

The Leiria Fragments: Vestiges of Fifteenth-Century Northern Polyphony in Portugal*

BERNADETTE NELSON

In the Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital de Leiria, a small cathedral town some 130 kilometres north of Lisbon, are preserved 1,000s of old registers and documents among which some 300 may be distinguished for their bindings or covers made up from parchment folios taken from a wide variety of manuscripts dating from around the early 1100s onwards. They have formed the basis of studies by the palaeographical department at Coimbra University, and a report published in 1995 by Ana Bela da Silva Vinagre was the first to attempt a classification of the parchment folios by type.¹ These folio fragments display texts (literary, legal, theological) ranging from English, French and Portuguese to Latin, and especially to musical plainchant (the majority) – a significant proportion of which would appear to have originated outside Portugal and the Iberian

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¹ Ana Bela da Silva VINAGRE, 'Manuscritos de capas de livros paroquiais e notariais do Arquivo Distrital de Leiria do século XII a XIX (inventário preliminar)', in *II Colóquio sobre história de Leiria e da sua região (1991): Actas*, vol. II, Leiria, 1995, pp. 13-54. I would like to thank Dr Saul António Gomes of Coimbra University for alerting me to this important collection in Leiria, also for allowing me access initially to the archive made from xeroxes of these fragments in the Faculdade de Letras, Inst. de Paleografia e Diplomática. I would also like to express thanks to the staff of the Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital de Leiria for allowing me to study and make photographs of their holdings, and to Professor John Caldwell of Oxford University for his help in deciphering some of the script and notation in various of the fragments.

peninsula.² Whereas some of the musical fragments date from as early as the twelfth century, most of them date from the 1400/1500s, with a handful dating from the eighteenth century.³ While immediately begging questions of exact provenance and history and circumstances of their journey to Portugal, therefore, the important question of whether indeed these, along with those of Portuguese origin, once performed a practical musico-liturgical function in a Portuguese religious institution at any time, is also raised. Almost all the registers and documents bound in these parchment fragments (largely legal documents and baptismal records dating from about the mid-sixteenth century onwards) originate predominantly in churches and other religious institutions of towns and villages in the Leiria region: from Peniche and Óbidos to the south, to Pedrógão Grande to the north, embracing also the famous monasteries in nearby Batalha and Alcobaça.⁴

Our main concern here lies with the Latin-scripted parchment folios of which the majority (187) are of liturgical plainchant written in notation ranging from early French-style on a single-line staff, through to Germanic *Hufnagel* type on four- and five-line staves, and to standard (larger) square notation using both four- and five-line staves on the fragments dating from between the fifteenth and the eighteenth century. Fig. 1 shows a bookbinding made from a fourteenth-century parchment folio of chant copied in *Hufnagel* notation.⁵

However, hidden among these, and unaccounted for previously, is an isolated folio of polyphonic music which has palaeographical features comparable with sources containing Burgundian court style music.⁶ What is more, judging from the size of the folio and the music written there, it was clearly extracted from a once large and significant choirbook containing a repertory of three-voice polyphony for the Mass. To date, as far as we are aware, there is no precedent for or anything like this known to exist in

² The musical fragments comprise over half of the range of bookbindings found in the Leiria library. The scope of these is extensive and will require a detailed and thorough examination of the different types – not only of musical notation, but also of the texts and melodies, and hence particular liturgical observances.

³ This initial calculation was principally made by VINAGRE in *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21 and Table VI.

⁴ Dating from the twelfth century, the abbey at Alcobaça was an important Cistercian foundation with strong ties with mother foundations in France and their liturgy.

⁵ Doc. 1-H-13: front cover of binding of baptismal records (1583-1614) from Amoreira, Óbidos. The notation is copied onto four-line staves.

⁶ I first made the discovery of this unique polyphonic fragment when I was in Coimbra (see above, n.1).

Portugal;⁷ neither indeed does it appear that there is much with which to compare it among other extant manuscript sources (and fragments) of European polyphonic music of the period.



Fig. 1: Leiria bookbinding: fragment showing fourteenth-century *Hufnagel* chant notation.

⁷ The so-called 'Penha longa fragment' now preserved in the Museu da Música in Lisbon (MM 1055), comprising part of two *Agnus Dei* settings in black and red notation suggestive of northern practices of the post-Machaut era, would appear to date from the early decades of the 15th century (no later than c. 1425).



Fig. 2: Leiria bookbinding (front and back covers): fragment with polyphony.⁸

The fragment with polyphony: description

This particular piece of parchment forms the binding of a set of baptismal records dating from between 1595 and 1611 from the church of Nossa Senhora da Ajuda, in Peniche: see Fig. 2. The provenance of the book from the parish of 'Ajuda – Peniche' is clearly inscribed both on the top right-hand corner of the front cover in black ink and on the label pasted below, where the span of dates 1595-1611 for the baptismal records is given. The dates are also inscribed in large numerals between two of the musical staves. (The bifolium was placed upside down to the baptismal book.) This volume is one from a set of seven dating from 1583 onwards surviving from the series of baptismal records from this church.⁹ However, as far as we know, it is the only one to have been bound with a piece of parchment

⁸ Doc. 2-B-38: outside cover of binding of baptismal records (1595-1611) from Peniche, Óbidos.

⁹ The church was founded at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

containing polyphony. The preceding volume (1583-1595), for example, is bound in parchment on which is copied plainchant using the *Hufnagel* type of notation: see Fig. 3 which shows the inside cover of this volume. The succeeding volume, which would have covered the years 1611-1622, is apparently missing. A set of baptismal records from a church in the parish of Amoreira, Óbidos, exactly contemporary with the set in Peniche bound with the polyphonic folio, also consists of a fragment of plainchant using *Hufnagel* notation (see Fig. 1), but from an earlier period.

The total size of the original bifolium of polyphony (before it was folded in half and bound with one of the gatherings of the original choirbook)



Fig. 3: Leiria bookbinding: inside cover of fragment with chant copied in *Hufnagel* notation.¹⁰

¹⁰ Doc. 2-B-37: baptismal records (1583-1595) from Peniche, Óbidos. Note: the notation is on five-line staves.

measured c. 37.5 (height) x c. 51 cms, with each half page (or single folio) therefore measuring c. 25 cms wide. It was much larger than the paper book prepared for the baptismal records and so the original spine or central fold of the parchment occurs about a quarter-way across the back of the volume with the result that the parchment is slightly stressed where it stretches over the spine (about two cms) of the new document. About ten cms of the parchment folio making up the back cover has been torn off from top to bottom, and consequently a portion of the musical composition on that side is now missing. As is evident from the photograph (Fig. 2), the parchment cover as a whole is now in an extremely poor state of preservation owing to general wear and tear and heavy usage. The outside is extremely dirty and badly rubbed, which has resulted in the partial obliteration of some of the musical notation and script; also, there is a large hole in the middle of the front cover. During the binding process, the top of the parchment folio (at the bottom of the book of baptismal records) was folded over inside, which has thus enabled not only a fairly accurate estimate of the original size of the bifolium, but also a clear reading of important details, including the Roman folio numbering. What we can see on the photograph (the book placed upside down) is fol. 111 on the left (fol. 111v visible), and fol. 120 (fol. 120r visible) on the right,¹¹ which means that it originally formed part of a larger gathering with at least with four more bifolia. There is no possible means of verifying from which part of the choirbook this portion (fols 111-120) had been extracted, but the fact that the volume consisted of at least 120 folios of parchment is in itself of enormous import. Where it is well preserved (largely the unexposed sides of the bifolium on the inside cover, fol. 111r, and where it has been folded over inside) the reading of the musical notation on the parchment folio is quite good, albeit faded in places, and it has thus fortunately been possible to piece together some passages of the music. However, the notation is also presently obscured in places by the labels and leather supports on the spine of the document.¹²

As can be seen on Figs 2 and 4 (below), most of the music is neatly written in standard white mensural notation, the notes copied close together onto pentagrams drawn in red ink (eight on each folio side). Owing to discrepancies and unevenness of size, it becomes clear that a rastrum was

¹¹ The folio numbers are written as 'cxi' and 'cxc' (the former is clearly visible on Fig. 4).

¹² It was not possible to examine notational details obscured by the labels and inside the spine on my visit to the Biblioteca Pública in Leiria.

probably not used for these pentagrams: the average size of each is 20 mm in height; but towards the bottom of fol. 111v, for example (visible on the left-hand side of the photograph), these become uneven and reduce in size to c. 15 mm in places. The fragment of the musical composition on the right-hand side (fol. 120r), however, is written entirely in black notation (see below).

It is clear to see that the style of the initial letters of the plainchant intonations painted in red with their surrounding filigree flourishes (the 'B' of *Beata* and the 'A' of *Asperges*, visible on Figs 2 and 5 below) are indicative of very long traditions of manuscript copying and illumination in northern Europe, but which may also be found in Portugal.¹³ The style of polyphonic (white mensural) notation, on the other hand, is comparable with that of a number of important mid-fifteenth-century manuscripts containing northern/ Burgundian School repertoires such as we may find preserved in both Italian and northern archives.¹⁴ The sacred Latin text is copied in a classical-style script, but this has also deteriorated in places and several letters are difficult to read. The names of the voice parts (see Fig. 2: 'Tenor', for example), and the initial letters of sections in the polyphonic pieces are enlarged and very slightly more elaborate.

The polyphonic repertory

This fragment records three items of polyphony composed for three voice parts: (1) two polyphonic Propers: settings of the Graduals *Benedictus es* (fol. 111r) and *Beata gens* (fol. 111v) – Graduals for Trinity and the Holy Ghost, or Pentecost; and (2) a setting of *Asperges me* (fol. 120r), the opening antiphon to Mass celebrated outside Paschal time. It is this last piece that is copied in black notation. (No music was copied onto fol. 120v, although pentagrams were prepared.) With the exception of the *Asperges me*, of which all three voice parts were copied successively onto the same side of the folio (albeit fragmentary now), and which can therefore be reconstructed

¹³ This style can be found in manuscripts dating from at least the fourteenth century. For examples of polyphonic manuscripts with comparable styles of initial letter copied in the Low Countries before 1400, see Eugeen SCHREURS (ed.), *Anthologie van muziekfragmenten uit de Lage Landen / An Anthology of Music Fragments from the Low Countries*, Leuven, 1995, pp. 16-17, where are reproduced folios now preserved in the Rijksarchief in Ghent, Belgium.

¹⁴ For instance, there is a striking resemblance to the notational style of 'ModB' (= ModE: Modena, Biblioteca Estense a X.1.11 [olim lat. 471]). Apart from references made to 'ModB', manuscript sigla cited henceforth are those found in Charles HAMM and Herbert KELLMAN (eds), *Census-Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music, 1400-1550*, 5 vols, Neuhausen-Stuttgart, 1979-88.

to some extent, the Graduals in both cases are lacking one complete voice part and parts of a third (the tenor). This is due to conventions of polyphonic notation during that time (especially in northern Europe, so it would seem) whereby the individual voice parts were arranged over a folio opening: usually the cantus on the left-hand folio, the contra on the right, and the tenor straddling the two folio sides at the foot of the opening.

Table 1: Contents of Leiria fragment with polyphony (Doc. 2-B-38)

f. 111r	Gradual [<i>Benedictus es</i>]	Contra & (part of) Tenor
f. 111v	Gradual <i>Beata gens</i>	[Discantus] & Tenor
f. 120r	<i>Asperges me</i>	[Discantus], Tenor & Contra
f. 120v	(no music)	

Gradual *Benedictus es* (fol. 111r)

Fig. 4 shows the inside (front) cover of the document, showing what survives of the Gradual for Trinity Sunday *Benedictus es*. Apart from the large hole at the 5th and 6th staves on this folio, and the section obscured at the spine of the document, the verso has remained relatively unspoilt with the passage of time and the musical notation can very largely be read quite clearly. Here, therefore, we can see virtually the entire contra part of the Gradual setting (lines 1-5), beginning with the text ‘Domine, qui intueris abyssos’ which would have succeeded the intonation ‘Benedictus es’ sung (presumably) in the cantus part now missing. This is succeeded (lines 7-8) by part of the tenor, where can be seen the beginning of what must have been a final three-part passage consisting of a long polyphonic melisma on the first syllable of the final word ‘suam’ (visible on the penultimate staff) in the verse section. Clearly the verse during which the tenor was silent up to that point was scored just for cantus and contra. (Compare with Gradual *Beata gens* below.) The fragment of notation which can be seen of the beginning of line 7 in the tenor is the conclusion of the antiphon that ends with the word ‘(cheru)-bim’.

The first section, the antiphon, written in perfect mensuration, was about 36 breves long; the verse section about three times the length with the tenor entering at ‘suam’ apparently after 44 breves’ rest in imperfect mensuration (see Fig. 4: line 7).



Fig. 4. Leiria bookbinding: fragment with polyphony. Contra part of Gradual *Benedictus es*, with fragment of tenor part below (fol. 111r).

A transcription of the beginning of the contra part on fol. 111r comprises Example 1. It is also possible to reconstruct isolated phrases of the tenor aligned with the contra – particularly at the word ‘cherubim’ (the end of the antiphon) and at the beginning of the word ‘suam’ in the verse section where the tenor re-enters. (Judging from the length of the contra part occupying the three lines of the verse section, the period of rest in the tenor is evidently double the length of that indicated in the score.) Whilst there is relatively little to go on from the point of view of contrapuntal style and technique, we may be struck that the stance of the contra with its emphasis on descending triads at the outset and other intervallic leaps, the sometimes lively syncopated rhythm and frequent rests certainly bears resemblance to the settings in the Trent codices, including the Propers in TrentC 88 of which a large number have been attributed to Dufay by modern scholars.¹⁵

The curiosity perhaps of this setting, however, lies in the version of the liturgical text used. While the text of the antiphon corresponds with that given in standard chant sources issued from Solesmes (e.g. the modern *Liber Usualis*), and therefore essentially derived from Roman practices, that of the verse is entirely different. However, it does match the text for this Proper given in a large number of Aquitainian sources, also northern French, Parisian and English.¹⁶ It is probably indicative, therefore, of the special Use found in a particular region known to the composer or institution with which he may have been associated – thus hopefully providing us with a clue for compositional orbit and context. The two versions of the Gradual text are shown in parallel columns on Table 2.

¹⁵ There has existed considerable controversy regarding the authorship of the cycle of Mass Propers in TrentC 88 ever since a significant number (eleven of the sixteen) were edited as works of Dufay by Laurence Feininger in 1947, despite the paucity of evidence within the source itself; see Laurence FEININGER (ed.), *Auctorum anonymorum missarum propria XVI quorum XI Gulielmo Dufay auctori adscribenda sunt (Monumenta polyphoniae liturgicae*, 2nd series, no. 1, Rome, 1947. However, since Planchart’s investigation into the possibility of five or six of these forming the ‘perpetual’ cycle sung in honour of the Order of the Golden Fleece in the Burgundian chapel in Dijon (a cycle established by Philip the Good in 1432), and other evidence, many of these have more firmly been accepted as by Dufay. See especially Alejandro E. PLANCHART, ‘Guillaume Du Fay’s benefices and his relationship to the court of Burgundy’, *Early Music History* 8, 1988, at pp. 143-68, and summary of modern opinion in the entry on ‘Du Fay’ by A. E. PLANCHART in Stanley SADIE (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (= *NGD*), vol. 7, 2nd ed., London, 2001, at pp. 650 & 655, and other cited literature. It is thought that some of the series in TrentC 88 were composed in the 1440s.

¹⁶ The same text, for example, occurs in the tenth-century Mont-Renard Gradual (Noyon MS) and the eleventh-century Saint-Yrieix Gradual (Paris BN Lat. 903) exemplified in *Paléographie Musicale* vols XVI and XIII respectively. It is also found in the ninth-century Ms 111 of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris (incipit only for the verse). In England, it occurs in the Sarum Gradual, also the York Gradual (Oxford Lat. Lit. b.5). (It is of some note that yet another variant for the verse text is found among German sources.) I would like to thank Juan Carlos Asensio and Theodore Karp for helping me trace the use of this text in some of these early chant sources.

Cont(ra) [Contra: line 1]

Domi (ne) Do - mi - - - - - ne qui
in tu - - - - - ris

// (line 2)

Ex. 1: Gradual *Benedicta es*.Table 2: Text versions of *Gradual Benedictus es*

1: Leiria fragment:	2: <i>Liber Usualis</i> (910):
Benedictus es , * domine, qui intueris abyssos, et sedes super Cherubim.	Benedictus es , * domine, qui intueris abyssos, et sedes super Cherubim.
Vs. Benedicite Deum caeli quia fecit [vobiscum] misericordiam * suam.	Vs. Benedictus es domine, in firmamento caeli, et laudabilis * in saecula

The word ‘vobiscum’ in the verse does not appear in the Leiria fragment, but it is consistent in the French sources.¹⁷ But, bearing in mind that we are only left with the contra part in the fragment, we cannot be certain whether this word was omitted in the cantus part also. (We can surmise that this section of the verse was sung by cantus-contra duo: see above.)¹⁸

¹⁷ The word ‘vobiscum’ is found in some Sarum Graduals.

¹⁸ A setting of the Trinity Gradual in TrentC 88 (no. 270: by Dufay), on the other hand, employs the standard Roman text transmitted, but with the exception of the final phrase which reads ‘et gloriosus in secula’ – a variant that can be traced to the Dijon missal, and identified by Planchart in his article ‘Guillaume Du Fay’s benefices’, pp. 161-2 and n. 167. (Planchart remarks in this context that the Dijon version differs from that used in Cambrai and in modern chant books.) See FEININGER (ed.), *Auctorum anonymorum missarum*. For a new edition of TrentC 88, see Rebecca L. GERBER (ed.), *Sacred Music for the Cathedral at Trent: Trent, Museo Provinciale d’Arte, Codex 1375 (olim 88), Monuments of Renaissance Music*, n.pl., 2006. See also above, n. 15.

Gradual *Beata gens* (fol. 111v)

Fol. 111v (the outside front cover: see Fig. 2) records the whole of the cantus part of the setting of the Gradual *Beata gens* on lines 1-5,¹⁹ and the tenor up to a double bar preceding the verse section on lines 6-7. What is possible to read and reconstruct of the opening of the antiphon of these two voices is reproduced as Example 2 below. Like the setting of *Benedictus es*, the first section in perfect mensuration (which was undoubtedly written for the full complement of three voices) was about 36 breves long. The succeeding verse section (in *tempus imperfectum diminutum*), of which only certain phrases in the cantus part can now be read, would appear to have been at least 90 breves in length. As we find in the Gradual *Benedictus es*, the verse section here is set entirely polyphonically without plainchant intonation. Throughout this setting, the cantus is clearly a paraphrase of the particular chant melody known to the composer (which in fact closely matches that found in modern chant sources),²⁰ with phrases and their final notes therefore corresponding with those in the chant. These phrases are separated one from the other in the cantus each time by a rest. (We are thus able to supply editorially any missing or illegible text at these points, for example.) As in the setting of *Benedictus es*, it seems likely that the verse section would have commenced with a long cantus-contraduo: the tenor part notated at the foot of the folio fragment consists only of part of the antiphon section. Likewise, one may assume that there is a similar climax to that in the Trinity Gradual at the end of the verse section, with all three voices partaking in the polyphony at the final word 'eorum': a fermata (implying a full cadential point) is placed above the stave in the cantus at the end of the preceding phrase set to 'omnis virtus' ('omnis virtus * eorum'). The text used is common to many chant sources.

Text of Gradual: **Beata gens, * cujus est dominus Deus eorum:**
 Populus, quem elegit dominus in heritatem sibi.
 Vs. Verbo domini caeli firmati sunt:
 Et spiritu oris ejus omnis virtus * eorum.

In modern liturgical Mass cycles, this Gradual text is used only for the 17th Sunday after Pentecost (see LU 1048). In the fifteenth century, however,

¹⁹ It may be observed that there is a change of clef from C2 for the intonation to C1 for the polyphonic line.

²⁰ Cf. LU 1048-9. It is to be noted that the intonation itself is slightly more elaborate than that found in the *Liber Usualis*, for example, and very slightly different to that used in the setting in TrentC 88.

it was apparently used for Pentecost Sunday or/ and a votive Mass for the Holy Ghost (the cycle preceding that for Trinity) as indeed we find recorded in TrentC 88.²¹ In this context, therefore, it may seem slightly curious at first that in the Leiria fragment the Gradual for Trinity, *Benedictus es*, is found before that for the Holy Ghost. We may however bear in mind the custom throughout large parts of Europe – Germany especially – where a cycle of votive masses for the week began on Sunday with one for the Holy Trinity succeeded on the Monday by one for the Holy Ghost.²²

Beata gens cujus Beata gens

Tenor
[Contra: missing]

Cujus est dominus Deus

corum

corum

Ex. 2: Gradual *Beata gens*.

²¹ TrentC 88, no. 262/263: *de Spiritu Sancto*.

²² See n. 35 below.

With this setting, in which we can reconstruct practically the whole of the cantus line and align it with the tenor to some extent (Example 2), we are perhaps in a better position to analyse elements of the compositional language. The style of chant paraphrase is familiar to a considerable degree in a number of works written in the Trent codices, for example, although it is melodically and rhythmically more elaborate than the *Beata gens* Gradual setting in TrentC 88 with which it is otherwise clearly comparable.²³ It may well therefore be indicative of the ‘Burgundian court’ style that dominated during the fifteenth century, as indeed also is the relationship to be found in this setting between the cantus and tenor that is characterised by imperfect consonances. Particularly striking, moreover, is the style of cadential articulations that occur regularly (marking the ends of individual chant phrases) with which one may find close comparisons in the work of Binchois especially. Many of these concern melodic decorations of the last two (falling, conjunct) notes of a phrase employing a quickened triple-time syncopated figure contravening the main tactus, and resolving on to a ‘weak beat’ (second or third in perfect mensuration), but also with the implication of expanding the whole cadential phrase to four beats.²⁴ These occur especially at bars 9-11 and 14-15. See Examples 3a-3b that show the first of these compared with an almost identical cadential patterning (also at the same pitches) in Binchois’ *In exitu*.²⁵ (There are no examples here of the so-called ‘Landini’ under-third cadence patterns in the cantus which are also found with Binchois and others, however.)

In summary, the following overall structure pertains to both Gradual settings:

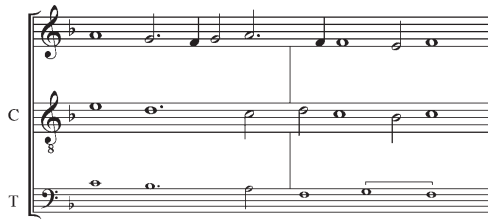
- chant intonation (cantus)
- 3-voice setting of the antiphon in perfect mensuration, with fluid chant paraphrase in the cantus (c. 36 breves)
- 2-voice setting (cantus & contra) of the verse section²⁶ (some 90-110 breves) in imperfect mensuration (C or cut C: *tempus imperfectum diminutum*), also constructed from chant paraphrase (less fluid); leading to:
 - extended 3-voice setting of the last word of the verse.

²³ TrentC 88, no. 262/263: de Spiritu Sancto.

²⁴ This particular characteristic has been highlighted in David Fallows’s entry on ‘Binchois’ in *NGD*, vol. 3, at p. 583, where reference is also made to Binchois’ *In exitu* setting. (See also *New Grove Online*: henceforth *NGO*.)

²⁵ Clause endings g’- f’ are to be expected in chants in the modes of the two settings: 1st mode (Gradual) and *tonus peregrinus* (*In exitu*).

²⁶ In the Dufay collection of Mass Propers in TrentC 88 the verse sections either start with a plainchant intonation or proceed more or less entirely in three-part counterpoint (with just a few phrases reduced to duo texture).

Ex. 3a: Binchois: *In exitu* (bars 11-12).Ex. 3b: Gradual *Beata gens* (bars 9-10)*Asperges me* (fol. 120r)

The setting of the opening Mass antiphon *Asperges me* on what remains of fol. 120 (see Fig. 2) is somewhat unusual. It is written in what appears to be black mensural notation, but is in fact more like a hybrid chant-mensural notational style complete with ligatures reflecting the original plainchant notation from which it is derived: see detail, Fig. 5. It employs longs, breves and minims (briefly, in the psalm-verse section), but no semibreves. There is no mensuration signature.

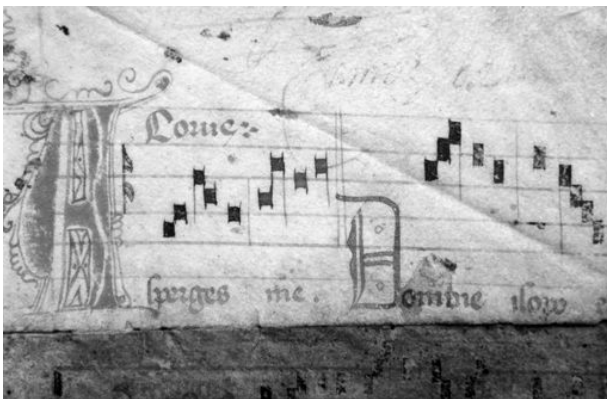
Fig. 5: Detail from polyphonic fragment: *Asperges me* (fol. 120r).

Table 3: Antiphon *Asperges me* (Leiria fragment)

Lines	Surviving portions of text & music a3:	Missing text/ music:
1	Corue [= Corus] <i>Asperges me. domine isopo et m(undabor).</i>	<i>Corus. Lavabis me. Et super nivem de</i>
2	alba(bor). Cor(us). V. Miserere mei Deus, secundum (magnam)	<i>misericordiam tuam. Corus. V. Gloria Patri & Filio, et spiritui sancto.</i>
3	<i>Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper : et in secula seculorum).</i>	<i>Amen.</i>
4	Tenor. <i>Domine (isopo et mundabor. Et)</i>	<i>super nivem dealbabor.</i>
5	<i>Secundum magnum (misericordiam tuam.) Sicut erat in principio</i>	<i>et nunc et semper : et in secula seculorum. Amen.</i>
6	Contra. <i>Domine (isopo et mundabor.)</i>	<i>Et super nivem de</i>
7	<i>(alabor). Secundum magnum (misericordiam tuam.) (Sicut erat in prin-)</i>	<i>cipio et nunc</i>
8	<i>(et semper : et in secula seculorum).</i>	<i>Amen.</i>

What remains of the eight polyphonic lines and text is shown on Table 3. (Note: apart from the expansion ‘cor(us)’, words placed inside parentheses on this Table are no longer visible on the surviving half of the folio.) Despite these various lacunae, it has been possible to reconstruct the piece more or less in its entirety, modelling the missing passages on what survives: see Example 4.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system features three staves: Courue [Corus] (treble clef), TENOR (treble clef), and CONTRA (bass clef). The lyrics are: Courue: *As per ges me Do mi ne As - per - ges me Do - mi - ne i - so - po et m[un - da - bor.]*; Tenor: *Do mi ne Do - mi - ne i - so - po et nun - da - bor.*; Contra: *Do mi ne Do - mi - ne i - so - po et nun - da - bor.* The second system shows a reconstructed section with lyrics: *La - va - bis me Et su - per ni - vem de al - ba - [bor.]* for the Courue part, and *Et su - per ni - vem de al - ba - bor* for the Tenor and Contra parts. The third system continues the reconstruction with the lyrics: *Et su - per ni - vem de al - ba - bor* for all parts.

La - va - bis me Et su - per ni - vem de al - ba - [bor].
Et su - per ni - vem de al - ba - bor
Et su - per ni - vem de al - ba - bor

[Corus]
Glo - ri - a Pa - tri et Fi - li - o et spi - ri - tu i - san - cto. Si - cut e - rat in prin - ci - pi - o et nunc et sem - per:
Si - cut e - rat in prin - ci - pi - o et nunc et sem - per:
Si - cut e - rat in prin - ci - pi - o et nunc et sem - per:

et in se - cu - la se - cu - lo - rum. A - men.
et in se - cu - la se - cu - lo - rum. A - men.
et in se - cu - la se - cu - lo - rum. A - men.

Ex. 4: Antiphon *Asperges me*.

Curiously, perhaps, no other fifteenth-century manuscript sources offer comparable examples of ‘chant harmonization’ quite in this style.²⁷ It is written in what could be termed a hybrid organum-*fauxbourdon* (the latter term used to embrace other northern European variants of this style also): in other words, in a style that would have arisen from simple improvisatory practices

²⁷ However, some comparison may be made with extant fragments of short three-voice liturgical chant settings dating from mid-fifteenth-century England and the Lowlands employing stroke and strene notation. See, for example, Margaret BENT, ‘New and Little-known fragments of English medieval polyphony’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 21, 1968, pp. 137-68.

practices involving plainchant and its amplification or ‘harmonization’ according to convention in a particular milieu. It is also clearly in a ‘consonant’ style such as basically characterizes much of the polyphony stemming from northern Europe. In form it shows the pattern traditionally found in polyphonic settings of an antiphon – basically an alternatim performing sequence of chant (intonation)/polyphony for each of the main phrases, the verse section included. In this particular example of simple note-against-style a basic principle of root-position chords defines the vertical consonances of the polyphonic clauses, beginning and ending each one with an open 5th/octave mirroring and amplifying the notes of the chant, with most phrases proceeding, for example, from a chord on d to a chord on G, cadencing with a fall of a fifth in the bass. About one third of the *Asperges me* setting progresses in this series of root-position chords – the majority amplifying the chant with often the 5th in the middle voice. There are also just a few 6/3 chords: these occur in the verse section only. But it is not easy to detect any particular systematic application of intervals in the two lower parts: the lowest, for example, moves both in contrary and in parallel motion with the chant-bearing voice (cantus).

There is little to gauge from the notation and presentation of the music about performing manner.²⁸ However, we may surmise that it would probably have proceeded using a steady tactus, with a slight lengthening of the penultimate syllables of each phrase in deference to the fermata signs indicated – a practice recorded in a few coeval sources containing music by composers of the Dufay-Binchois generation.²⁹ Intriguing from the contextual point of view also is the use of the term ‘Corus’ at the intonations in the cantus (and presumably for the chant phrases on the missing half of the folio). It has to be said that this term is only rarely encountered in surviving fifteenth-century sources of polyphony. However, isolated examples occur in three of the major sources of music by the Dufay-Binchois generation: BolC Q 15, ‘ModB’ and OxfBC 213 (all, incidentally, copied in northern Italy or the Veneto region). We can infer that this term was used to instruct an entry (here, intonation) by more than one or two singers. In most other instances, this term occurs in both the cantus and tenor parts when these lead with the chant, and are all spelt ‘chorus’, with an ‘h’.³⁰

²⁸ As noted above, there is no mensuration sign given with this music.

²⁹ We may find examples of this practice in ‘ModB’, for example.

³⁰ It is likely that the term has more to do with the provenance of the music, rather than with the actual source itself and the particular scribe(s). Interestingly, it is not apparently exclusively used for a chant intonation: in BolC Q 15, for example, it is used in a work by Dufay (the *Missa Sancti Jacobi*)

Otherwise, we are aware of its practical use through certain Germanic treatises of the time.³¹ The particular orthography and spelling of the term in the Leiria fragment with the distinctive final ‘e’ (for ‘s’) is unusual.

* * *

To conclude, the evidence provided by this fragment would suggest that it once formed part of a distinguished collection of three-voice polyphony intended for use during celebration of the Mass. The style and overall structure of the two Graduals, as far as one is able to gauge, is unquestionably analogous with repertories of polyphonic Mass Propers preserved in the Trent codices (particularly codex 88), and there are certain melodic, rhythmic, and cadential features directly comparable with works attributed to Dufay and Binchois. It is therefore perhaps not at all surprising to have found notational characteristics and certain performing instructions (including the use of the term ‘c(h)orus’) in this manuscript in common with apparently near contemporary sources of Burgundian court-style polyphony). One may surmise, therefore, that it was copied probably by the middle years of the fifteenth century. We may also conclude that the original choirbook was very big (although we have no means of ascertaining exactly how many more folios after folio 120 were bound in the original volume) and that it may therefore have had its origin in, or have been linked with, a richly endowed centre such as a princely court or an important cathedral. In actual fact its measurement or size compares with that of only a handful of polyphonic manuscripts we know to have been copied around the middle of the fifteenth century. These include the group of four (now lost) recorded to have been copied by Simon Mellet for Cambrai Cathedral in c. 1449 (two of these being formed of music for the Proper of the Mass), which consisted of as many as 168 folios each,³² and the ‘Lucca choirbook’ which Reinhard

several times to distinguish both three- and four-part polyphony from duo textures, in addition to chant intonations (Sanctus and Benedictus). However, in Dufay’s *Missa sine nomine* in the same source, the term ‘unus’ is employed for a chant intonation (Sanctus).

³¹ This term (also spelt ‘chorus’) occurs in the series of treatises dating from between the 1430s and the 1520s edited by Christian Meyer in his *Anonymi, Tractatus de cantu figurative et de contrapuncto (c.1430-1520)* (*Corpus Scriptorum de Musica*, 41), Neuhausen-Stuttgart: American Institute of Musicology, 1997). I would like to thank Bonnie Blackburn for drawing this to my attention.

³² Notice of the copying of these codices occurs in Ms 4g 4656 (fol. 30) of the Archives Départementales du Nord, Lille, and published in Craig WRIGHT, ‘Dufay at Cambrai: Discoveries and Revisions’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 28 (1975), pp. 225-6. See also PLANCHART, ‘Guillame Du Fay’s benefices’, p. 142.

Strohm estimates was made up of some 250-300 folios.³³ The actual size of the individual folios (c. 37.5 x c. 25 cms) of the Leiria fragment, however, compares with only a very few surviving parchment sources or fragments containing polyphonic music.³⁴

It seems probable that the choirbook was once a repository of cycles of settings of Propers for the Mass, although it is difficult to tell exactly what constituted the preceding 110 folios, and whether the book as a whole was ordered perhaps by category of Mass Proper – Introit, Gradual, Alleluia settings and so on. While we cannot yet be certain whether the codex contained a representative series of Propers for the *Temporale* and *Sanctorale*, such as we find in TrentC 88, for example, we can perhaps almost be sure that the fragment does indeed reflect a series of votive Mass formularies that began (on Sunday) with the Mass of the Holy Trinity.³⁵ Significantly, the fact that we may trace the particular version of the text used for the Trinity Gradual from Aquitanian through to Parisian and other northern chant sources, including English, is probably the largest clue we have for the origin of the settings.

While the following therefore can of course remain only speculative owing to lacunae still in our knowledge of the Uses known to Binchois (with whose works it will be remembered certain stylistic characteristics in the polyphony are comparable), it remains true that the Use of Paris (or Use of

³³ Existing now only as a series of fragments used as binding covers for archival documents in Lucca (the majority) and Pisa, the contents of what remains of this choirbook has been fully described in Reinhard STROHM, *Music in Medieval Bruges*, Oxford, 1990, pp. 120-36. The first announcement of these fragments was published in R. STROHM, 'Ein unbekanntes chorbuch des 15. Jahrhunderts', *Die Musikforschung*, xxi, 1968, pp. 40-42.

³⁴ These include the Old Hall manuscript with folios measuring c. 41.5 x 27 cms; the fragments at Pembroke College, Cambridge (CambriU Pembr. 314: 41 x 29 cms), and in Coventry (CovC A.3: 38.7 x 26.7 cms). Two other important choirbooks of the period made up of parchment folios from Cambrai Cathedral – CambraiBM 6 and 11 – measure 48-50 x 33.5-36 cms. The 'Lucca choirbook' (copied in Italy) had folios measuring c. 46.5 x 33.5 cms. (The paper folios of a further choirbook source, BolU 2216, are also comparable in size.)

³⁵ This became popular from the time of Alcuin during the Carolingian era. The series was frequently Mass of the Holy Trinity (Sunday); Mass of the Holy Ghost (Monday); Mass of the Angels (Tuesday); Mass of a patron Saint (Wednesday); Mass of the Holy Eucharist (Thursday); Mass of the Holy Cross (Friday); and Mass of the Blessed Virgin (Saturday). See Philip KAVANAUGH, 'Early sixteenth-century cycles of polyphonic Mass Propers – An evolutionary process or the result of liturgical reforms?', *Acta Musicologica* 48, 1976, p. 152. Kavanaugh traces the sudden rise in Mass Proper settings after c. 1425 to the reforming activities of the Council of Constance, 1414-18 (*ibid.*, p. 153). This series of votive Masses, of course, became the model for the series celebrated in the chapel at Dijon in honour of the Order of the Golden Fleece, though the order of the first two of these was reversed (see n. 14 above).

Notre-Dame)³⁶ was certainly observed at the Burgundian court with which he was associated for several decades during his composing career. Furthermore, we are almost sure that he spent time in the service of the Earl of Suffolk, William (de la) Pole, prior to his time at the court (from the 1420s), where presumably the Use of Salisbury was observed.³⁷ Unfortunately, there is very little within Binchois' identified surviving output with which to compare these Proper settings from the compositional point of view.³⁸

If this music did indeed have its origin in the Low Countries, then we may bear in mind that intimate links existed between Portugal and the Burgundian court from the time of the beginning of the period of the alliance between the Houses of Valois-Burgundy and Aviz precipitating the marriage of Isabel of Portugal to Philip the Good in 1429/30. (We may or may not attach significance to the fact that this coincided with Binchois' employment at the Burgundian court which began sometime in the 1420s.) Following the Burgundian court Embassy to Lisbon in 1428-9, members of the Portuguese aristocracy also travelled to the north and widely as a result of this alliance, and may well have accrued treasures for their private residences, even liturgical and musical books for devotional purposes.³⁹ It is also recorded that Franco-Flemish musicians regularly visited the Lisbon court up to about 1553, and could well have been instrumental in bringing over

³⁶ See Barbara HAGGH, 'Binchois and sacred music at the Burgundian court', in Andrew KIRKMAN and Denis SLAVIN (eds), *Binchois studies*, Oxford, 2001, pp. 12-13. Her use of the term 'Use of Notre-Dame' is a qualification of the more general expression 'usage of Paris' adopted by the Burgundian and Habsburg court chapels according to evidence supplied by Burgundian court statutes as discussed by Mary Jennifer BLOXHAM in '*A Survey of late medieval service books from the Low Countries: Implications for sacred polyphony, 1460-1520*', Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1987, pp. 68-73.

³⁷ Not all sources of chant melodies used by Binchois have yet been traced, however. See HAGGH, 'Binchois', p. 18 and *passim*.

³⁸ Only four Mass Propers by Binchois are known: two Introit settings, a Sequence and an Offertory – all for BMV Masses. See the works list in the entry on 'Binchois' by FALLOWS in *NGD*, vol. 3, pp. 587-8.

³⁹ For example, it is known that Dom Afonso, fourth Count of Ourém, was one of the principal personages accompanying the Infanta Dona Isabel and her brother Dom Fernando on the voyage to the Low Countries in July 1429 for Isabel's marriage to the Duke of Burgundy that took place in Bruges early the following year (January 1430). See Joaquim Veríssimo SERRÃO, *História de Portugal*, vol. II, Lisbon, 1977 (8th edition 1996), pp. 36-8. It is reckoned that Dom Afonso only returned to Lisbon some nine months later, having also travelled to Germany. For further information on this important and highly cultured figure and maecenas, see Alexandra Leal BARRADAS, 'D. Afonso, 4º Conde de Ourém: viagens, cultura visual e formação de um gosto', *Medievalista on line* 2, 2006. We may also speculate that the particular Use reflected in the liturgical texts in this fragment, which might indeed be Salisbury, was applicable to that used in Portugal at the time. The Use of Sarum, or Salisbury, was introduced into Portugal in the mid twelfth century, but discontinued by the early decades of the sixteenth century.

music books and repertories during that period. One might also add that Lisbon was of course a principal port in trading routes from cities in northern Europe, including Bruges and Antwerp, for example.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, none of this of course explains why this fragment appears to be the only one surviving from a choirbook (or section of a choirbook) which was apparently lamentably dismantled at the binders (place unknown in Portugal) in the late sixteenth century.

⁴⁰ Bruges especially was the most important port for trading throughout the fifteenth century, and with connections with Lisbon. See SERRÃO, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 35-6.