. 163r (Hu 182) are labelled there as pieces in praise of the prophet – both pieces are written, however, for John the Evangelist.⁵ Asensio takes over the wrong feast attribution for both *Iste est Iohannes* versions (Hu 178 & Hu 182 in his new numbering) and does not label four pieces connected with the Precursor's cult.⁶ The list below is the first correct table of eight pieces for John the Baptist contained in Hu (Table 1). Apart from three two-part motets known in the central Notre-Dame sources like F, W2 and Ma and one sequence popular on the Iberian peninsula, there are four *Benedicamus Domino* tropes not found elsewhere, including one two-part setting.⁷ The notational and stylistic variety of these pieces is stunning and each of them deserves a separate note, as they pose differing textual, musical and performance problems.⁸

4 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 50.

5 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 50.

6 Asensio, *Códice de las Huelgas*, 604.

7 It is worth mentioning that the picture of *unica* in Huelgas codex is changing thanks to the newest discoveries of the concordances of the famous “solmization song” by Dominique Gatté and Cristina A. Raurich, whose observations are presented and developed by David Catalunya in his article “Nuns, Polyphony, and Liégeois Cantor. New Light on the Las Huelgas ‘Solmization Song’”, forthcoming in *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 9/1 (April 2017). Sincere thanks to David Catalunya for sharing his draft with me.

8 Six pieces from this list have been recorded by ensemble Peregrina under my direction on the CD *Cantrix—Medieval Music for St. John the Baptist* from the Royal Convents

Table 1: The list of pieces in Las Huelgas Codex for John the Baptist

	Folio in Hu	Incipit	Setting
Motets			
no. 88	90r _v	<i>Mulier misterio</i> /MULIERUM	2VV
no. 113	110r	<i>Mulierum hodie</i> /MULIERUM	2VV
no. 114	110v	<i>Mulieris marcens</i> /MULIERUM	2VV
Sequence			
no. 69	63r64v	<i>Helizabet Zacharie</i>	1V, incomplete
BD tropes			
no. 36	24r _v	<i>Benedicamus Hic est enim precursor</i>	2VV <i>unicum</i>
no. 178	155r	<i>Benedicamus O quam sanctum</i>	1V <i>unicum</i>
no. 185	164v & 168r	<i>Perhibentur cunctis rerum</i>	1V <i>unicum</i>
no. 186	168r	<i>Benedicamus Hic est enim precursor</i>	1V <i>unicum</i>

Motets on the tenor MULIERUM

As Nicolas Bell notices, “all the motets in Hu are presented in a form in which they can be performed from: page-turns are kept to minimum, and always synchronised in all parts.”⁹ Curiously, the manuscript mostly doesn’t name the tenors nor specifies their liturgical designation. The tenor labels and their host chants are, however, easy to restore thanks to the concordances in central sources. All three Johannine motets preserved in Hu are based on the tenor MULIERUM (M29),¹⁰ even though

of Sigena (Hospitallers) and Las Huelgas (Cistercians), released in 2013 by Raumklang (RK 3204). All but one are first recordings.

⁹ Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 72.

¹⁰ Numbering after Friedrich Ludwig, *Repertorium organorum recentioris et motetorum vetustissimi stili*, I. Catalogue raisonné. 1. Handschriften in Quadratnotation (New York:

only one of the tenors is labelled.¹¹ This tenor is a short melodic and textual passage taken from the alleluia verse of the *Inter natos mulierum* for the Mass of the 24th of June. Even though the alleluia is kept in an e-mode, the musical passage in question builds the clear and logical unit in *protus*. Thanks to its internal d-mode character, this tenor has greatly appealed to the motets' composers.¹² The text of this fragment is a quote from the Gospel of Matthew (11:11) and is Christ's testimony about John the Baptist:

Alleluia. Inter natos MULIERUM non surrexit major Iohanne Baptista.

Alleluia. Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.

MULIERUM (as well as IOHANNE, another tenor borrowed from this chant) was frequently used as the basis for two-, three- and four-part compositions in Latin and French.¹³ In fact, the twenty-seven motets built on these tenors are among the largest motet families, surpassed only by those based on the most popular of tenors such as IN SECULUM, FLOS FILIUS, PORTARE/SUSTINERE and APTATUR.¹⁴ All three motets preserved in Hu have their cognates in the central repertory, found in the main repositories

Institute of Mediaeval Music and Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964). These very motets are subject to analysis by Michael A. Anderson in both his article "Fire, Foliage and Fury: Vestiges of Midsummer Ritual in Motets for John the Baptist," *Early Music History* 30 (2011), 1–54 and his dissertation *Symbols of Saints*, 83–97. Also, two chapters of my book deal with the MULIERUM and IOHANNE tenor family: Agnieszka Budzińska-Bennett, *Subtilitas. Słyszalne i niesłyszalne aspekty motetu ars antiqua. Tekst – kontekst – intertekst [Subtilitas in the ars antiqua Motet. Text – Context – Intertext]* (Poznań: Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 2012), 165–177, 268–275.

- 11 It is *Mulierum hodie*/MULIERUM on f. 110v with the description *tenura de mulierum et cantasse por natura*.
- 12 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 87–88.
- 13 The full list of the pieces of this motet family can be found in Henrik van der Werf's *Integrated Directory of Organa, Clausulae, and Motets of the Thirteenth Century* (Rochester, N.Y.: H. van der Werf, 1989), 55–57 as well as in Anderson, "Fire, Foliage and Fury", Appendix 2, 50–54. The numbering of motets follows van der Werf's directory.
- 14 Anderson, "Fire, Foliage and Fury", 14.

as F, W2 and Ma.¹⁵ The textual content of the numerous motets on the tenor MULIERUM (“of women”) seems to imply the saint’s particular connection with women, even though he himself is said to have remained celibate all his life. The evocative word MULIERUM was certainly appealing to the poet-composers of the 13th century, and there are numerous motets beginning in deliberate assonance with the tenor label in the upper-voice /s, both in Latin (*Mulieris marcens, Mulierum hodie, Mulierum natus, Mulier misterio*) and in French (*Mout souvent, Mout ai este*). The attention to the euphonic design of the motets’ texts, however, did not exclude the exegetical potential of the upper voices: each of the Latin motet texts on MULIERUM refers to John the Baptist and offers “deeper theological reflections on the Precursor saint.”¹⁶

Mulierum hodie (373)/MULIERUM

Hu 113, f. 110r

Concordances: *Prodit lucis*/MULIERUM, F, f. 392v (as the middle voice), *Prima dedit*/Mulierum hodie/MULIERUM, Ba, f. 37 (as the middle voice), *En grant effroi*, R, f. 206v (199v), N, f. 186, W2, f. 217v; *En grant effroi*/Souvent me fait/MULIERUM in Mo, f. 122v (as the middle voice), LoD, f. 59v, only text concordance.¹⁷

Remarks: tenor labelled *tenura de mulierum et cantasse por natura*.¹⁸

In order to understand some particularities of this motet in Hu, I would like to start with the text version as found in the central source Ba:

15 Gordon A. Anderson, “Newly Identified Clausula-Motets in the Las Huelgas Manuscript,” *The Musical Quarterly* 55/2 (1969), 240–242.

16 Anderson, “Fire, Foliage and Fury,” 16.

17 This piece is listed by Anglès in his table of contents as a contrafact in spite of the fact that the only connection is a textual one. Anglès, *Còdex musical de Las Huelgas*, xxxvii. The motet in LoD belongs stylistically to the so-called Engelberg motets. See Stuart M. Erwin, *The Motets of the LoD Manuscript, British Museum Add. 27630: Performance Edition and Commentary* (PhD diss., University of California, 1980), 75.

18 Meaning that this piece is supposed to be sung in the first mode, contrary to its concordances usually implying the second mode. Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 149.

Mulierum hodie	Of those born of women,
maior natus oritur	one greater has arisen today,
preco gracie	the herald of grace,
sol iusticie	the sun of justice,
templum Dei panditur	the temple of God is revealed.
Hic est sidus siderum,	He is the star of stars,
Prima lux ecclesie,	first light of the Church,
prima vox leticie	first voice of joy
mulierum.	of women.
 Tenor: MULIERUM	 Tenor: OF WOMEN

This short motet offers an interesting collision as far as the Christological and Johannine images are concerned. The important analogies between John and Jesus are worth mentioning. According to the Scripture, the births of both children were announced by the angel Gabriel, first to Zechariah, then—six months later—to Mary. The Precursor and Christ meet already in their mothers' wombs when Mary comes to visit Elizabeth (both women were considered blood-related) and speaks the famous *Magnificat*. John, as yet unborn, senses the presence of the King. Thirty years later John recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and baptizes him in the River Jordan, which marks the official beginning of Christ's ministry.

This six months' difference between the births of both children also defines the temporal symmetry of the two important liturgical feasts: the Nativity of John the Baptist (24th of June) and *Nativitas Domini* (25th of December): the two days mark the summer and the winter solstice respectively.¹⁹ This crucial astronomical analogy between the days with increasing and diminishing daylight seems to get echoed in the final words of John himself: *illum oportet crescere me autem minui* ("He must increase, but I must decrease").²⁰ All this has found its way into early Christian theology

19 It is by no means accidental that the *Alleluia Tu puer propheta* for John the Baptist uses the same melodic *formulae* as the *Alleluia Dies sanctificatus* for the Feast of the Nativity. More details on the "golden hinges" of the liturgical year, the solar symbolism of the two feasts and the parallel relationships of John and Christ are to be found in Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 36–52.

20 John 3:30.

(e.g. Augustine) and was still present in 13th century writings and commentaries like those of Guillelmus Durandus (1237–1296). He also interprets the diminishing of John’s ministry as a prerequisite for the rise of Christ.²¹ Interestingly, *Mulierum hodie* uses the vocabulary of solar symbolism in an ambiguous way. Even though the expression *sol iusticie* is usually explained in Christological terms, it seems to be used here in reference to the Baptist. Despite the long tradition of applying the term *sol iusticie* to the awaited Messiah, the original mention in the Book of Malachi seems to have been intended as the symbolic name of Christ’s precursor.²² Before its Christological understanding became established, it was he who was supposed to come “with the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17).²³ The grammatical structure contributes to the unclear status of this expression in our piece. When we consider the expression *sol iusticie* as belonging to the preceding genitive *gratie*,²⁴ the following passage can be understood as referring to Christ, the founder of the new Church and its *prima lux*. However, it seems more likely that it was meant as a part of Johannine descriptions, after “the herald of grace” and the quote from the Gospel of Matthew on John in the beginning of the motetus text. Anderson posits that “the imagery of radiance is ... appropriate for Christ’s forerunner” and that this motet, together with *Mulierum natus est maior* / MULIERUM (a motet preserved in W2 with empty staves) that uses this expression in reference to the Saviour, “exemplify the unusual parity between the Baptist and Christ.”²⁵ But exactly this imagery is clearly defined by the words

21 Guillelmus Durandus, *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* (Matriti: ex typographia Blasii Roman, 1775), 407–408.

22 Malachi 4:2: *et orietur vobis timentibus nomen meum sol iustitiae et sanitas in pinnis eius* (“but for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings”).

23 On the usage of the term *sol iusticie* referring to John the Baptist see the editor’s commentary to this passage in *Biblia Tysiąclecia. Pismo Święte Starego i Nowego Testamentu*, edited by Zespół Bibliistów Polskich, 4th ed. (Poznań: Pallotinum, 1996), 1120.

24 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 131.

25 Anderson, “Fire, Foliage and Fury,” 22. The relevant passage of the motet *Mulierum natus est* / MULIERUM reads: *hic est sidus siderum, quem sol iusticie misit ut luciferum* (“He [John] is the star of stars whom the sun of justice [Christ] has sent as a light-bearer”).

of Christ himself as recorded in the Gospel of John. Jesus regarded John as a burning lamp whose light was not of duration; there is no mention of the powerful solar light.²⁶

Several other passages of this short text also seem to have a dual nature. *Prima lux ecclesie* is difficult to understand as referring to John—it means most likely Christ who is the foundation of the Church and who brings forth the reign of God (*regnum Dei*) mentioned in the text. While *preco/precursor gratie*, used in the both motets mentioned above is clearly referring to the Baptist, the expression *sidus siderum*, also found in both, is a usual Marian appellation. We find the epithets *sol iusticie* and *lux ecclesie* in two widely transmitted motets *O Maria maris stella* (448)/VERITATEM and *Ave lux luminum* (784)/NEUMA, where they belong to Marian vocabulary.²⁷ Also *vox letitie mulierum* can refer to Elizabeth’s happiness with pregnancy,²⁸ but also reminds strongly of Mary’s own words to Elizabeth—*magnificat anima mea Dominum et exsultavit spiritus meus*—that expresses the joy of both women.²⁹

The version of this text in Hu changes three words allowing a different reading in my translation:

Mulierum hodie	Amongst women,
maior matris oritur	One greater has been born today of a mother,
preco gratie	the herald of grace,
vis iusticie ³⁰	the power of justice,

26 “He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light” (John 5:35). A passage of the conductus motet (371) sharing its music material of the motetus and tenor with the *Mulierum hodie*/MULIERUM reading *prodit lucis radius veri solis previus* (“a ray of light emerged, harbinger of the true sun”) does not leave any doubt to the question who is more radiant.

27 Anderson, “Fire, Foliage and Fury,” 20. The appellation *lux ecclesie* is also often used for other saints like Thomas of Canterbury. Anderson notes that the motetus text of *Mulierum hodie* enters “a litany of appellations for John the Baptist, not unlike Marian sequences of the period.” Cf. Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 130.

28 We find a reference to it in the text of the motet *Ioanne Yelisabet* (383a)/IOHANNE. Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 107.

29 Anderson notes that the *Magnificat* is “contained within an otherwise John-centric series of events”. Cf. Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 107.

30 The manuscript reads here *vim iusticie* (emendation after Lorenzo Arribas).

regnum Dei panditur
 Hic est sidus siderum,
 Prima lux ecclesie,
 prima vox leticie
 mulierum.

Tenor: MULIERUM

the Reign of God is revealed.
 Here is the star of stars,
 first light of the Church,
 first voice of joy
 of women.

Tenor: OF WOMEN

Interestingly, in his recent edition of the Hu texts, Josemi Lorenzo Arribas translates the beginning of this motet into Spanish in the following way: “Today the greatest of women, herald of grace, power of justice, is born of a mother.”³¹ Similarly he interprets the passage *hic est sidus siderum* as a reference to Mary, somewhat overstretching the meaning of the demonstrative pronoun *hic* and translating it as feminine (*ésta*).³² In the commentaries there is no mention of this motet’s connection to Saint John’s liturgy nor is there a remark pointing to the quote from the Gospel of Matthew. However, the translator mentions Mary and her mother Saint Anne, not leaving any doubt about his understanding of this text.³³ The temptation of a Marian reading of the beginning of this motet is great and one could quickly think of Saint Anne and not Elizabeth. The initial *mulierum* “amongst women” as well as the mention of *gratia* would be immediately associated with *Ave Maria* prayer passages: “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women.” Several previously mentioned ambiguous expressions (*sidus siderum*, *vim iusticie* and *lux ecclesie*) could be clearly understood as Marian. The possible allusion to *Magnificat* in *vox leticie mulierum* would also be easy to localize in such a context. Until the definitely masculine *hic* in the sixth line, the neutral translation of this piece I proposed above can still be read ambiguously,

31 “Hoy la mayor de las mujeres, heraldo de la gracia, fuerza de la justicia, nace de una madre.” Asensio, *Códice de las Huelgas*, 121.

32 “Ésta es la estrella de estrellas.” Asensio, *Códice de las Huelgas*, 121.

33 I am not sure if this is a conscious reading. In the texts’ edition of Hu, Lorenzo Arribas translates the texts of the upper voice/s only, leaving out tenor labels. This may lead to incomplete information on the topic or the context of a particular motet.

but the whole text as it stands it is still a motet for John the Baptist and not for Mary and Saint Anne.³⁴

These strong Marian allusions, however, may find their explanation in the possible relationship between the melisma *mulierum* (with the chain of consecutive thirds) and some “memorable and striking musical gestures” of *Salve Regina* antiphon (*ad te suspiramus* in particular).³⁵ And we certainly find the continuation of these connections in the related motets. *Prima dedit femina* (372) preserved in W2 shares the musical material of the upper voice of *Mulierum hodie* with some rhythmical changes and slight melodic variants. Its text clearly moves into Marian direction:

Prima dedit femina	The first woman [Eva]
serpentis consilio;	Surrendered to the counsel of the serpent;
plange femina!	Weep, o woman!
Sed tu, domina,	But you, o Lady,
medicine nuncio	believe in the messenger of the cure,
credis, Dei filium	and receive the son of God
concupis in gremio	in your womb.
tibi psallat concio	To you, the congregation renders psalms,
laudantium!	united in praise!

The motet introduces the classical antithesis of Mary and Eve, even if none of them is mentioned explicitly. The sin of the first woman (Eve) is healed through the obedience of Mary who is greeted by the “messenger of the cure” [the angel Gabriel] with the word *Ave* (the palindrome of *Eva*). Recalling Anderson’s remarks on the musical similarities of the MULIERUM tenor and some passages of *Salve Regina*, one cannot but recollect another fragment of this antiphon that mentions the first woman: *ad te clamamus exules filii Eve* (“to you [Mary] do we cry, we exiled children of Eve”).³⁶ The

34 I am very grateful to Flavio Ferri-Benedetti, Sebastian Szymański, Mateusz Wilk and Shelagh Sneddon for discussing this passage with me.

35 Anderson, “Fire, Foliage and Fury,” 11. It is also where Anderson suggests that the incipits of the French motet on MULIERUM, *Souvent me fait suspirer* (375) and *En grant effroi sui souvent* (374) (two- and three-part piece) might be a deliberate assonance and the textual allusion to *ad te suspiramus* text. See also Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 114–115.

36 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 108.

author of the motet, on one hand, alludes to the text of the contrafact by starting this motet with the word *prima* (which appeared twice in *Mulierum hodie*),³⁷ but on the other deliberately avoids the assonance with the tenor, choosing rather the semantical than euphonic connexion with the MULIERUM label through the word *femina* (used twice). The text of the motet mentions also the messenger, alluding both to the Precursor and to the angel Gabriel who plays a crucial role in both stories. *Prima dedit* finishes with joyful singing, alluding again to the voice of joy in *Mulierum hodie*.

The third version of this motet preserved in Ba unites both texts in the three-part structure. Interestingly, the combination of voices and texts gets completely reversed. The motetus in Hu bears the text *Mulierum hodie*—in W2 its text is *Prima dedit*. Ba version uses the text of *Mulierum hodie* again as motetus (with the standard “Johannine” text, however), moving the words of *Prima dedit* to the newly written triplum.³⁸ In the short three-part motet we get the kaleidoscope of terms and ideas resounding at the same time: we can hear thrice *mulierum* (including the one present in the tenor if it is performed vocally), twice *femina*, there is the herald (*preco*) and the messenger (*nuncius*), *sol* and *lux* as well as the *verbatim* joyfully sounding voices in the end of the piece (*vox leticie* and *concio psallant laudancium*).

The motifs of *vox* (voice) in the motetus and the idea of joyful singing in the triplum seem to play an important role in this motet. Possibly, it is an allusion to the *vox clamantis*—the potent crying-out voice of the prophet in the wilderness we read about in Isaiah (40:3–4) and in Luke (3:4–6). The powerful “voice” is also present in the scene of Christ’s baptism (*et vox de celo facta est*) when a voice came from heaven proclaiming Jesus as the Beloved Son.³⁹ Another meaningful association with voicing or rather not being able to voice a strong emotion is the case of John’s

37 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 108.

38 These three versions—Hu (with the text version of Ba), W2 and Ba—have been recorded consecutively and presented as one track on *Cantrix* by ensemble Peregrina, dir. A. Budzińska-Bennett.

39 “And the Holy Spirit descended upon him [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased’” (Luke 3:22).

father, the prophet Zechariah who had lost his speech in the presence of the angel. His voice was not restored until his wife Elizabeth, believed to be barren, gave birth to a boy.

The simultaneous sound of upper voices' texts leads to new conclusions: due to the audibility of the higher register, the Marian topic of the triplum dominates the text of the motetus. Even if the Marian reading of the Hu version was quite speculative, the three-part motet leads us undoubtedly into this direction. The expression *sol iusticie* sounds simultaneously with *domina* which reintroduces the possibility of understanding this passage in Christological terms. *Sidus siderum* and *prima lux ecclesie* in motetus are forced into the story of Jesus' conception sounding in triplum, thus placing both expressions immediately in the Christological and Mariological context as well. *Vox leticie mulierum* at the end of the motet, the joyful voices of women united in congregational praise, include the voices of Elizabeth, Mary and symbolically of all of womanhood set free from the original sin of Eve through the miracle of Saviour's conception. The three-part motet certainly loosens its ties with the Precursor theme and enables a multi-levelled theological reading.

It is also interesting that the passage of the motet *Mulierum hodie* with the words *regnum dei panditur* is only found in Hu. In the three-part version from Ba, the motetus reads in this place *templum dei panditur* ("the temple of God is revealed"). Despite the euphonic similarity of the words *regnum* – *templum*, choosing the latter greatly influences the reading of the whole text. The classical exegesis of the term *templum Dei* or *templum Domini* was introduced by the Venerable Bede (ca. 672–735) who "declared that 'the temple of the Lord had once been placed upon the earth ... but now the Church, the temple of the living God, whose way of life is in heaven' had replaced it; while the former had hidden the Ark of the Covenant behind a veil, the latter revealed the Lord's incarnation to the whole world."⁴⁰ The Bamberg scribe clearly wanted the topic of Incarnation and the New Law to flow into the motetus text (in agreement with the Marian

40 Conor O'Brien, *Bede's Temple. An Image and its Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

content of the triplum), thus leading it, contrary to the ambiguous Huelgas version, clearly into a Christological direction.

Mulier misterio (376a)/[MULIERUM]

Hu 88, f. 90rv

Concordances: Ma, f. 135v; clausula F-146.

Remarks: tenor notated together with the tenor of motet *Agmina milicie* on f. 90v. Both tenors labelled jointly *esta tenura es de agmina et es otra de yuso de mulier*.

Mulier misterio	A woman by divine mystery
sterilis	barren
Mire fit in senio	Marvelously made in old age
fertilis.	fertile.
Dives cui gracia dampna redimit,	The rich whose detriment is corrected
Tedia perimit.	through grace, has destroyed the weariness.
Angelus pontifici	The angel gives assurance
Spondens rem sacrifici	to the priest
Quam perfici	of a perfect sacrifice,
senex abnuit.	the old man refuses.
Hic herentem arguit,	He discloses his doubts
Et dampnat silencio,	And is condemned to silence.
Dans corda promissio;	A promise is given in the heart.
Nati natalicio	Upon the birth of the son
eloquio	The prophet is restored
Vatem recreat	with speech.
Ordo rerum,	The order of the events
senem beat.	Makes the old man blessed.
Inter natos mulierum	Among those born of women
[non surrexit maior Iohanne	[there has not risen anyone greater than John
Baptista]	the Baptist]
Tenor: [MULIERUM]	Tenor: OF WOMEN ⁴¹

Various aspects of the saint's life are present in this motet, referring mostly to the events described in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. John's birth

41 Translation Lucas Bennett.

was foretold to his father Zechariah, a priest in the temple of Jerusalem by the angel Gabriel. Zechariah had lost his speech and it was not restored until his wife Elizabeth gave birth to a boy. According to God's wish, Zechariah named him John. The issue of fertility is not only anchored in the Biblical story, but also seems to have connections to the pagan past. The Midsummer's Eve has been associated with common sexual discord and with the pagan rites of procreation all over Europe. The time around the 24th of June thus embraces the theme of nature's fecundity and was often connected with various floral customs having to do with potency, believed to emerge specifically on Saint John's day.⁴²

Textually, this motet ends on a strange note. Reading only the text of the motetus we can get the impression that it is Zechariah here who is blessed among those born of women. This obviously makes no sense, as we need to complete the last sentence of the motetus with the rest of the co-sounding tenor (*non surrexit maior Iohanne Baptista*).⁴³ This could be easily mended by inserting the whole motet into the matrix alleluia chant verse on the *mulierum* melisma. Apart from the appeal of deliberate assonance of motetus and tenor on *mulier/mulierum* both in the beginning and at the end of the piece, the final sentence of the motet *inter natos mulierum* quotes the Gregorian text source and thus reminds us where we took off in polyphony and where we should continue after the motet is finished, namely in the verbal and musical continuation of the chant.⁴⁴ The musical part seems logical too (as we remember, this motet is based on the MULIERUM clausula F-146, meant as an insertion), so even with the two-voice interpolation the chant we are still in agreement with the whole form and the modality of this passage of alleluia.

42 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 71-75.

43 Never referring to the tenor, Lorenzo Arribas falls into this trap and translates this passage: "El orden da las cosas alegre al viejo entre los nacidos de las mujeres". Ascensio, *Códice de las Huelgas*, 101.

44 Anderson considers using the word *mulierum* "an incomplete tag" and suggests it could be a reference to the beginning (*Symbols of Saints*, 128). The motet with the quote of the whole passage *inter natos mulierum* is stronger than the inserted clausula with only the word *mulierum*.

Mulieris marcens (369) / [MULIERUM]

Hu 114, f. 110v

Concordances: F, f. 406v, W2, f. 174; *A la revenue*, W2, f. 222v; clausula W1-65.

Remarks: no tenor designation.

Mulieris marcens	When the withering womb of the woman
venter dum virescit	grew fertile,
Dum senectus	when old age and ripe years
sera iuvenescit	became young,
Legis nubes	a new child was born
Novus pubens	to lighten
Nascens elucescit	the cloud of the Law,
Pariture predicans	making known to the people
Plebi quod recessit	about to bring forth
Vetus observancia	what the old observance of the Law
legis et accessit	had destroyed,
tempus gratum graciae	and that the time of grace was at hand,
quod primus detexit	which first had discovered
vias penitencie	the ways of repentance,
per quas nos provexit	through which he has guided us;
nam maris et semine	for none born of a man's seed
natus non surrexit.	has risen [greater than John the Baptist].

Tenor: [MULIERUM]

Tenor: OF WOMEN

This motet introduces another sort of problem. The transmission of the piece is in general quite steady and lacks variants, but the version in Hu differs significantly from others in many aspects. First, it is notated a fifth higher than the chant and all other concordant versions. Second, its tenor is deprived of designation and presents a melody differing from the usual *mulierum*-melisma.⁴⁵ Three concordances of this piece (Latin and French

⁴⁵ There is a noticeable tendency in Hu to substantially change some of the tenors as it is in case of Hu 93, about which Bell writes: "The curiosity lies more in the fact that the scribe has decided to change what we would normally assume to be the most fixed element of the composition, the plainchant melody on which it is based. One obvious explanation for this alteration might be that the scribe had chosen to use the Cistercian version of the plainchant". Cf. Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 154.

motets) and the related clausula, however, have without exception the MULIERUM tenor. The pitch is well readable, including one securing *custos*, and the scribe notated the original MULIERUM tenor on the preceding folio. Since the source of the foreign tenor has not been identified so far,⁴⁶ it is not unthinkable that we are dealing here with a compositional experiment. Further, as far as the rhythm of the tenor is concerned, it is certainly not the first mode that is intended here, as it is the case in all the concordances. The motetus' melody seems to be adjusted to the tenor, both in the rhythmical scheme as well as in its melodic shape. However, this setting is musically not very graceful due to the unclear modality and the irregular declamation of the text in the upper voice and to some of its challenging intervals that in spite of several adjustments result in tritones or sevenths in metrically accentuated positions.⁴⁷ Asensio points out that this motet (transmitted also in Ma with the "correct" tenor) and *Ioanne Yelizabet*/IOHANNE (383a/914) (*unicum* in Ma) are both connected to the Johannine alleluia verse *Inter natos mulierum* and found only in Spanish sources.⁴⁸ Textually and musically it is difficult to think of *Mulieris marcens* as separate from the host material of the alleluia verse that of course fits it perfectly in every regard, thus I will continue considering this motet as if it was based on the MULIERUM tenor.

The motetus text of this piece uses two quotes from the presumed host chant surrounding the tenor passage: the emblematic and evocative *mulieris* in the beginning and the final *natus non surrexit*.⁴⁹ The text describes the contradictions inherent in the Gospel. The initial glossing *mulieris venter* introduces the motif of Elizabeth's age and infertility ("withering

46 I have compared the tenor melody with all the Mass and Office chants for John the Baptist but did not find any match. If read as the usual d-mode, some passages of the tenor resemble the beginning of the *Alleluia Inter natos mulierum* (the motif *dfdec* appearing just in the beginning of alleluia and the verse), but this resemblance seems too vague to make any conclusion.

47 Because of its musical shortcomings, I decided to record this motet on the *Cantrix* CD with the MULIERUM-tenor and the motetus as found in the central sources.

48 Juan Carlos Asensio Palacios, *El Códice de Madrid. Biblioteca Nacional, mss. 20486. Polifonías del siglo XIII* (Madrid: Ed. Alpuerto, 1997), 21.

49 The analysis of this piece is found in Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 126–127.

womb”); the connection between the pagan fertility festivities around the summer solstice and the Christian celebration of John’s birth have been mentioned before. Elizabeth’s womb has been blessed by God’s grace and is poetically depicted as fertile and young. The motet praises this event as a divine mystery and a wonder, but introduces the new-born child that will “lighten the cloud of the [old] Law.” Again, the usual Christological vocabulary is here used for John he is the one to change the old order through penitence, truly preparing the way for the Lord. Interestingly, the end of the text introduces the concept of “man’s seed,” as opposed to the implicit God’s “seed” in the case of Mary. The extraordinary conception of the Baptist is juxtaposed with even more extraordinary conception (*sine viri semine*) of Christ. The Latin text, through the choice of words *nam maris et semine natus*, evokes associations with the famous Marian alleluia verse *Nativitas gloriose virginis Marie ex semine Abrahe* (emphasis mine) for the feast of her own Nativity. In the motetus this text is placed in the highest register and thus is aurally impossible to miss. This association reinforces the last contradictory statement when the sounding tenor “of women” is juxtaposed with man’s virility mentioned in motetus.

It has been mentioned that the end of the motet paraphrases the alleluia quote choosing only the words *natus non surrexit*. If one did not know the tenor source, this phrase would not make much sense. The final sentence “for none born of a man’s seed has risen” has to be rounded off by the phrase “greater than John the Baptist.” This “missing” text passage could be understood as contextually present and obvious, but, as in the case of the previous motet, it could also offer a performative suggestion. Not only would it be logical to insert this motet as a glossa into the alleluia verse replacing the *mulierum* melisma with MULIERUM-based motet, but the final words of this piece also suggest that the chant continues from the words *non surrexit maior Iohanne Baptista*. There would be no disturbance, either in the liturgical form or in the musical (the motet uses the material of clausula W1-65 that was intended for an insertion) or modal structure (the motet ends in the unison), and the piece would have been completed both in a musical and in a semantic sense.

There is yet another thought that needs mentioning while dealing with *MULIERUM* tenor and the quote from the Gospel. The whole passage from the Gospel of Matthew reads: “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” These words of Christ put an end to the Old Law and to the diminishing ministry of John the Baptist, who still belongs to the old order. Even the least in the new kingdom and the new Church will surpass the last of the Prophets.

Helizabet Zacharie

Hu 69, f. 63r64v

Concordances: various concordances given in AH.⁵⁰ Two Iberian cognates:

Ba 911, f. 112v, Tortosa 135, f. 72v.

Text concordance with Hu 178

1a. Helizabet Zacharie Magnum virum in hac die Gloriosa genuit,	Elizabeth of Zechariah Bore a great man On this glorious day.
1b. Qui virtutum vas sincerum, In amore mulierum Principatum tenuit.	He who was a genuine vessel of virtues, Ruled with the love of women.
2a. Nondum natus sensit regem Nasciturum iuxta legem Sine viri [semine],	Not yet born, he sensed the king About to be born according to the Law Without the seed of a man.
2b. Deum sensit in hac luce Tamquam nudeum [= nucleum] in nuce Conditum in virgine.	He sensed God in this light Hidden [naked] within the virgin [like the kernel] in its shell.

⁵⁰ *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, eds. Guido M. Dreves, Clemens Blume, Henry M. Bannister, vol. 55 (Leipzig: Reisland, 1889–1922), 209.

3a. Quam beatus puer natus Salvatoris angelus,	What a blessed child is born! The messenger (angel) of salvation.
3b. Incarnati nobis dati Verbi vox et baiulus.	Voice and carrier of the Word Given in flesh to us.
4a. Non precedit fructus florem, Sed flos fructum, iuxta morem Agri pleni dans odorem Mentibus fidelium;	The fruit did not precede the flower. But the flower [preceded the] fruit according to custom, giving off the odor of blossoms to the minds of the believers.
4b. Viam parat et hostendit, Ubi pedem non offendit, Qui per fidem comprehendit Verum Dei filium.	He prepares and shows the way, where he does not set foot, [He] who understands by faith The true son of God.
5a. Lege vite sub angusta Mel silvestre cum locusta Cibum non abhorruit,	Living strictly by the Law, He did not shrink from wild honey with locusts As his nourishment.
5b. Camelorum tectus pilis In deserto quam exilis, Quam bonus apparuit.	Clothed with camels' hair In the desert so poor, how good he appeared.
6a. Verba sunt evangeliste: Lux non erat, inquit, iste Sed ut daret tibi, Christe, Lucis testimonium;	The evangelist says: He was not the light, says he, this one, but so that he might give to you the witness of the light, o Christ.
6b. Lux non erat sed lucerna Monstrans iter ad superna, Quibus suum pax aeterna Pollicetur gaudium.	He was not a light, but a lantern, showing the way to the heavens by which his eternal peace might promise joy.
7a. Contemplemur omnes istum, Quem putabat turba Christum Stupes ad prodigia,	May we all contemplate him [John] Whom the portents led astonished crowd to believe to be Christ.
7b. Qui cervicem non erexit Nec se dignum intellexit Domini corrigia.	He who did not lift up his own neck Nor perceived himself worthy [to untie the] thong of the [sandals of the] Lord.

8a. A suo tempore Divino munere Celum vim patitur Et violencie Cum penitencie Fructus conceditur Gratis, non merito.	From his time, by divine grace he experiences heavenly strength, as he submits to violence with penitence by profiting grace without merit.
8b. Quem vates ceteri Sub lege veteri Canunt in tenebris, In carne Dominum, Figuris terminum, Propheta celebris Ostendit digito	He of whom other prophets Sing in darkness Under the old Law, He, the incarnate Lord And the term of the signs Is pointed by the finger Of the famous prophet
9a. O quam sanctum, quam preclarum, Qui viventium aquarum Fontem, Christum baptizavit Et lavantem cuncta lavit In Iordanis flumine.	O how holy, how outstanding, The fount of living waters who baptized Christ And thus washing one, washed all In the river Jordan.
9b. Ab offensis lava, Christe, Praecursoris et baptiste Natalitia colentes Et exaudi nos gementes In hac solitudine.	O Christ, wash from their offences Those who are celebrating the birth Of the precursor and Baptist And hear us crying out In this solitude.
10a. Post arentem et australem Terram anime dotalem Petimus irriguam,	After the dry and windy land, we seek the fertile [irrigating] dowry for the soul.
10b. Ut manipulos portantes Veniamus exsultantes Pacem ad perpetuam. Amen	So that bearing these poor offerings We may come rejoicing and find everlasting peace. Amen.

A large proportion of the sequences preserved in Hu belong to the Marian repertoire. The remaining pieces are the sequences of the *temporale* or pieces for particular saints. The latter group is represented only by four figures: St. Mary Magdalene and St. Catherine for the female saints

and St. Paul and St. John the Baptist for the male. The sequence *Helizabet Zacharie* for the feast of Nativity of John the Baptist is a lengthy piece of ten pairs of strophes.⁵¹ Contrary to Anderson's remark pointing to 15th century manuscript from Düsseldorf as the only other source of this sequence than Hu, *Helizabet Zacharie* has been widely transmitted in the whole of Western Europe from 14th century onwards.⁵² The Hu version is not even the earliest; the piece appears already in the 13th century Iberian source Tortosa 135 with Aquitanian notation.⁵³

Particularly the monophonic pieces in Hu pose a real problem when it comes to transcription into modern notation. Apart from obvious mistakes, "many added and sometimes unnecessary stems"⁵⁴ and missing rests, the attempts at a "literal" transcription often result in performer-unfriendly solutions that "interrupt the [natural] flow."⁵⁵ They usually squeeze the final melismatic passages in and stretch too long or "compensate excessively short notes" in order to fit the "long-breve" or "breve-long" pattern. As Bell notices:

because none of the concordances with the sequences of Hu presents them in such a rhythmically repetitive way, we might assume, for the sake of argument, that the scribe of Hu was responsible for imposing a measured rhythmic notation

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- 51 Dreves considers this piece "geistvoll" and "formvollendet". AH 55, 209.
- 52 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 169. Anderson has been misled by the full text of the sequence from Düsseldorf 11 (AH 9, no. 240). In AH 55, no. 185 the list of numerous sources, however incomplete, is presented.
- 53 Tortosa 135 was used by both G. Anderson and Asensio to complete the version in Hu. For the recording of ensemble Peregrina I have used Ba 911.
- 54 Barbara Hagg-Huglo, "Modes, Tenors, Scribes, and Stems: The Hispanic Features of Two Hispanic Manuscripts, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Ms. 20486, and Las Huelgas, Santa María la Real, Ms. 1X," in '*Nationes*', '*Gentes*' und die Musik im Mittelalter, eds. Frank Hentschel, Marie Winkelmüller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 351.
- 55 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 132. Also M. Anderson calls this and other sequences "mensural," using the mensural transcription of G. Anderson in his book. Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 162. Wulf Arlt addresses the general problems with the Huelgas notation in his article "À propos des notations pragmatiques: le cas du codex Las Huelgas: remarques générales et observations particulières," *Revista de Musicología* 13/2 (1990), Simposium Internacional "El Códice de Las Huelgas y su Tiempo" (Cuenca, 1987), 401-419.

on exemplars which were notated in freer rhythms. It therefore seems that one of his primary concerns was to preserve the sense of a regular perfection, which is innate in the trochaic and iambic rhythms, but which would have been lost in some places if the more complex and varied metres of certain of the other texts had been followed in as systematic a way.⁵⁶

As we can see, the sequence *Helizabet Zacharie* presents several metrical schemes. Two first verse pairs employ a scheme of 8+8+7 syllables and introduce the modality of the piece: a d-mode with the plagal flavor present in the second verse. Thematically, this sequence summarizes the saint's entire life. Despite mentioning Elizabeth and Zechariah, the theme of the miraculous conception is avoided and the story starts at John's birth and his meeting with Jesus in the womb. The wonder of birth is taken up in the third double strophe and made clear by the change of metrical scheme into 4+4+7 and the introduction of the *b* flat. The transition to John's adolescence takes place in the 4th strophe that expands to an 8+8+8+7 scheme and moves in the plagal realm. The next strophe, returning to 8+8+7 syllables' brings the opening with the leap of fifth and goes up to the octave for the first time. It describes John as Christ's predecessor, an itinerant preacher and hermit wearing clothes of camel-skin and eating locusts and wild honey. The 6th strophe, now in the meter of 8+8+8+7, is full of light images that have been previously mentioned by the *Mulierum hodie* / MULIERUM. *Verba evangeliste* obviously refer here to the Gospel of John mentioning Christ's words about the Precursor as "a burning and shining lamp."⁵⁷ Its ending on the fifth leads energetically to the next pair of verses inviting the contemplation of Baptist's deeds — it is the first time that the community has been addressed (*contemplemur omnes istum*), and this with a repeated formula in the upper register of the mode. Again, the *ouvert-*ending on the fifth leads the piece forward to the strophe 8 that employs for the first time the metrical scheme of 6+6+6+6+6+6 and begins on

⁵⁶ Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 124. The version of this sequence as present on the *Cantrix* recording by ensemble Peregrina, working with my transcription and under my direction, follows the flexible and changeable flow of the metrics and word accents.

⁵⁷ John 5:35.

the upper octave. The two first phrases of this double verse are also quite melismatic with several four- and six-tone groups (until now we could hear occasionally three-tone groups). This new musical element expresses on the one hand the moral authority and the strength of John as described in verse 8a and on the other hand helps to prepare the thematic shift in verse 8b that speaks about Jesus himself, with John taking a role of a “supporting actor.” The two protagonists continue to be juxtaposed in the two verses of strophe 9, using yet another extension of the basic metrical scheme to 8+8+8+8+7, with the verse 9b belonging fully to Christ. This is a climactic strophe in the highest register (with a third above the octave), justified by its theme.⁵⁸ Thirty years after their first meeting in their mothers’ wombs, John recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and baptizes him in the River Jordan, marking the beginning of Christ’s ministry. The theme of water is illustrated in music: “liquidity” words like *fontem* (“the fount”) or *lavantem* (“washing”) are set to descending figures (*fontem* additionally with a plica). The use of this device is continued throughout the 10th and the final strophe on the word *irriguam* (“irrigating”) set to a long eight-tone descending melisma.⁵⁹ Its text mentioning the “dry land” and the search for “the fertile dowry,” alluding clearly to barren Elizabeth and the miraculous conception of John. In general, the particular image of interest in this piece “involves water and fertility”⁶⁰ and might be connected to some Midsummer rituals like a “curative” dew and bathing in rivers and streams.⁶¹

One particular passage of the text of this sequence is worth mentioning. The verse 1b in all the sources but Hu reads: *qui virtutum vas sincerum inter natos mulierum principatum tenuit* (“he who was a genuine vessel of virtues, among those born of women, held pre-eminence”). Interestingly, the Huelgas codex renounces the famous quote from Matthew 11:11 and instead of *inter natos mulierum* offers *in amore mulierum*. “A genuine vessel

58 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 168.

59 It is worth mentioning that the first time the upper octave and a descending motive appears in the 5th strophe, it is placed by the words *mel silvestre* (“wild honey”) with drippy association and on clearly contradictory *desertum* (“desert”).

60 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 169.

61 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 169–170.

of virtues, ruled with the love of women” seems to be a highly applicable description to John the Baptist. On one hand it alludes to the figures of Mary and saint’s mother, making “a brief tribute to Elizabeth,”⁶² on the other, the placement of this variant in the manuscript might emphasize a particular role of this sequence in a female cloister.

Benedicamus Hic est enim precursor (2vv)

Hu 36, f. 24rv

Text concordance with Hu 186

Unicum

BENEDICAMUS

Hic est enim precursor
et magnus Iohannes Baptista
qui viam Domino preparavit in heremo
in Iordane baptizato

DOMINO

DEO DICAMUS

Hodie natus est
Iohannes de Helizabet⁶³
Repletus spiritu sancto
magnum predicavit
Eya, nunc pueri dicite:
GRACIAS

LET US BLESS —

This is the precursor,
the great John the Baptist,
who prepared the way of the Lord
in the desert, baptized in the Jordan —

TO THE LORD.

TO GOD LET US SAY —

Today John
is born of Elizabeth;
filled with the Holy Spirit
he preached great things,
Eya! Now say, children,
THANKS.⁶⁴

The text of this *Benedicamus* trope uses the famous passage of Malachias’ prophecy proclaiming the arrival of the Messiah: *ecce ego mittam angelum meum et preparabit viam ante faciem meam et statim veniet ad templum suum*

62 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 169.

63 Even though this trope, unlike *Benedicamus O quam sanctum*, is not rhymed, this line misses two syllables in respect to the first strophe that causes irregularities in text underlay. To mend this, G. Anderson inserted here the word *sanctus* in his edition thus reading *hodie natus est [sanctus] Iohannes de Helizabet*. None of the existing recordings of this piece, however, followed this proposal.

64 Translation Lucas Bennett.

dominator quem vos queritis (“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple”).⁶⁵ It also refers to the baptism of Christ as witnessed in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew.⁶⁶ The feast described in the song is the Nativity of John the Baptist and the main topic here presents a self-referential note on the performers: *eya, nunc pueri dicite gratias*. The Huelgas convent was famous for its *cantoras* and the reference to *pueri* seems strange at first. *Pueri*, however, does not have a clear sex connotation—it can refer both to the masculine and to the feminine element (that is why it can be translated as “children” or “youth”). Here it is very likely (also) addressing women.⁶⁷

In this two-part piece the composer inserts the trope (sung by the soloists) between *Benedicamus* and *Domino* and then repeats the procedure with the same musical material while working on the *Deo dicamus — gratias* passage. The predominance of parallel fifths and the simple contrary motion shows the archaic style still in use in Hu. Even though the three existing editions offer more (Gordon Anderson, Asensio) or less (Anglès) mensurable readings, only one of three recordings of this piece follows the transcription of the latter (Ligeriana, women’s voices).⁶⁸ The ensembles *Sequentia* (men’s voices)⁶⁹ and *Peregrina* (women’s voices)⁷⁰ take a non-mensurable approach and work directly with the facsimile and their own transcriptions, bringing forth the “antique” character of the piece written in almost Aquitanian style.

65 Malachi 3:1.

66 Luke 3:21–22; Matthew 3:13–17.

67 Asensio, *Códice de las Huelgas*, 54.

68 Ensemble Ligeriana (dir. Katia Caré), *Iberica*, JADE 2002, JADO221.

69 Ensemble Sequentia (dir. B. Thornton and B. Bagby), *Vox Iberica II: Codex Las Huelgas – Music from the Royal Convent Las Huelgas de Burgos (13th –14th centuries)*, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 1992, BMG Classics 05472772382.

70 Ensemble Peregrina, *Cantrix*.

Benedicamus Hic est enim precursor (1v)

Hu 186, f. 168r

Text concordance with Hu 36

Unicum

This monophonic *Benedicamus* trope for the feast of Nativity of John the Baptist uses the first strophe of the previous piece (we can assume that the second strophe belongs to this piece, too, because of the closing formulas *Deo dicamus* and *gratias*), but sets it to different music. Written on the last folios of the codex, this piece is badly legible. Anglès refrained from transcribing it—his edition presents the text only.⁷¹ Gordon Anderson and Asensio both offer two rhythmically complex transcriptions that hardly differ from one another. The notation here, however, seems to be imposed by the scribe and does not serve the nature of this piece, it apparently stems from a much older tradition: the *longe* rather mark a new syllable or the beginning or the end of a new textual and musical unit than they have a strict mensural value. Both transcriptions also present a strange modality, starting on *f* and ending the piece on upper *a*, rendering the modal understanding of this piece rather difficult. We have seen that the Hu scribe uses the fifth transposition in some Dorian pieces, as was the case with the motet *Mulieris marcens*/MULIERUM. But even if we transpose this piece a fifth lower (*d* finalis), we still have trouble with the *b* flat (transposed *f*) that obscures the mode since the piece moves almost exclusively in its upper register, thus asking most of the times for *b* natural (*f* sharp in the transposition). Only the initial clef is visible (the only one in the three lines of music) and points to *f* as a first tone and with several tones quickly ascending to the upper *a*—an octave above the virtual finalis. I assume the scribe has made a mistake: if we consider the clef to be positioned a third lower, we will end up with a clear d-mode. The unusual beginning on *b* natural can be explained in terms of an initial formula for starting a polyphonic piece. And this piece might truly be an experimental

⁷¹ Anglès, *Còdex musical de Las Huelgas*, 411.

vox organalis of a partially notated organum for John the Baptist or a written down upper-voice improvisation in the usual d-mode. The high register used in this piece throughout (it descends to the finalis only once) and the final octave in the end reached through typically upper-voice stepwise movement would strongly point to this interpretation. In her work on the national style in Hu, Barbara Hagg-Huglo suggests that “we should be more encouraged to give more attention to the Aquitaine” while looking for stylistic counterparts of *Benedicamus Domino* tropes in this codex.⁷² The melismas of *Benedicamus Hic est enim precursor* recollect the characteristic traits of some Aquitanian pieces, and the piece might have its roots in the style cultivated around the abbey of Saint Martial. The *crypto-polyphonie* was a well-known phenomenon in early Aquitanian sources like Pa 1139, usually in the form of the successively notated voices or as one written voice of a two-part composition that can be reconstructed. Nicole Sevestre showed the three-fold connection between the Aquitanian *Benedicamus* tropes and the Hu repertoire.⁷³ Especially the *Benedicamus* tropes in Aquitanian repertoire create an interesting group in this respect, often notated just monophonically, with the lower voice of a two-part setting possible to reconstruct, as it belonged to the best known and most often sung chant melodies.⁷⁴ No one has ever attempted a reconstruction

⁷² Hagg-Huglo, “Modes, Tenors, Scribes, and Stems,” 373.

⁷³ Nicole Sevestre, “De lointains ‘ancêtres’ des *Benedicamus Domino* du manuscrit de Las Huelgas,” *Revista de Musicología* 13/2 (1990), Simposium Internacional “El Códice de Las Huelgas y su Tiempo” (Cuenca, 1987), 469–485. The examples of the three stylistically different counterparts are *Deus in adiutorium*, *Catholicorum concio* and *Stirps Iesse* in Pa 1139 and *In hoc festo gratis*, *Catholicorum concio* and *Benedicamus benigno voto* in Hu respectively. For more on the polyphonic *Benedicamus* see Barbara Barclay, *The Medieval Repertory of Polyphonic Untroped Benedicamus Domino Settings* (PhD diss., University of California, 1977), 2 vols.; Susanne Thomann, “Zu den superponierenden *Benedicamus*-Tropen in Saint Martial. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung früher Mehrstimmigkeit,” *Kirchmusikalisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1988), 1–19 and Anne Walters Robertson, “‘*Benedicamus Domino*’: The Unwritten Tradition,” *Journal of The American Musicological Society* 41/1 (1988), 1–62.

⁷⁴ One such piece is the often discussed *Organa letitie* on f. 59v60v in Pa 1139 that has been considered a two-part piece by many researchers, but apart from a sketch in Jacques Handschin’s unpublished material on Aquitanian polyphony, there has never been

of a two-part *Benedicamus Hic est enim precursor* as the transcription of its melody is already problematic. But for structural as well as melodic reasons, there is good cause to believe that the original setting of this piece was polyphonic. The notational habits and the connection to Aquitanian style support this view.⁷⁵

Perhibentur cunctis rerum

Hu 185, f. 164v and 168r

Unicum

Perhibentur cunctis rerum	These words of the Creator of things
Conditoris verba ista	are reported to all:
Inter natos mulierum	Among those born of women
Iohanne maior Baptista	no greater man than John the Baptist has arisen
Non surrexit qui precessit	who has gone before
Parare viam in heremo	to prepare the way in the desert
Ideo	therefore
BENEDICAMUS DOMINO	LET US BLESS THE LORD. ⁷⁶

presented a musically and structurally convincing two-part transcription of this piece (for the summary of the discussion on whether it is a polyphonic piece or not, see Barclay, *The Medieval Repertory*, 115–135). I hope to be able to offer a logical and convincing polyphonic rendering of this piece with the FLOS FILIUS tenor on the forthcoming recording *Nova Gaudia* by ensemble Peregrina (expected in 2017 by Glossa/Schola Cantorum Basiliensis) and to contribute to understanding of this piece in a forthcoming article on the newest discoveries in Aquitanian manuscripts in preparation with Kelly Landerkin.

75 There is yet another interesting link between the polyphonic setting and *Benedicamus Domino*, additionally linked to John the Baptist. Kelly Landerkin discovered that the two-part piece *Adsit Iohannis Baptista* (Pa 3549, f. 160), considered to be a *prosa* but problematic due to its shortness (only two pair of verses and an Amen transmitted), uses the transposed musical material of an untroped two-part *Benedicamus Domino* (Pa 3719, f. 46). The lower voice of this *Benedicamus* exists also as a monophonic piece in Pa 1120 (f. 105). A paper on this constellation of contrafacta is currently in the preparation by me and Kelly Landerkin.

76 Translation Lucas Bennett.

This piece starts with the idea of *testimonium*: the first words describe the power of the evangelical report by Matthew, followed by the quote from his Gospel. We have seen that the sequence *Helizabet Zacharie* also mentioned the *verba evangeliste* referring to the passage from the Gospel of John about the Precursor.⁷⁷ Further, the text of *Perhibentur* quotes the passage from the Gospel of Luke,⁷⁸ and is at the same time a quote from the Book of Isaiah and the prophecy of Malachias.⁷⁹

This monophonic *Benedicamus Domino* trope is written on two folios towards the end of the manuscript. Its notation causes similar problems in reading and transcribing as the previous piece. Anglès' edition presents again the text only, and Gordon Anderson and Asensio both offer measured transcriptions, trying to preserve the sense of a regular perfection. For the performer, however, their striving to coerce the melody into a kind of regular meter proves at least problematic, if not unsuccessful. *Perhibentur* is a good example of what the needs of both music and the performers are, as Bell describes it:

in practice some flexibility is almost inevitable, and as strict an interpretation as that shown by the precision of the modern notation is as impractical as it is improbable. ... these are cases where the precisely prescriptive nature of the modern system of notations is ill-suited to accommodating the innately flexible interpretations which the notation of Hu requires.⁸⁰

77 It is worth mentioning that all four canonical Gospels acknowledge John as Christ's predecessor.

78 Luke 3:2–5: *Sub principibus sacerdotum Anna et Caiapha factum est verbum Dei super Iohannem Zacchariae filium in deserto et venit in omnem regionem Iordanis praedicans baptismum paenitentiae in remissionem peccatorum sicut scriptum est in libro sermonum Esaiiae prophetae vox clamantis in deserto parate viam Domini rectas facite semitas eius omnis vallis implebitur et omnis mons et collis humiliabitur et erunt prava in directa et aspera in vias planas* (“During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth’”).

79 Isaiah 40:3–4; Malachi 3:1.

80 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 131.

In fact, while working on this piece for the recording, Kelly Landerkin and I made our own transcriptions interpreting this piece in a rhythmically neutral manner and such an interpretation has been recorded. Also this piece seems to show strong traits of a more antique style, not far from the Aquitanian melismatic *versus* and *Benedicamus* tropes from 1139, even though the scribe used the “up-dated” notation.

The piece begins with the *testimonium* passage that settles the authentic *d*-mode by the opening fifth *d-a* and the two semi-cadences of the *Gegenklang* (*c* below the finalis and *e* above it). *Conditoris verba ista* returns to the clear *protus* mode and is set to the initially syllabic pattern that recurs throughout the piece. We can observe it later on the *[in]-ter natos mulierum*, *Iohanne maior* and *parare viam*. The latter passage is probably meant rhetorically, as instead of the ascending *f-g-a* motive in the beginning, it starts on the *a* already depicting the straight and even paths prepared for the Lord by his Forerunner. The first melisma on *inter* marks the beginning of the quote from the Gospel. Further highly melismatic parts are set to the following words: *Iohanne* and *Baptista* (exposing the main protagonist of the piece) as well as to *non [surrexit]* and *precessit* (emphasizing saint’s role and activity). The last passage on *ideo* uses the embellished initial formula of *perhibentur*, leading directly to the syllabically set *Benedicamus Domino* conclusion.

The modality of this piece seems to be clear. Its strong cadences on the second degree of the mode (*e*) and the beginnings of the new phrases on the *b* natural, however, are quite striking. Could this be an allusion to the *Alleluia Inter natos mulierum* with which chant *Perhibentur* shares some of its text? Its long verse is almost completely set in *d* (with several strong *protus* cadences), apart from the final *e* that reminds us of this alleluia written in fact in the 3rd mode. This modal ambiguity of *Perhibentur* is much stronger since the musical gestures are more robust. The three melismas *Iohanne*, *Baptista* and *non [surrexit]* begin on *b* natural, with *precessit* starting on the upper *c* but also oscillating around *b* natural. The persistence of the *Gegenklang* is reinforced by a very unusual leap of fifth *e-b* natural between *maior* and *Baptista*. A particular moment is offered by the longest melisma on *Baptista* containing over 120 tones (sic!). After several cadences on

the tone *e* in the lower register, the scribe repeats the unusual leap of fifth *e-b* natural, letting the final syllables end on the high octave of the piece. Could the persistent use of *b* natural at the beginnings of the phrases and the strong cadence on the high octave be again an indication of a possible original polyphonic setting of this piece? No attempt to reconstruct a polyphonic setting has been undertaken so far, but in the light of the remarks on unwritten *Benedicamus* trope tradition in the cognate repertoires like the Aquitanian one, a polyphonic origin is certainly not unthinkable.

Benedicamus O quam sanctum

Hu 178, f. 155r

Partial text concordance with Hu 69

Unicum with a signature *Iohannes roderici me fecit*

BENEDICAMUS

O quam sanctum, quam preclarum,
Qui viventium aquarum
Fontem Christum baptizavit
Et lavantem cuncta lavit
In Iordanis flumine.

DOMINO.

DEO DICAMUS

Ab offensis lava, Christe,
Praecursoris et baptiste
Natalitia colentes
Et exaudi nos gementes
In hac solitudine.

GRATIAS

LET US BLESS —

O how holy, how outstanding,
The fount of living waters
who baptized Christ
And thus washing one, washed all
In the river Jordan. —

THE LORD.

TO GOD LET US SAY —

O Christ, wash from the offences
Of the precursor and Baptist
Cherishing the things of birth
And hear us crying out
In this solitude —

THANKS.

The text of this *Benedicamus* trope uses the 9th strophe of the sequence *Helizabet Zacharie*. Even though the version in Hu abruptly finishes exactly in the middle of the 9th verse, there seem to be no musical connection between the trope and the sequence. However, this strophe was central to the musical culmination of the sequence, reaching the highest range after the long build-up, thus certainly noticeable and memorable.

The composer inserts this text as a trope (sung by the soloist) between *Benedicamus* and *Domino* and uses the same musical material for the repeat with *Deo dicamus — gratias* passage. The first strophe (from *Benedicamus* to *Domino*) uses the *u* vowel in the beginnings of the words (*cuncta, flumine*) or in the endings (*sanctum, preclarum, viventium aquarum, Christum*) – this insertion works very well with the *benedicamus* assonance. The second one puts more emphasis on the sibilant *s* (*offensis, colentes, nos gementes, solitudine*), resounding also in the names or bynames of main protagonists here: Christ and Baptista (Precursor), additionally preparing the assonance to the final *gratias*. Both strophes, operating with their own rhymes, are also jointed by *flumine — solitudine* pair, otherwise having no rhyme within the strophe.

The first strophe takes up the baptism theme as described in two Gospels.⁸¹ At first, the main protagonist is here the Precursor, the one who baptized Christ, but the text immediately takes a curve to mention the figure of Messiah as the one washing all sin. The act of baptism here is treated as an introduction to the true purification through Jesus. This strophe is full of watery images: we have here the acts of baptizing and washing (twice), an image of a fount of living waters and the highly symbolic River Jordan. Exactly these words are also mostly set to melismatically, which I believe is meant as a rhetorical device, as was the case in the sequence *Helizabet Zacharie*. The second strophe confirms the importance of Christ for this Johannine trope. It is a clear invocation to the Saviour to cleanse the sinful and to hear out their prayers. The last fragment—*et exaudi nos gementes in hac solitudine*—sounds familiar. It bears great textual resemblance to a passage of *Salve Regina*, the Marian antiphon already mentioned in the possible connection with the Johannine motets: *ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes in hac lacrimarum valle*. Even though the words *flentes* (“weeping”) and *lacrimarum valle* (“valley of tears”) do not appear in the text of the *Benedicamus* trope, they are evoked by *gementes* and are virtually present, especially after the very “watery” first strophe.

81 Luke 3:21–22; Matthew 3:13–17.

The two strophes of this piece juxtapose the main two personages, the Precursor and Christ, showing how the presence of John the Baptist is diminishing, leaving room for the Messiah. *Benedicamus O quam sanctum* is more an invocation to the Saviour who washes away the sins of the humanity than the praise to the old prophet. The dominant topic of the first strophe also shows an important shift from fire, so present in the festivities of the 24th of June, to water – the symbol of the purity of New Law.⁸²

Benedicamus O quam sanctum is one of the pieces bearing the famous signature *Iohannes roderici me fecit*. A long-lasting desire on the part of scholars to see in him of the main composers of Hu cannot be really supported by newest research. Barbara Hagg-Huglo writes about the consensus that “*me fecit* means that Roderici adopted or emended, but did not compose” the pieces in question.⁸³ Bell shares the same conviction, adding that Roderici might have been responsible for the use of the codex while working with the group of singers after its compilation and for keeping it up to date.⁸⁴ Catalunya shows that Roderici intervened after the principal scribe of the codex had completed his main corpus, and only worked on fascicles containing motets, conductus and *Benedicamus* settings.⁸⁵ Could other *unica* for John the Baptist in this section have more connection to Iohannes Roderici? His interest lay clearly in *Benedicamus* tropes and another unique piece of this genre that can be attributed to him (with no signature) is *Benedicamus Iste est Iohannes* for John the Evangelist starting on the verso page of *Benedicamus O quam sanctum*.⁸⁶ The musical style of *Benedicamus Iste est Iohannes* is close to both *Perhibentur* and the monodic *Benedicamus Hic est enim precursor*; all three pieces show antique melodic features similar to Aquitanian melismatic versus from Pa 1139. In fact, Iohannes Roderici seems to have copied another *Benedicamus* trope, the two-part *In hoc festo gratis* on fols 162v163r that is a contrafact

82 On the symbolism of fire in the pieces for John the Baptist see Anderson, “Fire, Foliage and Fury,” 22–29.

83 Hagg-Huglo, “Modes, Tenors, Scribes, and Stems,” 350–351.

84 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 34.

85 Catalunya, *Music, Space and Ritual*.

86 Catalunya, *Music, Space and Ritual*.

of the already mentioned crypto-polyphonic Aquitanian *Deus in adiutorium* beginning the versus section of Pa 1139.⁸⁷ What is also intriguing is Roderici's clear predilection for working on pieces for the two saints bearing his own name.

Conclusions

The remarks above show how many different, elaborate and partly unique pieces (or pieces with unique solutions) for John the Baptist have been preserved in the Las Huelgas codex. The particular interest in the musical testimonies for this saint in the female cloister might have various reasons. One of the most important ones is the link of the Precursor to the women. It comes from the Biblical narrative on the relationship between Virgin Mary and Elizabeth, "connecting John to the powerful Holy Kinship."⁸⁸ The powerful idea of the *deesis*, a traditional Byzantine and Orthodox iconic representation of Christ Pantocrator ("Almighty") with the Virgin Mary on one and John the Baptist on the other side, an image also found in Western Europe, made John and Mary share the highest rank among most important intercessors. The texts of pieces for the Precursor in Hu are filled with female figures (Elizabeth, Mary, Eve) and show further more or less hidden Marian allusions. The intertextuality can also be traced in the music: the likely *Salve Regina* motives in the MULIERUM tenor have been shown and their textual consequences for both motets and the musically unrelated *Benedicamus* tropes discussed. The popular Johannine MULIERUM tenor proved to be a tempting excuse to include the female element beyond Marian themes in the motets. In the texts of the upper voices we find allusions to Salome, Herodias and to John's notorious beheading.⁸⁹ The Johannine motets in vernacular also often address an

87 Sevestre, "De lointains 'ancêtres' des *Benedicamus*," 470.

88 Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 104.

89 On the presence of the women theme in various literary registers in the MULIERUM and IOHANNE motets see Anderson, *Symbols of Saints*, 110–123.

amorous lady who can be interpreted as Mary or Ecclesia. All these circles of themes might have been particularly appealing to well-educated nuns of the Spanish convent.

The presence of many pieces for John the Baptist in the codex has also historical reasons. We know that next to Saint Catherine, John the Baptist was the saint particularly revered in the convent.⁹⁰ The importance of the saint's cult might also be explained by the family connections of the houses of Castile and Aragon. A year after the royal monastery Santa María la Real de Las Huelgas was founded in 1187 by Alfonso VIII of Castile, his aunt Sancha of Castile and Poland (ca. 1154–1208), the only daughter of King Alfonso VII and Richeza of Poland, founded its twin convent in Sigüenza. Raised in a Cistercian cloister and at the Castilian court in Leon, Sancha married Alfonso II of Aragon whose court flourished with music and the arts, and who was a well-known patron of troubadours and a poet himself. Sancha entered into this powerful and rapidly growing kingdom, contributing also significantly to its cultural development. After her husband's death, according to her holy vow never to remarry, Sancha sought to establish a royal burial place to strengthen the identity of the dynasty of Aragon and founded a new royal monastery in Sigüenza that she herself entered as a nun, later becoming a prioress. She chose as the patrons of her new monastic foundation a military order of the Hospitallers, known also as the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (and today as the Order of Malta). The patron of this knights' congregation is no other than John the Baptist who was also highly venerated in the new convent.⁹¹ His cult is also mirrored in a processional from the 14th–15th century, preserved in

90 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 67.

91 Sancha's dedication to the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist is present in her vocational letter written in 1187 to Ermengol de Aspa, the Prior of Saint-Gilles, she states: *Et ego Sancha, Dei gratia Aragonis regina, [...], offero me ipsam Domino Deo et Beate Virgini Marie et Beato Johani et infirmis pauperibus Hospitalis Iherosolimitanorum in vita et in morte* ("And I, Sancha, by God's grace Queen of Aragon, ..., offer myself to the Lord God and the Blessed Virgin Mary and Blessed John, as well as to the poor sick of the Hospitallers of Jerusalem in life and in death"). Archivo Histórico Provincial de Huesca, Armario de Sigüenza, Libro de la Fundación, f. 1–3, copy from 1695.

the Archivo Histórico Provincial in Huesca (Huesca 48). This is a beautifully written source of liturgical music from this important Hospitaller women's cloister in Aragon and a testimony to the rich vocal culture of Spanish nuns. The pieces for John the Baptist are numerous: we find one alleluia verse and four responsories for the saint's Nativity as well as a rare example of a rhymed responsory for the feast of *Visitatio*.⁹² In the Sigena Rule of 1188 we also find many details about particular liturgical functions for singing nuns and specific names for female solo singers, called *cantrix*, *paraphonista* and *precentrix*. These singers led the choir of nuns, intoning the hymns, responsories, antiphons, alleluias and other forms of chant sung during the Mass, the Office and the liturgical processions of the community.⁹³

Documents on the royal Las Huelgas cloister provide us with even more information. Not only do we learn the various functions of female singers in the convent (*cantora*, *socantora*, *precentrix* and *cantatrix*), but we also learn over a dozen of their proper names.⁹⁴ As Bell phrases it, "Las Huelgas was by no means a normal Cistercian convent" and "the music of Hu was sung by the nuns themselves."⁹⁵ Although he expresses caution in regarding Huelgas nuns as performers of polyphony, entrusting the polyphonic and mensural music to their chaplains of possibly French origin,⁹⁶ the newest research by Catalunya delivers the evidence not only for the fact that they sang three-part polyphony, but also that they "shared

92 Responsory *Elisabeth ex opere V. Nullus deffidat*.

93 I am indebted to Agnieszka Tutton for providing me with important information and sources on the Sigena convent and the Queen Sancha.

94 Josemi Lorenzo Arribas, "¿Una atribución a una compositora castellana de principios del siglo XIV? Nuevas interpretaciones para una polémica en torno al 'Código de Las Huelgas,'" *Revista de Musicología* 28/1 (2005), Actas del VI Congreso de la Sociedad Española de Musicología (Oviedo 2004), 99–101.

95 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 35.

96 "Though it is difficult to prove without a much wider survey of the available evidence, it seems to me at least as probable that this polyphonic music was sung not by the nuns themselves in the choir, but as an adornment to their worship, sung elsewhere in the church (and in some cases outside it, in a non-liturgical setting) by some of these chaplains". Cf. Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 35.

liturgical and singing duties in the most solemn and public events at Las Huelgas, such as coronation ceremony of a king.”⁹⁷ For years Las Huelgas has belonged to the abbeys that have enjoyed a particular treatment, receiving “innumerable papal bulls in their favour confirming them in their independence of any bishop and accepting their civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction.”⁹⁸ Equally great was the power of the abbess commanding over up to hundred nuns, all noblewomen, and their numerous servants.⁹⁹ Josemi Lorenzo Arribas has even proposed one of the abbesses, María González de Agüero, as a composer of several pieces in Huelgas codex.¹⁰⁰ The codicological analysis of Las Huelgas *Ceremoniale* (Huelgas 6) shows that it was written by female hands (thanks to feminine forms present in vernacular Castilian in which *Ceremoniale* is written) that match the scribal habits and other features of the Las Huelgas music codex, suggesting that the scriptorium of Las Huelgas had female scribes who might have been active in writing music for the cloister.¹⁰¹

We should also not forget that until the 15th century John the Baptist was known as the patron of music. This is slightly surprising since there are no pictorial or literary sources confirming this (John’s attributes do not include any musical instruments), and traditionally he is considered the

97 Catalunya, *Music, Space and Ritual*.

98 Joan Morris, “Women and Episcopal Power,” *New Blackfriars* 53/624 (1972), 205.

99 Bell, *Las Huelgas Music Codex*, 35. Morris writes also: “The ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction of the abbesses of Las Huelgas de Burgos covered a territory extending over some sixty-four towns and villages, and over the clergy and people within these places.” Morris, “Women and Episcopal Power,” 206.

100 Lorenzo Arribas, “¿Una atribución a una compositora castellana,” 86–101.

101 Catalunya, *Music, Space and Ritual*. Interestingly, the already mentioned manuscript Düsseldorf 11 containing a German concordance to *Helizabeth Zacharie*, might stem from a female Dominican scribe, Elisabeth von Lünen from a cloister Paradies. She is known to have provided the Dominican friars from Dortmund (*notabene* with John the Baptist being one of the patrons of the cloister) with a complete gradual (Dortmund, Archiv der Propsteikirche, ms. B 6). See Susan Marti, “Schwester Elisabeth schreibt für ihre Brüder in Dortmund. Das Graduale für das Dortmunder Dominikanerkloster,” in *Die Dortmunder Dominikaner und die Propsteikirche als Erinnerungsort*, eds. Thomas Schilp, Barbara Welzel (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2006), 277–294.

patron of the shepherds, tailors and the barbers.¹⁰² However, there is one strong connection with music: the famous hymn *Ut queant laxis*, often attributed to Paul the Deacon.¹⁰³ In its famous first strophe the singers are “imploing the saint to heal their colds in order that they may sing with clear voices:”¹⁰⁴ *ut queant laxis resonare fibris, mira gestorum famuli tuorum, solve polluti labii reatum, Sancte Iohannes* (“So that your servants may praise the wonders of your deeds with full voices, wash the guilt from their unclean lips, O Saint John!”).¹⁰⁵ The famous medieval anecdote told by Guillelmus Durandus in his *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* (ca. 1286) strengthens the case of the Baptist’s connection to voice and singing. Durandus describing the festivities of the 24th of June mentions Paul the Deacon who had to sing the *Exultet* on Holy Saturday, but suffered from severe hoarseness. He petitioned Saint John in the beginning of the hymn that he has just composed to his praise and got his voice restored, just as it happened to the prophet Zechariah after the birth of his son.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, Paul the Deacon does not ask for help of Saint Blaze, known to prevent from any throat disease,¹⁰⁷ but the healing powers of the Precursor. Could the group of eight pieces for the patron of voice and music be of a particular interest to the highly musical nuns of Las Huelgas? The presence

102 “The four saints who did attain this status – Saint John the Baptist, Saint Wilgefortis, Saint Cecilia, and Saint Job had no connection with music at all, so far as the official sources are concerned. Each of them came to be linked with music only as a result of peculiar circumstances that demand investigation.” See Kathi Meyer, “St. Job as a Patron of Music,” *The Art Bulletin* 36/1 (1954), 21.

103 “Ut queant laxis,” in *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*, <http://www.hymnology.co.uk/u/ut-queant-laxis> (last accessed 24 April 2016).

104 Kathi Meyer-Baer, “Saints of Music,” *Musica Disciplina* 9 (1955), 19.

105 The passage about the voice has been translated in various ways including: “with loosened voices, resound the wonders of your deeds,” “with loosened (expanded) vocal chords,” “with clear voices” and “with all their voice.”

106 “Paulus historiographus, Romanae Ecclesiae Diaconus, Cassinensis Monachus, quadam die cum vellet paschalem cereum consecrare, raucae factae sunt et fauces ejus, cum prius vocales essent: ut ergo vox sibi restitueretur, composuit in honorem beati Joannis hymnum, ut queant laxis resonare; in cujus principio petit vocis restaurationem, quam obtinuit, sicut per merito Sancti Joannis restaurata est Zachariae.” Durandus, *Rationale*, 407–408.

107 Meyer-Baer, “Saints of Music,” 18.

of some elaborate *unica* and several polyphonic settings creates almost an aesthetical statement of compositional and notational advancement and repertoire uniqueness that were cultivated in this convent. We can assume that at least some of the pieces for John the Baptist, maybe even the polyphonic ones, could have resounded with *vox leticie mulierum* – clear and joyful voices of the well-educated and independent Cistercian nuns.

The following manuscript sigla are used:

- Ba Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Lit. 115 (formerly Ed.IV.6) (Codex Bamberg)
- Ba 911 Barcelona, Biblioteca Central, ms. 911
- Düsseldorf 11 Düsseldorf, Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek, D.11
- F Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut.29.1(Pluteo 29)
- Hu Burgos, Monasterio de Santa Maria la Real de Las Huelgas, ms. 11 (formerly ms. IX or s.s.)
- Huesca 48 Huesca, Archivo Histórico Provincial, ms. 48 (processionale of Sigena)
- LoD London, British Library, Add. 27630
- Ma Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, 20486 (formerly Hh 167)
- Mo Montpellier, Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire, Section de Médecine, H 196 (Codex Montpellier)
- N Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 12615 (chansonnier de Noailles; trouvère chansonnier T)
- R Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 844 (chansonnier du Roi; trouvère chansonnier M)
- Pa 1120 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. lat. 1120
- Pa 1139 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. lat. 1139
- Pa 3549 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. lat. 3549
- Tortosa 135 Tortosa, Archivo de la Catedral, ms. 135
- W1 Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 628 Helmst. (Heinemann no. 677)
- W2 Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1099 Helmst. (Heinemann no. 1206)

For all Biblical quotations I am using the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Translations of the pieces, unless indicated otherwise, are adapted from those in Michael A. Anderson, *Symbols of Saints: Theology, Ritual and Kinship in Music for John the Baptist and St. Anne (1175–1563)* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2008). I cordially thank M.A. Anderson for making his dissertation available to me.

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ABSTRACT

Inter natos mulierum.

Pieces for St. John the Baptist from the Cistercian Convent of Las Huelgas

In the famous 14th-century Las Huelgas Codex (Burgos, Monasterio de Las Huelgas, ms. 11, olim IX or s.s.) containing predominantly Marian repertoire, we can also find a bulk of pieces bearing witness of the vivid cult of John the Baptist. They outnumber by far the musical testimonies for other popular saints in this manuscript, like Saint Catherine or Saint Nicholas. These pieces show a great notational and stylistic variety: there is one sequence popular on the Iberian peninsula and there are three two-part motets known in the central Notre-Dame sources, but also four *Benedicamus Domino* tropes not found elsewhere, including one two-part setting. This study takes a closer look at them, as each poses different textual, exegetical, musical and performative problems, and attempts to suggest some ideas and explanations (Biblical, historical and aesthetical) regarding their style and significance within the liturgy of Cistercian nuns.

KEYWORDS John the Baptist, Las Huelgas, motet, tenor, *Benedicamus trope*, early polyphony, liturgy, Cistercian nuns

STRESZCZENIE

Inter natos mulierum.

Utwory ku czci św. Jana Chrzciciela z cysterskiego klasztoru w Las Huelgas

W słynnym czternastowiecznym Kodeksie Las Huelgas (Burgos, Monasterio de Las Huelgas, ms. 11, olim IX lub s.s.) zawierającym głównie repertuar maryjny, można znaleźć również znaczną liczbę utworów będących świadectwem żywego kultu Jana Chrzciciela. Jest ich w tym manuskrypcie zdecydowanie więcej niż muzycznych świadectw kultu innych popularnych świętych, takich jak św. Katarzyna czy św. Mikołaj. Utwory te charakteryzuje znacząca różnorodność zapisu i stylu: obok popularnej na Półwyspie Iberyjskim sekwencji znaleźć tu można trzy dwugłosowe motety znane z głównych źródeł repertuaru Notre Dame, jak również cztery niewystępujące nigdzie indziej tropy *Benedicamus Domino*, w tym jeden w opracowaniu dwugłosowym. Niniejsza praca koncentruje się na tych utworach, ponieważ każdy z nich prezentuje inne problemy tekstowe, egzegetyczne, muzyczne i wykonawcze; jest ona również próbą przedstawienia pewnych idei i hipotez (biblijnych, historycznych i estetycznych), dotyczących ich stylu oraz ich znaczenia w liturgii cysterek.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE Jan Chrzciciel, Las Huelgas, motet, tenor, trop *Benedicamus*, wczesna polifonia, liturgia, cysterki