

Multisensory Worship:

Plainchant and the Didactic Aesthetics of Liturgical Performance in *MS 47*

The illuminated antiphonal leaf *MS 47* (full shelf mark: *Columbus, OH. K.E. Johnson Collection. MS 47*) provides the lyrics and musical notation for both common and proper chants in Latin for the liturgical hours of the Divine Office. Specifically, the folio refers to the Sanctoriale Cycle commemorating the feast day of Pope Saint Clement I on November 23rd.¹ Prior to providing the literary, cultural, and musical context of the folio, however, it seems prudent to first embed the manuscript within its possible origins, date, and provenance. This paper shall begin, therefore, with an in-depth codicological and paleographical exegesis so as to later couch *MS 47*'s cultural and liturgical context within those findings.

The leaf itself measures 229 mm x 260 mm, with a text block width of 195 mm. The folio, however, has been ostentatiously sliced out of its original codex as indicated by the cut-off musical staves at the top of both the recto and verso, thus rendering a measurement for the height of the original text block impossible. While no discernable marginalia or corrections appear on either side of the folio (even when exposed to UV light), rubrication does appear in plentitude throughout both the words and music. Large decorated initials—'C' on the recto in addition to 'R' and 'B' on the verso—highlight the beginning of important chants for the Night Office, while rubricated abbreviations appear as in-text glosses to note which specific time during the liturgical hours each chant was to be sung. While abbreviated words do appear within the chant lyrics, the rubricated components of the manuscript take the majority of the abbreviations in the folio—

¹ Catholic Church. *The Liber Usualis, with introduction and rubrics in English*. Tournai (Belgium): Society of St. John the Evangelist, Desclée & Co. 1938.

presumably, the words actually being sung were intentionally spelled out so as to emphasize what syllables were sung at what time during the chant. These rubricated abbreviations served three major purposes for the folio: 1. indications like *v(erso)* or *(p)salmus* note points in which psalms or biblical verses would occur between chants during the ceremony; 2. phrases such as *co(mmemoratio) cecili(a)e v(erso) a(ntiphona)* indicate the content for a particular sung passage; and 3. rubricated phrases noted the time of day to sing a particular chant, such as *ad vi antiphona*, noting that the chant was to be sung at the liturgical hour of Sext.² No discernable paleographical differences appear between the chant text and the rubricated gloss, indicating that both the black and rubricated letters were composed by a single scribe. This is not to say that multiple hands did not work on the manuscript, however—there is no way to determine whether another hand ruled out the musical staves on the page before handing it to another scribe, and the illumination was likely done by a separate illuminator. Vertical lines also appear on the recto side to indicate moments where the singer should pause to take a breath between words. This indicates a range of at least one, yet upwards as many as four, hands working on the manuscript at different points in the production. Different types of writing implements were almost certainly used for different components, as well: small spikes within the notes seem to indicate that a more precise writing tip, such as a steel nib, might have been used to place the musical notes onto the surface of the staff.

The rubrication in *MS 47*, however, does not limit itself to words: as an antiphonal piece, several musical staves have been ruled out in vibrant red ink. Fourteen sets of four-line staves appear on the folio: seven staves on the recto and seven on the verso. The staves appear to have

² Cappelli, Adriano. *Lexicon Abbreviatarum: Dizionario Di Abbreviature Latine Ed Italiane*. 5th edition. Milan: Ulrico Hoepli Editore, 1999.

been the first component inked onto the parchment, as indicated by the blank spaces provided within the staff for future rubricated glosses, decorated initials, and the large historiated “O” on the verso side (see Figure 4, below). The *mis-en-page* of the manuscript arranges itself in such a way that the lyrical text corresponding to each staff falls directly below it, with the words of the text stretched by syllable to correspond to their respective placement in the chant. This suggests a complicated compositional order for *MS 47* that required meticulous planning before its execution: the scribes first ruled out the rubricated staves, followed by the musical notes evenly spaced out along the lines. The Latin chant lyrics were most likely added after this, as the scribes would need to see where the music fell on the staff in order to know where to place each syllable. Another step of rubrication followed this, adding the glosses for the liturgical hours and the notations during the ceremony indicating psalms, verses, and the context for each chant, in addition to the large decorated initials mentioned above. The illumination would follow as the final component for the antiphon, but the final hand seems to be an actual singer who added the vertical breath marks seen on the recto side.

The script style for *MS 47* provides several challenges towards classification, as the writing supplies both proto-Gothic and Gothic features within its letters. The bottoms of minims mostly provide a flat, *praescissus*-like ending, yet certain letters—notably ‘t’ and letters ending words—display the beginnings of ‘feet’ curving out towards the right, moving towards the full serifs of a proper Gothic minim. The script, in fact, seems to be moving towards a Gothic Semitextualis: neither ‘f’ nor straight ‘s’ descend below the baseline, and ‘b’, ‘h’, ‘k’, and ‘l’ possess straight ascenders rather than the indicative loops found in *Cursiva*. A single-chambered ‘a’ (Figure 3) confirms the Semitextualis classification. While a minimal amount of biting occurs

(see for example the ‘de’ in *dei* on the verso), the text for the most part is evenly dispersed across the page, although this may be influenced in addition by the *mise-en-page* necessity of spacing out letters to delineate what notes in the chant were meant to be sung on certain syllables. An ‘fl’ ligature appears (Figure 1) on the verso for *flumi(nibus)*, although that connecting stroke has a slight break in it, indicating a movement away from the fully connected ‘fl’ and ‘st’ ligatures found in English and German proto-Gothic bookhands.³ *MS 47*, in fact, displays evidence pointing closer to the Gothic side of the timeframe, more notably the styles of a Gothic script from the Iberian Peninsula. A back-curved ascender Uncial ‘d’, combined with a single-chambered ‘a’ with a flat-topped shoulder points towards Iberian bookhands. In preference over using ‘9’ for *con-*, the text uses a backwards ‘c’ abbreviation for *(con)fess(rum)* on the verso (Figure 2). This feature, combined with the use of tall ‘s’ appearing at the beginning of words and round ‘s’ appearing at the end, points more specifically towards the northern portion of the peninsula. These observations, based on the analysis of Albert Derolez, point towards a late proto-Gothic manuscript leaning towards Iberian Semitextualis created in the first quarter of the 13th century in northern Spain or, possibly, southern France.⁴

There are moments, however, when that script becomes difficult to decipher due to the extensive codicological damage that *MS 47* has experienced, which we’ll now take a moment to describe. The illuminated ‘O’ on the verso, the keynote visual marker of *MS 47*, is an example of intentional codicological damage inflicted upon the manuscript. Straight cuts within the folio indicate that at one point the historiated initial had been sliced out of the folio, though that

³ Clemens, Raymond, and Timothy Graham. 2007. *Introduction to manuscript studies*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 145–152.

⁴ Derolez, Albert. *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books: From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 111–119.

blasphemy has since been rectified by paleographers who reattached the illumination to its original location using modern materials. As mentioned above, the folio itself has been cut out of its larger codex—presumably an Office antiphonary but possibly a breviary⁵—with the sliced material at the top of the folio indicating that the piece was measured and cut for a specific purpose. Other aspects of damage further point towards that purpose: smeared rubrication and pigment migration occurs on the recto but not the verso, indicating that the folio was folded in a particular direction (Figure 5). Faded filigree within the decorated initials on the verso, combined with the worn text that appears also on the verso (Figure 7), indicates that the verso side of the folio had contact with another surface at some point. Three small holes also appear on the side of the folio from the stitching marks made by the original binding. This, combined with the straight perpendicular fold marks that run across the folio, indicate that *MS 47* was cut, folded, and reinserted as a flyleaf or pastedown for another, smaller codex with a presumably rigid exterior.

The quality of the parchment and specific codicological features in *MS 47*, however, do offer insight into the original intended means of use and audience for the manuscript before its untimely removal. Most features indicate that this text was not intended to be on display for the general public: the quality of the parchment is rather low, with axilla and veining occurring in the lower left hand corner (when facing the recto), and an overall translucency exposed by backlighting appears in several sections of the vellum, thus indicating a hasty or low quality production process. The prominence of rubricated Latin abbreviations points towards an esoteric readership, and the relatively small size of the musical notes and chant lyrics would not have been visually practical for an ensemble greater than three people sight-reading the music. Indeed,

⁵ Reynolds, Roger E. *Divine Office—Dictionary of the Middle Ages*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1984. 221–31.

we can see by observing the recto side of the folio that those singing the antiphons for the feast day of Pope Saint Clement I were in extremely close proximity to the music: a wax dripping (Figure 6) appears on the chant commemorating Saint Cecilia. As indicated by the gloss *ad v(e)s(pera) se(cunda) ps(almus) a(ntiphona)*, the chant would have taken place during second Vespers of the Night Office—presumably, the wax dripping appeared due to a singer holding a candle over the manuscript so as to better see the notes in the dark.

Yet what liturgical content did the notes of *MS 47* commemorate, and how was the music intended to be sung? The remainder of this paper will focus on the musical, cultural, and liturgical contexts of the folio so as to provide insight into how the feast day of Pope Saint Clement I was commemorated for the Sanctorale Cycle.⁶ As mentioned earlier, the folio provides in-text glosses that note when each chant was meant to be sung for the liturgical hours: the recto begins with *ad vi a(ntiphona)*, indicating that the chants following were to be sung at the hour of Sext. The hours that came before, Prime and Terce, do not appear in the gloss, although we can see the beginnings of the chants presumably sung at Terce towards the upper portion of the sliced folio. The recto continues with glosses for the hour of None, *ad ix antiphona*, followed by the commencement of second Vespers, *ad v(e)s(pera) se(cunda) ps(almus) a(ntiphona)*. The verso picks up with the invitatory of Psalm 94, which would mark the opening chant for Nocturnes.⁷ Note that oftentimes the chants in the manuscript only begin with the incipit—these were common chants that the choir members were expected to already have memorized, whereas the proper antiphons were written out in their entirety. Note also that the liturgical practices of the

⁶ Harper, John. *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1991.

⁷ Catholic Church. *The Liber Usualis, with introduction and rubrics in English*. Tournai (Belgium): Society of St. John the Evangelist, Desclée & Co. 1938.

Divine Office did not simply commemorate the saint in question for their feast day. Often the saints that were celebrated on the previous day would also receive acknowledgement throughout the hours—both Saints Felicity and Cecilia are commemorated in the music just before the invitatory psalm, each receiving their own proper chant: *co(mmemoratio) cecili(a)e v(erso) a(ntiphona)* and *co(mmemoratio) felicitatis a(ntiphona) v(erso)*, respectively. Saint Cecilia, whose feast falls just before Pope Saint Clement I, is also commemorated with her own proper chant during the commencement of second Vespers on the recto side, although another chant for Saint Felicity may have appeared in the sliced out section of the upper verso.

After the invitatory psalm for Nocturnes, an incipit for a chant commemorating the Virgin Mary appears: *Regem sempiternu(m) venite adoremus*. A comparison of the incipit in *MS 47* to the online Cantus Database reveals that the music for this incipit was specifically a Cistercian antiphon, which seems logical considering the Cistercian fervor for the Virgin Mary.⁸ A common chant for one martyr follows this, although Saint Clement's name has been filled in to specify the chant to him: *qui martirem suum coronavit clem(e)ntem*. A gloss follows indicating the actual commencement of Nocturnes, *In p(r)imo (nocturne) a(ntiphona)*, which begins with a Common incipit for one martyr, *Beatus v(ir qui timet Dominum)*.⁹ To commemorate Pope Saint Clement I, here begins the Responsory chant *Orante sancto clemente*, to be sung after the psalms of Nocturnes.¹⁰ It is at this chant that the historiated initial 'O' appears to draw the eye, and it is thus here that we must now focus our attention.

⁸ Lacoste, Debra (Project Manager). Cantus: A Database for Latin Ecclesiastical Chant. <http://cantusdatabase.org/id/100310> (accessed December 9th, 2014).

⁹ *Liber Usualis*, pg. 146

¹⁰ *Liber Usualis*, pg. 1758

Considering the content of the text *Orante sancto clemente*, it would seem logical to assume that the kneeling figure in the historiated letter ‘O’ (Figure 4) was Saint Clement himself. Yet several discrepancies appear that point away from such a conclusion, starting with the content of the antiphon. The text commemorates the miracle of Saint Clement, who was banished by the Roman Emperor Trajan to a rock quarry in Crimea for his heresy against paganism.¹¹ Seeing his fellow banished Christians dying of thirst, Clement prayed to God, whereupon the lamb of God appeared and from its feet sprang a fountain of water: *Orante sancto clemente app(a)ruit ei agnus dei de sub cuius pede fons vivus emanat*. Note, however, that this story takes place at the end of Clement I’s life, as it is due to this miracle that he is tied to an anchor and cast in the ocean, earning him his martyrdom. As such, traditional depictions of Clement I portray the saint as an old man with a full beard.¹² Yet the kneeling figure visited by the angel in the historiated initial is notably clean shaven, with a soft, rounded face and tightly bound hair: the figure is not Saint Clement, but is rather undoubtedly female. Considering the commemorations of Saint Cecilia and Felicity earlier on, one might be inclined to argue that the kneeling figure is one of these two martyrs. The evidence, however, would not lean towards such a conclusion: Saint Felicity, who gave birth in prison prior to being executed, is typically portrayed with her martyr counterpart, Saint Perpetua, whereas illuminations of Saint Cecilia, as the patroness of musicians, are nearly always portrayed with some type of instrument nearby.¹³ As mentioned earlier, the only other saint mentioned in *MS 47* is the Virgin Mary with the Cistercian chant

¹¹ Catholic Online. *Pope St. Clement I*. www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=37. (Accessed: December 8, 2014).

¹² c.f., *British Library, London, Royal MS 11 D.viii* in addition to *Chazen Museum of Art, Richard R. and Jean D. McKenzie Endowment Fund purchase, 2001.30: Sistine Chapel Antiphonary with St. Clement I Pope and Martyr, 1539*

¹³ Catholic Online.

commemorating her, which appears prior to this illumination on the folio (see above). A comparison to other illuminations of the Virgin Mary reveals that her body position, combined with the visitation of an angel, strongly indicates that this is a scene of the Annunciation, in which the archangel Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary.¹⁴ Granted this argument, this confirms *MS 47* as a Cistercian antiphon, and in addition reinforces that the folio is indeed dedicated to Pope Saint Clement I, who would be elevated in his commemoration by integrating the Virgin Mary into the proper chant for his feast day.

Considering the manuscript's presumed origin from northern Spain, one may be inclined to say that the illumination is consequently Spanish in design. Yet Spanish illuminations of the time period were traditionally marked with bold, vibrant colors, including reds, oranges, and gold leaf.¹⁵ Human figures, in addition, were normally drawn with stretched bodies, large eyes, and elongated faces. While the colors of the illumination in *MS 47* make it difficult to discern what color palette the initial originally bore beyond the remaining corroded blue and a faded yellow, the proportions of Mary and Gabriel do not seem to indicate the elongation seen in most Spanish illuminations, as noted by their round faces, small eyes, and even body proportions. Considering the tendency of illuminators to travel during this time period, it is neither surprising nor an unlikely suggestion that the illuminator for *MS 47* may have come from another country. The sheer simplicity of the illumination, however, has proven an obstacle, and despite consultations with professor of European medieval art Karl Whittington, crowdsourcing through the Ohio State University History of Art Department, and research into Spanish and French illuminations, I have been unsuccessful in securing a province for the historiated initial, which

¹⁴ c.f., *British Library, London, Royal 2A XVIII, fo. 34* in addition to *Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 294b*

¹⁵Mentré, Mireille. *Illuminated Manuscripts of Medieval Spain*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd. 1996.

suffers from not only chromatic degradation but also an artistic simplicity that, while pointing towards Cistercian art, does not offer much concrete detail for any definite conclusions. I shall, therefore, discuss in the rest of this paper the final aspect of *MS 47* that has yet to be addressed, and yet is perhaps the most vital component of the folio: the medieval music itself.

The word ‘antiphon’ may be misleading here, as it typically connotes a musical piece involving two choirs singing back and forth to one another, ergo the term ‘responsory’ when referring to antiphonal pieces. Yet *MS 47* gives no indication that the chants it provides are to be divided in any way between choirs—small vertical lines appear on the recto side between notes, but the hasty, uneven additions seem more like indications for pausing to breathe rather than an official, formal divide between singing ensembles. According to Professor Charles Atkinson, medieval musicologist in The Ohio State University Music Department, the proper of Saint Clement with the historiated initial would have been a neumatic antiphon—a chant with musical runs that lasts between two to six syllables—and would have been sung as a solo by the lead singer in the choir, typically a young boy. The notes themselves show no notation for musical length or general meter, indicating that the music is Gregorian, or plainchant, an even, flowing form of singing sans vibrato or dynamics, wherein the singer gives each note equal tonal emphasis and length.¹⁶

Despite the nature of plainchant, there are musical notations that provide interpretative assistance to the singer. In contrast to modern music that appears on a five-line staff with set key signatures and rhythmic meters, the music of *MS 47* appears on four-line staves, and the ‘key signatures’ prove far more arbitrary: each chant is marked by a *fah* (F-clef) or *doh* (C-clef),

¹⁶ *Liber Usualis*, “Rules for Interpretation.”

indicating the relative position on the staff where the musical note F or C falls, respectively.¹⁷

These notes, however, were associative and fluid from one chant to another—depending on what line or space the clef symbol fell upon, the relative positions of the musical scale would fall on different points for different musical pieces. *MS 47*, fortunately, is consistent in that the notation for C-clef (Figure 9) always falls upon the top line of the staff, and the folio's one use of F-clef for the chant commemorating the Virgin Mary (Figure 8) falls upon the second highest line. The folio uses four major musical symbols, or neumes, to denote not the length or emphasis of each note but rather the local *movement* of the chant. The most elementary component, the *punctum* (Figure 10), is a simple square-shaped neume, indicating a single note on the staff and sung as such. A *podatus* (Figure 11) consists of two or more *punctum* stacked on top of one another and denotes an upward musical movement: the bottommost neume would be sung first, followed by the one above, etc. The *punctum inclinatum* (Figure 12), in contrast, consists of diamond-shaped neumes to mark a downward musical progression, with the topmost neume being sung before the next highest in a descending pattern. Finally, the *porrectus* (Figure 13) indicates a three-note movement wherein one note would be sung, followed by a lower note, then concluding with the singer returning to the original note. While these musical symbols indicated the musical movement of the piece, however, it is important to reinforce that each note was sung with equal emphasis and length, regardless of the particular neume used to denote it. Indeed, the producers of *MS 47* expressed a careful consideration for ensuring that the Gregorian chant for the feast day of Pope Saint Clement I could be read easily and smoothly: at the end of each musical line on the manuscript, a *custos* or “guide” appears in the right-hand margin to indicate to the singer what

¹⁷ *Liber Usualis*

the next note will be. This allowed the singer to continue the plainchant without having to pause a moment as his or her eye skipped down to the next line to read the next note (Figure 14). After researching the nature and technical features of the plainchant, as described above, I was able to successfully transcribe the music for the *Orante sancto clemente*, as seen in Figure 15.

This musical transcription reveals far more insight than just providing visual accessibility for the modern musician—the movement of the Gregorian chant comes fully into light, exposing the function of the musical notes themselves as a space for liturgical worship and contemplation of the divine. The musical movement throughout the chant flows in an organic ebb and flow that logically supplements and emphasizes the corresponding text commemorating the miracle of Pope Saint Clement I. The opening notes, sung to the first word *Orante*, begins on the D at the bottom of the staff—the lowest note in the chant and the only occurrence in the piece—which then rises step by step to an A. This ascension complements the Latin being sung—*Orante*, the past participle for ‘pray’—as a devotional act of looking upwards to the divine, emphasized by its visual proximity to the illuminated Virgin Mary kneeling millimeters away, whose praying hands seem to generate the first note ascending upwards in prayer. This ascension is mirrored later on in the chant with *fons* (fountain), which demonstrates a similar musical ascension to emulate the welling of the water from the mountain. Important to note, however, that as this is the divine miracle, the upwards movement in scale occurs higher than the rise in *Orante*, starting at E and ascending to a B. To better understand the musical significance of this moment, we must embed the word within its narrative context: *de sub cuius pede fons vivus emanat*.¹⁸ The musical direction for the foot of the lamb of God, *pede*, rises and falls in pitch yet moves ever downwards

¹⁸ “From under his feet (i.e., the lamb of God), a fresh spring arises.” (My translation)

on the staff—the music is making a literal descent towards the ground and the foot of the lamb, only to once more spring upwards with *fons* and the welling up of the spring. As for contemplation of the divine, a greater emphasis of movement is given to key words and phrases, notably *clemente*, *agnus dei*, and *emanat*, the venerated saint, presence of the divine, and moment of the miracle, respectively. The presence of longer musical runs for these phrases allows a longer period of devotion and contemplation for that particular moment in the text. We may no longer, therefore, consider the Gregorian chant of *MS 47* as mere aesthetic practice—the music provides a didactic religious experience for both audience and participant in the liturgical hours, providing a multisensory means of worship through aural, visual, and oral mediums.

Despite the information provided in this analysis, there is still plenty of work to be done for future research on *MS 47*. The illumination of Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, if properly identified and localized, can provide the key to discovering a more specified region of origin for the manuscript. It can also open the possibility of acquiring the necessary search parameters for locating other folios from the same codex to provide more concrete information on the region and Cistercian abbey that created the antiphon. The Gregorian chants in the folio may also prove useful for such a task, as future research may be able to localize specific chant formulas to particular areas—as of now, however, the CANTUS database does not provide the specific region of origin for the particular chants in this folio. Tracing the provenance of *MS 47* is also an avenue for future inquiry, as I was unable to determine what codex used the folio for its flyleaf, nor was I able to determine the history of the sliced out—and reinserted—illumination. Yet in spite of these limitations, *MS 47* has proven a multifaceted piece that has acquired in its journey the scars and wear of a well-traveled manuscript, transformed from a piece of musical worship

for the Catholic liturgy into a marginalized fragment for another unknown codex, then further reduced to an incomplete fragment with its keynote illumination removed. Yet with that illumination restored, we may perhaps say with confidence that *MS 47* has returned to its origins of musical worship as a piece that can—and has—been used to commemorate Pope Saint Clement I in the modern era.

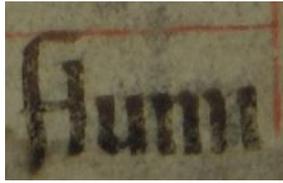


Fig. 1

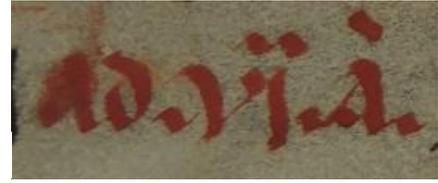


Fig. 5



Fig. 2



Fig. 6



Fig. 3

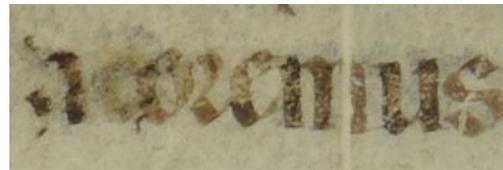


Fig. 7



Fig. 4



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12

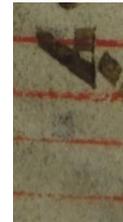


Fig. 13

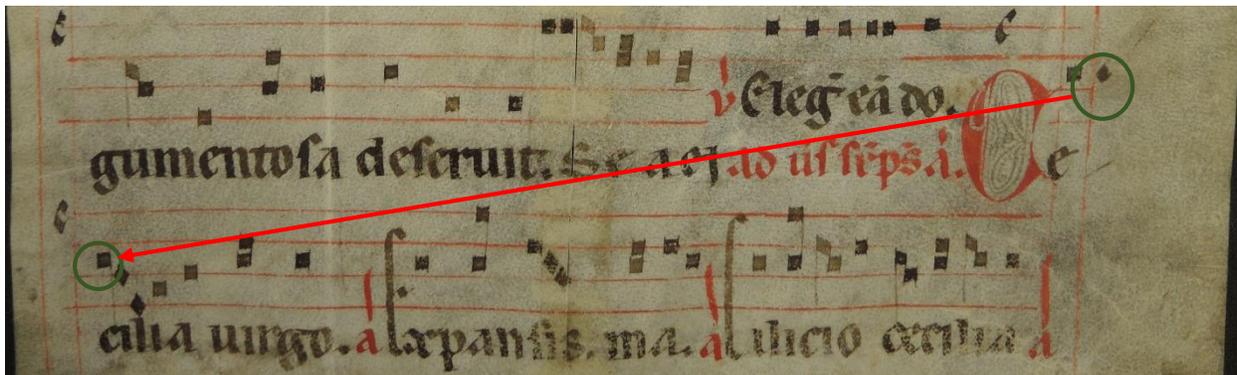


Fig. 14



Fig. 15

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