

When Isolation Fosters Creativity  
The Oddities of the Las Huelgas Manuscript

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Of the substantial 13th-14th century music manuscripts available to scholars today, the Las Huelgas codex (hereafter Hu) is rarely addressed in academic conversation compared to collections such as Florence (F), the Wolfenbüttel manuscripts (W1 & W2), Bamberg (Ba) or the Montpellier Codex (Mo). Perhaps this is due to Hu's isolated location in the Iberian Peninsula, or perhaps because certain of its musical tendencies are odd compared to those found in contemporary manuscripts. It may be these very oddities, however, which shed light on the musical situation and compositional taste of 14th century Iberian culture. This paper will explore a sampling of Hu motets, examining their differences from the mainstream repertoire, isolating their atypical musical characteristics, and presenting possible explanations for these anomalies. Finally, it will consider what these compositional choices suggest about music transmission to the Iberian Peninsula, as well as what the culture's musical preferences of the time might have been.

### **The Monastery**

The Las Huelgas codex was compiled c. 1300 at the Monasterio de Santa María la Real de las Huelgas, a convent established by Leonore and Alfonso VIII of Castile<sup>1</sup>. The abbey, founded near Burgos in 1187, was intended for Cistercian nuns but was only officially made part of the order in 1199.<sup>2</sup> This apparently resulted from diplomatic concerns and placed the convent at the

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Boorman et al, "Sources, MS," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed April 27, 2016, [http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/50158pg5?q=sources&search=quick&source=omo\\_gmo&pos=7&\\_start=1](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/50158pg5?q=sources&search=quick&source=omo_gmo&pos=7&_start=1).

Alexandrea Gajewski, "The Patronage Question Under Review: Queen Blanche of Castile (1188-1252) and the Architecture of the Cistercian Abbeys at Royaumont, Maubuisson, and Le Lys," in *Reassessing the Roles of Women*

as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture, Vol. 1., ed. Theresa Martin (Boston: Brill, 2012), 218.

Rose Walker, "Leonor of England, Plantagenet Queen of King Alfonso VIII of Castile, and Her Foundation of the Cistercian Abbey of Las Huelgas. In Imitation of Fontevrault?" in *Journal of Medieval History* 31 (2005): 350.

<sup>2</sup> Rose Walker, "Leonor of England," 346-68 (esp. 350-52).

center of a heated political environment. According to James D'Emilio, its adoption into the order afforded Alfonso VIII Cistercian support, as well as spiritual authority which increased his influence on neighboring Leon and Navarre.<sup>3</sup> The abbey was even granted jurisdiction over several Leonese and Navarrian houses, increasing Castilian royalty's influence on these kingdoms when tensions amongst them ran high. Consequently, the Monsaterio de Santa María was of interest to the royal Castilian family for its spiritual and political influence.

The family maintained personal reasons for endowing the abbey as well. Early on, Leonor and Alfonso explicitly requested that they be buried in the monastery, laying their own infant son and heir to rest there as well.<sup>4</sup> The convent was quickly established as the royal necropolis, holding generations of Castilian royalty carefully tended by its nuns.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Leonor, who took particular interest in endowing Las Huelgas, may have had her own additional reasons for championing the establishment.<sup>6</sup> Miriam Shadis discusses the possibility that Leonor (daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine) was inspired by her mother's patronage of Fontevrault, a female monastery wherein she may have spent much of her childhood.<sup>7</sup> Leonor's later patronage of Fontevrault suggests that she felt a connection to the institution and wished to establish a

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James D'Emilio, "The Royal Convent of Las Huelgas: Dynastic Politics, Religious Reform and Artistic Change in Medieval Castile," in *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture 6*, ed. Meredith Lillich (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 191-192.

<sup>3</sup> James D'Emilio, "The Royal Convent," 193-196.  
Rose Walker, "Leonor of England," 352.

<sup>4</sup> Janna Bianchini, Janna, *The Queen's Hand: Power and Authority in the Reign of Berenguela of Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 18. Miriam Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and Political Women in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 204 & 209. Rose Walker, "Leonor of England," 350. Alexandra Gajewski, "The Patronage Question," 220.

<sup>5</sup> Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 209. Miriam Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile*, 160. Rose Walker, "Leonor of England," 350.

<sup>6</sup> Rose Walker, "Leonor of England," 350.

<sup>7</sup> Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 203.

female monastery in her own Castilian homeland.<sup>8</sup> With such personal and political reasons in play, it is not surprising that the monastery remained deeply connected to the royal family.

In fact, royalty began joining the abbey in the 1220s.<sup>9</sup> Records hint that a system of co-rule may have developed, in which the royal women handled secular affairs and the abbess dealt with spiritual concerns.<sup>10</sup> It appears that occasionally there was not even an active abbess, and the members of the royal family took on considerable responsibility in running the institution.<sup>11</sup> By the mid-13th century, Santa María la Real had been richly and fundamentally supported by many Castilian royalty, making it a significant location from which to learn about Castilian and, more broadly, Iberian culture.

Despite its substantial local support, the abbey was fairly isolated on a larger scale. Burgos lay far from Rome, travel was slow, and Castile's conflict with Leon and Navarre had torn the region apart for some time.<sup>12</sup> In fact, spiritual regulation seemed to be so far removed from the area that Pope Innocent III complained to several abbots about Burgos and Palencia abbesses' "abuses," including "preaching homilies, hearing confessions, and blessing novices."<sup>13</sup> Although these offenses are hardly unforgivable, especially considering the area's distance from central spiritual institutions and the difficulty of finding available priests, they indicate a certain isolation from mainstream Catholic institutions and the necessity for a level of independence. Understanding these circumstances is essential in considering and understanding the state of the Las Huelgas codex, especially when regarding to its specific peculiarities.

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<sup>8</sup> Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 203.

<sup>9</sup> Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 206.

<sup>10</sup> Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 207.

<sup>11</sup> Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 207-210.

<sup>12</sup> James D'Emilio, "The Royal Convent," 193-196. Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 206.

<sup>13</sup> Miriam Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power," 206. Pope Innocent III's letter was dated December 11, 1210.

The Monasterio de Santa María la Real de las Huelgas is a central location to consider when examining the development of Iberian sacred music. Its integral ties to the Castilian royal family lent it resources and support which would have made it culturally significant. Simultaneously, its location at the heart of an isolated region allowed for unique musical practices and tastes to develop outside of the central Parisian tradition. The monastery contains one of the few medieval music manuscripts available to us, and it is certainly one worth exploring. What does this compilation say of Iberian musical preferences? Does it speak to how Central music was being transmitted to the Peninsula? Finally, how did the convent's isolated and independent nature influence the music's unorthodox makeup? These questions, although requiring many more years of study to be truly answered, will be addressed in this essay's motet sampling.

### **Hu f. 110': Medieval Motet Trees & Missing Links**

Many know that the world of medieval motets is a murky one. While musical works today are unique and distinctly associated with a given composer, medieval pieces were constructed on a far more complex system. They were not fully written by any one person but often appeared in multiple manuscripts, each version including sometimes slight and sometimes distinctive differences. Any given piece was part of a family—a musical tree founded on the tenor melody. This melody might be found in a simple, two-voice organum, substitute discant clausula, or even in full two- or three-voice motets. In these appearances, the tenor melody might be accompanied by several different upper voices: that from the clausula might be re-used in a motet, modified slightly, used in conjunction with a new voice, or replaced altogether. Rebecca Baltzer explains

this phenomenon in her essay “The Polyphonic Progeny of *Et gaudebit*,” demonstrating the importance of recognizing a motet’s full family tree for the purposes of dating, understanding the piece’s associative importance for medieval individuals, and parsing out its gradual development.<sup>14</sup> As involved as it may be, developing a well-rounded understanding of any given motet requires a researcher to consider all of its appearances, variations, and family ties.

These complex relationships lead to a remarkable amount of continuity along with differentiation between pieces. Hendrik van der Werf compiled an incredibly helpful *Integrated Directory of Organa, Clausula, and Motets of the 13th Century* which cross-references pieces built on related tenors, source-clausula, and even melodic cells.<sup>15</sup> As an example, let us consider his entry on M29 (the twenty-ninth Mass tenor according to Friedrich Ludwig’s *Repertorium Organorum*<sup>16</sup>), an Alleluia built on *Inter natos mulierum non surrexit major Johanne*.<sup>17</sup>

M29 Alleluya. Inter natos motets 369-370 Werf  
Index 55

M29 Alleluya. Inter natos mulierum non surrexit major Johanne.  
M29, M39, and M110 have the same cantus firmus.

**ORGANUM for TWO VOICES**

F f.120'; W2 f.75'. After the Verse, F restates "Alleluya", below marked with \*.

Tenor: MULIERUM

F = W2

dp.

= cl.W1-65 = motet 369 = motet 370  
= tenor+duplum:dp."quasi tuba":M110:Basel

<sup>14</sup> Rebecca Baltzer, “The Polyphonic Progeny of *Et gaudebit*: Assessing Family Relations in the Thirteenth-Century Motet,” in *Hearing the Motet: Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Dolores Pesce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Hendrik van der Werf, *Integrated Directory of Organa, Clausula, and Motets of the 13th Century* (Rochester, NY: van der Werf, 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Ludwig, *Repertorium Organorum Recentioris et Motetorum Vetustissimi Stili, Katalog*, ed. Luther Dittmer (Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> See Example 1. Hendrik van der Werf, *Integrated Directory*, 55.

## CLAUSULAE

Tenor: MULIERUM		
W1-24	f. 45 (53)#3	= cl.F-145
W1-65	f. 50 (58)#2	= dp."mulie-":F,W2 = motet 369 = motet 370
		= tenor+duplum:dp."quasi tuba":M110:Basel
F-145	f. 164 #1	= cl.W1-24
F-146	f. 164 #2	= motet 376a

## MOTETS

Tenor: MULIERUM		
369	Mulieris marcens venter dum virescit	= motet 370 = cl.W1-65
	= tenor+duplum:dp."quasi tuba":M110:Basel = dp."mulie-":F,W2	
	F f.406'; W2 f.174; Hu f.110'.	
370	A la revenue dou tens qui s'esclere	= motet 369 = cl.W1-65
	= tenor+duplum:dp."quasi tuba":M110:Basel = dp."mulie-":F,W2	
	W2 f.222'.	

Example 1: Selections from van der Werf's M29 entry, including motets built on the Mulierum tenor.<sup>18</sup>

Example 1 includes a selection from Werf's listing, which we will be referencing below. Rather than begin with the organum, as one normally would, we will start with the motets because of their relevance to this paper. Under the "Motets" portion, we see a two-voice piece whose tenor is built on *Mulierum* and whose duplum's incipit is *Mulieris marcens venter dum virescit*. This motet appears in F, W2, and Hu (f. 406', f. 174, and f. 110' respectively), and a contrafacted version with the same music but different text appears in W2 (f. 222': *A la revenue dou tens qui s'esclere*). Musically, the three renditions in F and W2 are nearly identical; we will see later that only Hu's motet is somewhat different.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Hendrik van der Werf, *Integrated Directory*, 55.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix A for scores.

Looking backwards along the family tree, we see that several two-voice clausula are built on the same *Mulierum* tenor: two in F and two in W1.<sup>20</sup> Of these, only one precisely matches the *Mulierum* motet found in F and W2.<sup>21</sup> Two others correspond to each other but not to the motets: their duplum shares some similarities with the motets' *Mulieris marcens* duplum, but its melody quickly veers in a different direction.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the second F clausula is entirely unique; although it is built on the same *Mulierum* tenor, its duplum corresponds to neither melody found in the other clausula and motets.<sup>23</sup>

At last we look at the organum.<sup>24</sup> According to Werf, the only organum written on *Mulierum* corresponds with W1's f. 50 (58), #2 clausula—the very clausula matching our *Mulierum* motets.<sup>25</sup> We consequently see a logical sequence of development: a two-voice organum composed on a *Mulierum* tenor,<sup>26</sup> a matching two-voice clausula composed on the same tenor,<sup>27</sup> and a group of corresponding two-voice motets which have tied a *Mulieris marcens* text to the duplum.<sup>28</sup> Throughout the tree, we find that most of the pieces are identical with the exception of some ornamental figures and changes of text. So how does Hu's motet, apparently matching those in F and W2, fit into the group?

This is precisely where Huelgas's quirky musical traits begin to surface. Its *Mulieris marcens* duplum (f. 110') matches that in F and W2 but is transposed up a fifth (see

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<sup>20</sup> F: f. 164, #s 1 & 2. W1: f. 45 (53), #3; f. 50 (58), #2.

<sup>21</sup> W1: f. 50 (58), #2.

<sup>22</sup> F: f. 164, #1 & W1: f. 53 (45), #3.

<sup>23</sup> F: f. 164, #2.

<sup>24</sup> F f.120' / W2 f.75'.

<sup>25</sup> W1: f. 50 (58), #2.

<sup>26</sup> Found in F: f. 120' & W2 f. 75'.

<sup>27</sup> W1: f. 50 (58), #2.

<sup>28</sup> F: f. 406', W2 f. 174, W2 f. 222.



Example 2).<sup>29</sup> This difference, although not found in any other related piece, is not incredibly surprising: it could be simply explained by the fact that the Las Huelgas works were performed by women, who sang at a higher tessitura. Still, it does make one wonder whether the piece was modified before it reached Santa María la Real, a question which is further emphasized by the motet's most peculiar component—its tenor.



*Example 2: Opening portion of Mulieris marrens Duplum*

*Hu f. 110' (above) and Ff. 406' (below)*

While the tenor in every other part of this *Mulierum* family tree has remained constant, Hu's f. 110 uses an unidentified, simple, and extremely unusual tenor. In fact, it appears nowhere our current resources give us access to. Bryden and Hughes's *Index of Gregorian Chant* does not even hold a trace of the melody or of anything similar: none of the indexed chants match Hu's

<sup>29</sup> See Example 2. See Appendix for full scores.

tenor beyond the first few notes.<sup>30</sup> If the chant appears nowhere in the Gregorian repertoire and does not even include a tenor designation, where does it come from? The most likely possibility is that it was newly composed. Although this might seem counterintuitive (motets are, by nature and the rules of counterpoint, composed out of and *above* a given tenor) it is nevertheless a possibility which can not be ignored.

For several hundred years, melodies had not been composed *below* a given melody but above it, and the outdated contrapuntal tools available for fitting a new tenor to a duplum would have been unwieldy. Perhaps, however, this might explain the tenor's cumbersome nature. As one can see in Example 2, the line is both repetitive and awkward, often limited to the final, third, and fifth with few notes between. Whoever crafted it was either uncomfortable with composition or not equipped with effective contrapuntal techniques. Consequently, the tenor seems to have been written out of necessity and was likely composed to fill in for a missing or damaged *Mulierum* line.

49.

Hu No. 114, f. 110 v.

(369)

M29

[Mulierum]

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Example 2: Sample of Unidentified Tenor in Hu f. 110<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> John Bryden and David Hughes, *An Index of Gregorian Chant*, Vol. 1-2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

<sup>31</sup> Gordon Anderson, *The Las Huelgas Manuscript: Burgos, Monasterio de Las Huelgas*, Vol. 2, in *Corpus mensurabilis musicae*: 79 (Neuhausen-Stuttgart : American Institute of Musicology : Hänssler-Verlag, 1982), 60.

If the piece had arrived at the Monasterio de Santa María in such a damaged state, would the scribe not have recognized that the *Mulierum* tenor could be made to fit the upper line? We know that, surprisingly, the scribe was aware of the tenor: on the recto side of f. 110, a two-voice *Mulierum hodie* motet is composed above the very same melody.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Gordon Anderson cleverly demonstrates that Hu's *Mulieris marcens* motet can be made to fit the *Mulierum* tenor with a few rhythmic adjustments.<sup>33</sup> Why would the Hu scribe not have noticed how well the melodies worked together? After all, he was no mere copyist. As Nicolas Bell explains, he must have been adept at reading various types of notation and transcribing them into a uniform style, due to the stylistic variety of the works included in Hu.<sup>34</sup> At the very least, one would expect a scribe at such an affluent institution to be capable of working out a more elegant solution.

There are several possibilities, with likely more than even the ones discussed here. For one, Anderson had the advantage of seeing the full motet in several other places, and the Hu scribe may have come across the duplum with no such context. Moreover, it is not guaranteed that the scribe transcribed the motet up a fifth. If he had received the piece already transposed, matching the duplum with the non-transposed tenor might have been an even more elusive task. Perhaps the most viable possibility, however, is that the tenor was lost and re-written *before* the motet reached the abbey. The Iberian peninsula was, of course, fairly isolated and fraught with regional conflict; it is possible that the motet might have arrived at a less affluent monastery, had

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<sup>32</sup> Higinio Anglés, *El còdex musical de Las Huelgas*, Vol. 2 (Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans: Biblioteca de Catalunya, 1931), f. 110. Gordon Anderson, *The Las Huelgas Manuscript*, Vol. 2, 60.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon Anderson, *The Las Huelgas Manuscript*, Vol. 2, 61 (#49a).

<sup>34</sup> Nicolas Bell, "The Status of the Music Scribe: The Case of the Las Huelgas Codex," in *Le statut du scribeur au Moyen Age: actes du XIIe colloque scientifique du Comité international de paléographie latine (Cluny, 17-20 juillet 1998)*, ed. Marie-Clotilde Hubert et al. (Paris: École des Chartres, 2000), 162-163.

a damaged or missing tenor, and been completed to the best ability of the resident (and perhaps less capable) scribe. If it had arrived at the Monasterio de Santa María in this state, the Hu scribe may very well have considered his duty as a copyist and preservationist more important than his duty as a composer—especially if both voices were in tact. There are other possibilities, of course, but this perplexing case is just one instance of a mysterious voice appearing in a Las Huelgas motet. As we will see, several others in our sampling are just as puzzling.

### Hu f. 102': Two-in-One?

The Las Huelgas codex has only two four-voice motets in its repertoire, one of which is set to an *In veritate* tenor from M37: *Propter veritatem. Audi filia et vide et inclina aurem tuam quia concupivit rex*.<sup>35</sup> This tenor is quite popular for motets: Werf's index shows four related settings with differing texts and numbers of voices.<sup>36</sup> Judging from his directory, all of these would seem equal to each other, and in fact many of them are. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, the Hu motets are again unique from the rest.

#### MOTETS

Tenor: VERITATEM and PROPTER VERITATEM		
448	O Maria maris stella plena gracie Conductus motet a3: P f.397'; W2 f.125; Ch f.14, no tenor designation. Tenor+duplum: Arsa f.290'; Gautier D-1 f.2'; Bes #19; Ca f.129', no tenor designation; Erf f.5', fragm.; Lyell f.164', incomplete.	= motet 450
448	O Maria maris stella plena gracie	= motet 450
449	O Maria virgo davitica virginum flos vite spes unica Cl f.369'; Mo f.88'; Ba f.48'; tenor text "Misit dominus" (from another Gradual beginning with the same intonation); Da f.1a', fragm. For 4 voices: Hu f.102', with two melodies (in score) for motet 448.	
449a	O Maria dei cella splendor glorie	
448	O Maria maris stella plena gracie Hu f.124'.	= motet 450
450	Glorieuse dieu amie dame de pitie Conductus motet a3: W2 f.135'.	= motet 448

#### Example 3: Selected Motets on Veritatem Tenor for M37<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Hendrik van der Werf, *Integrated Directory*, 66-68.

<sup>36</sup> Hendrik van der Werf, *Integrated Directory*, 68.

<sup>37</sup> Hendrik van der Werf, *Integrated Directory*, 68.

Unlike the M29 motets, this motet family is not directly related to organa or clausula, although the motet sub-groups are certainly linked to each other. F f. 397' and W2 f. 125 are part of a group of three-voice conductus motets based on the *Veritatem* tenor and an *O Maria maris stella* text used for both the duplum and the triplum. These two pieces, almost identical to each other, also match a contrafacted motet in W2 (*Glorieuse dieu amie*, W2 f. 135). Another group, *La Clayette* (Cl), *Montpellier* (Mo), and *Bamberg* (Ba) include double motets whose tenors and dupla match those in F's and W2's conductus motets, but whose tripla are different because they must fit the new upper-voice text (*O Maria, virgo davitica*).<sup>38</sup> Amidst this all, Hu includes two motets which are related to the Central motets but, unsurprisingly, include their additional mystery voices.

Hu's four-voice motet (f. 102'), which we shall discuss first, is most closely related to the Cl/Mo/Ba grouping because their tenor, duplum, and triplum correspond directly to Hu's tenor, duplum, and quadruplum. Hu, however, includes a fourth voice (the triplum) which is not found elsewhere. This voice is composed above the duplum and shares the *O Maria, maris stella* text; together with the tenor, these voices constitute a perfect conductus motet, complete with one text shared between the upper voices and unified rhythmic declamation. Once combined with the quadruplum, however, the new triplum simply gets in the way. The triplum generally follows the quadruplum's contour but conflicts with the upper voice.

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<sup>38</sup> Cl: f. 369'. Mo: f. 85'. Ba: f. 48'. See Appendix B for scores.

Hu No. 104, f. 102 v

(419) O Ma-ri-a, vir-go da-vi-ti-ca, vir-ginum flos, vi-te spes u-ni-ca, vi-a ve-ni-e,

(448) O Ma-ri-a, ma-ris stel-la, ple-na gra-ci-e, ma-ter si-mul

M 37 [In veritate]

Example 4: Beginning portion of Hu's 4-voice motet on In veritate

When all four voices are sung together, the motet includes twenty-two noticeable dissonances, five of which are on strong beats. The upper lines are especially haphazard, generally following each other but always off by a note or two. What, then, is this triplum's purpose? On first glance, two individual pieces seem to be present here: a double motet comprised of the tenor, duplum, and quadruplum as found in Cl, Mo, and Ba; and a conductus motet comprised of the tenor, duplum, and triplum. Sandwiching two pieces together like this seems rather unorthodox, but what would really happen if we tested different combinations of voices?

Separating out the tenor, duplum, and quadruplum (the double motet as found in Cl, Mo, and Ba) yields only six dissonances not including the final cadential measures, and four of these are only passing tones.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, the other iterations of the double motet include even fewer dissonances: Cl has four, three of which are passing tones<sup>40</sup>; Mo has three, with two passing tones<sup>41</sup>; and Ba has only one<sup>42</sup>. From this analysis, it is clear that Hu's three-voice double motet

<sup>39</sup> Hu 102' — m. 9 (C+B, PT), m. 11 (C+B), m. 13 (C+B, PT), m. 17 (C+D, PT), m. 19 (B+C, PT), m. 23 (B+A)

<sup>40</sup> Cl f. 369' — m. 9 (PT), m. 11 (PT), m. 17 (PT), m. 23

<sup>41</sup> Mo f. 88' — m. 9 (PT), m. 17 (PT), m. 23

<sup>42</sup> Ba f. 48' — m. 23

(when broken down) does include more noticeable dissonances than the other renditions. One might argue that this suggests a greater comfortability with dissonance, but the fact that most of these act as passing tones indicates that they are likely simply added embellishments. As a three-voice double motet, then, the piece seems to function quite smoothly.

When divided into a three-voice conductus motet (tenor, duplum, and triplum), the piece also flows remarkably well. Not only are the dissonances considerably few (only two on strong beats, one of which is a passing tone; and seven on the weak beats, all of which are passing), but the voices complement each other beautifully.<sup>43</sup> The duplum is fairly regular, and the triplum adds ornaments to a parallel rhythmic structure; all three voices pause synchronously in tandem with the text's phrases. Although the conductus motet is an older style less fashionable by the 14th century, this combination of voices seems too intentionally constructed to be happenstance.

Our last possible combination includes the tenor, triplum, and quadruplum. This seems highly improbable because of voices' nature: the quadruplum and triplum lie in the same register, maintain the same contour, and frequently invade each other's space. For the purpose of integrity, however, we will give it fair consideration. This combination results in the highest number of dissonances, aside from the use of all four voices. Of the clashes, five land on strong beats (with only one a passing tone) and twelve are on weak beats (many are not passing).<sup>44</sup> Perhaps more strikingly, the triplum and quadruplum in a couple instances actually call for

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<sup>43</sup> Tenor+Duplum+Triplum:

Strong beat diss: m. 23 (x2, one is PT).

Weak beat diss: (All PTs): m. 1 (x2, E+D), m. 3 (F+G), m. 10 (B+C), m. 17 (E+D), m. 18 (C+D), m. 26 (F+G)

<sup>44</sup> Tenor+Triplum+Quadruplum:

Strong beat diss: m. 6 (B+A), m. 22 (E+F, PT), m. 23 (E+F+G—coincidentally, the triplum and quadruplum each creates a different “chord” against the tenor and duplum), m. 29 (C+B—similarly, the triplum and quadruplum create different chords against the tenor here), m. 31 (C+D)

Weak beat diss: m. 1 (D+E, PT; E+D, PT), m. 2 (F+E, PT), m. 3 (E+D, Neighbor Tone), m. 5 (D+E, NT), m. 6 (E+D), m. 11 (C+B), m. 12 (D+E, PT), m. 18 (B+C, PT), m. 19 (B+C), m. 21 (E+D, PT), m. 30 (F+G)

different “chords” or perfect intervals, depending on which voice is sounded with the tenor (or even the duplum: see note). The upper voices’ considerable harmonic and textural disagreement make this three-voice combination an unlikely one, and it consequently seems even less likely that all four voices would have been forced together.

It seems, then, that the motet was likely intended to be performed as two pieces. One could be sung as a simple conductus motet on Marian devotion, and the other would be the double motet found in other manuscripts, an even more complex tribute to Mary’s worthy character.<sup>45</sup>

Although an odd solution, it seems to suit the music perfectly, and such a method of notation would certainly have conserved space. The triplum’s origins, however, are still not entirely clear. Because the melody is not found elsewhere, the Hu scribe would likely have had to compose it. We have already seen one possible instance of composition at the Monasterio de Santa María, although that example’s craftsmanship was considerably poorer. If the scribe did, in fact, compose a new triplum, why should he have done so? There seems to be nothing in the three-voice double motet to warrant discontent, and the conductus motet was going out of style. Yet Santa María la Real, again, was nestled into the Iberian peninsula and remained rather removed from the central Parisian tradition. Interestingly, conductus motets do make quite an appearance in Hu, comprising a third of the thirty three-voice motets (the rest of which are double motets). Perhaps the abbey, on the periphery of popular developments as it was, nurtured a taste for the conductus motet and preferred to add one more to its collection where an additional voice could be so seamlessly added. As unusual as it might seem, perhaps the scribe

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<sup>45</sup> See text in Appendix B.



used the opportunity to exercise some compositional freedom. In his essay on scribal practice in the Huelgas manuscript, Bell articulates that the scribe may very likely have fitted new Latin texts to preexisting music with French texts; would it have been impossible to create new musical lines to preexisting ones?<sup>46</sup> The very next motet we consider also seems to include a newly composed line: perhaps adding parts to music was more common at the Huelgas monastery than one would initially expect.

### **Hu f. 124': A "Double Conductus Motet"**

Our final Hu motet (on f. 124') is part of the same *In veritate* family as the four-voice motet on f. 102'. This piece is a three-voice quasi-conductus motet whose tenor and duplum match those in F, W2, Cl, Mo, Ba, and Hu f. 102'. Its triplum, however, is yet another mystery: the opening measures almost match Cl's, Mo's, and Ba's triplum but soon veer away, maintaining very little relationship to that line and instead generally matching the duplum rhythmically. Somewhat contradictorily, however, this triplum uses a different text.

When not considering the text, this piece appears to be a simple conductus motet. The triplum and duplum follow the same general rhythmic pattern, breathing and pausing together along with the tenor. The triplum incorporates a few embellishments than the duplum, but this is entirely normal. The remarkable part, however, lies in the fact that the upper voice uses a different text than the duplum.<sup>47</sup> While the piece functions musically like a conductus motet, its voices are not synchronized textually. However, the composer has made an admirable effort to make the texts—both comprised of rather non-poetic, adjectival chunks referencing Mary's

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<sup>46</sup> Nicolas Bell, "The Status of the Music Scribe," 165-166.

<sup>47</sup> The text does not seem to be available outside of the manuscript, but it may be seen in Anderson's score in Appendix B.

Hu No. 137, f. 124 v.

449 a) O Ma-ri-a, De-i cel-la, splen-dor glo-ri-e, Mo-y-si no-

(448) O Ma-ri-a, ma-ris stel-la, ple-na gra-ci-e, ma-ter si-mul

M 37 [In veritate]

vi-fi-scel-la, tro-nus u-si-e, tu es ma-ter cre-a-to-ris, /

et pu-el-la, vas mun-di-ci-e, tem-plum no-stri re-dem-pto-ris, /

Example 5: Beginning portion of Hu's 3-voice motet on *In veritate*<sup>48</sup>

admirable qualities—line up. The voices' text-cells, divided for us by commas ("O Maria, Dei cella, splendor glorie," / "O Maria, maris stella, plena gracie" etc.) are synchronized and almost always use end-rhyme; their number of syllables also line up much of the time, although the triplum loses its natural accent patterns in the compositional attempt to divide its syllables evenly against the duplum.<sup>49</sup> In other words, the voices are clearly intended to line up in some way or another, but they do not do so quite smoothly. It is almost as if the composer is combining a conductus motet with a double one.

Like the two-voice motet we observed earlier, this motet's "proper" triplum was not foreign to the scribe: it appears with this very same tenor and duplum in the four-voice motet (f. 102'). Here, however, the connection is even more blatant because all three voices do, or should, match those found in the four-voice motet. If the motet arrived with a damaged or missing

<sup>48</sup> Gordon Anderson, *The Las Huelgas Manuscript*, Vol. 2, 44 (#37).

<sup>49</sup> See Example 5, or see full score in Appendix B.

triplum, did the scribe truly not notice that the two lower voices matched the *O Maria, virgo davitica* triplum? Perhaps, however, it is not a question of why the scribe did not recognize the combination but of why he chose to not recreate it. This same three-voice double motet had, after all, already been included in Hu as part of the four-voice motet. If it was a matter of variety, the scribe may have preferred to create something new rather than repeat a piece already included in the repertoire.

In some ways, the f. 124' motet is awkward, with two different but precisely aligned texts vying for the listener's attention. However, the texts are similar enough that their differences might be negligible to the listener. Because the musical lines work so seamlessly, the piece might be seen as a compositional experiment—perhaps an attempt to bridge the two genres of conductus and double motets. On the other hand, it might have been broken into two separate pieces, much like the four-voice *In veritate* motet we looked at. Such a solution, in which each upper voice might have been sung with the tenor individually, would reduce the texture to two voices and make the compositional effort put towards matching three voices somewhat moot, although it would allow for an expanded motet. This hypothesis shifts into the realm of performance practice, which is beyond the scope of this study; still, it is worth considering various possibilities. Regardless, it seems that the Monasterio de Santa María nuns either were accustomed to using their music manuscript's space creatively, or were comfortable with experimenting compositionally when the need or curiosity arose.

### **From Necessity or Freedom?**

Clearly, we have considered a limited sample of the music contained in the Las Huelgas manuscript, but even these few contain enough mysteries to whet the appetite of a scholar. It seems that these abbey's individuals were neither afraid to invent or adopt new melodies, nor to be innovative in their treatment of musical notation and choirbook space. In some ways, scribal culture's emphasis on preservation of the pure and sacred would conflict with the idea of composing new melodies so freely. However, the Monasterio de Santa María la Real de las Huelgas was no ordinary place, removed as it was from Roman and central European influence, but given support and affluence by the wealthiest of Castilian royalty. Perhaps a subtle culture of musical experimentation—whether through new composition or through clever methods of notation—developed out of both necessity and the elite social status these nuns were afforded.

Much of this is still conjecture, and we might never fully understand the reasoning behind Las Huelgas's compositional choices. The extensive work that such scholars as Higinio Anglés, Gordon Anderson, and Nicolas Bell have done on this manuscript, however, has opened up the doors for investigations which might unearth an even greater understanding of Iberian culture's musical preferences, compositional activity, and potential for musical development had history regarding Spain's world influence taken a very different turn.

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