

About tropes

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About Tropes

ALEJANDRO ENRIQUE PLANCHART

The very nature of the object of my enquiry places my contribution to this panel beyond the chronological limits that had been established originally, and for this I apologize. But the rise of the trope and sequence repertory as well as the relatively rapid demise of much of it do present us with models that may open fruitful perspectives to our view of the evolution and growth of musical forms and categories in the realm of christian liturgy.

In the history of the evolution of musical forms and categories connected with the liturgical rites of the Christian west during the second half of the first millennium few decisions can be regarded as momentous or had such wide and long lasting implications as the essentially political decision of the early Carolingians, beginning already with Pepin the Short, to adopt and indeed to impose upon the churches of their realm a liturgy and presumably a chant taken from Rome itself. It is a moot point here to ask whether these imports were essentially a purely papal rite and music, as maintained by Bruno Stäblein,¹ or whether the chant and liturgy sent north by a series of popes were so to speak a «pan-Roman» or perhaps more accurately a «central-Italian» chant and liturgy, for as Helmut Hucke has shown in a number of occasions, the final product that crystallized in the cathedral *scholae* of the ultramontane north in the ninth and tenth centuries retained its Roman texts and musical categories for the most part, but all of this was clothed in a melodic language that, even though it shows a clear relationship to the central Italian language, was different in a number of essential ways.² What is important is that the liturgy and chant imposed on Europe by the Carolingians were different, often drastically different, from the traditional forms of ritual and music that had evolved in the course centuries in Merovingian and early Carolingian Gaul, so that the adoption of the new liturgical and musical forms must have represented a relatively drastic change in the ways of public worship in these regions.

The numerous references to episodes connected with the imposition and early transmission of Gregorian chant in the north – its very name became something of a propaganda ploy – and the comments of chroniclers, liturgists, and music theorists suggests that the decision of the Carolingian emperors met with puzzlement and incomprehension on the part of the popes, at least at the beginning, a similar incomprehension, misunderstood as malevolence by Frankish writers, on the part of the Roman singers, and outright resistance and resentment on the

1 Stäblein's ideas appear most fully in his introduction to *Die Gesänge des altrömischen Graduale Vat. lat. 5319*, ed. Margareta Landwehr-Melnicki, Monumenta monodica medii aevi, 2 (Kassel, 1970).

2 Helmut Hucke, «Towards a New Historical View of Gregorian Chant,» *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 33 (1980), 437–467.

part of numerous Frankish communities and prelates.³ It is interesting to note in this context that the adoption of the Roman sacramentary seems to have met with less resistance perhaps on account of three reasons: First, the prayers of the Gregorianum and the Hadrianum are not qualitatively so different from those of the Gallican lectionaries and Mass books or from those of the Gelasiana. Second, the existence of written texts right from the start seems to have made the process of transmission and dissemination much easier.⁴ Third, the items contained in these books are by far less «public» than those contained in the Antiphonale Missarum or the Cantatorium. The opposition to the new rite seems to have been focused upon those elements that were closest to the surface as perceived by a congregation, in this case the influential «congregations» made up of monastic communities and cathedral chapters, in a situation not without parallels to the reaction of conservative Catholics to the liturgical reforms instituted by the Second Vatican Council.

Some of what has been outlined above for the Frankish lands was then repeated in central and southern Italy in the tenth and eleventh centuries and beyond, as a series of German and German-influenced popes imposed the Romano-Frankish Gregorian music on the old Lombard duchy of Benevento and on Rome itself. The opposition to the new music may have been less strenuous now, but I have little doubt that it was one of the main driving forces behind the copying of the surviving manuscripts of Old Roman chant or the entering of a number of Old Beneventan Masses into the Gregorian Graduals now at the Biblioteca Capitolare in Benevento. We need not seek far causes and for rationales for the conflicts and the resistance. They spring from basic traits of the nature of human collectivities, but in addition we must remember that the concept of tradition was one of the most valued and powerful tools of Christian theology, which had been given powerful expression in the writings of the early Fathers and in the numerous decrees of the Ecumenical Councils that specifically caution against innovation.⁵ And can we doubt that in ninth-century France and Germany the Roman liturgy and the Romano-Frankish chant, no matter what their putative origins and authority could be, were in fact innovations and innovations that affected directly the very core of Christian modes of public expression during the most important liturgical functions of each day? The same may be said to some extent of central and south Italy in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and particularly in the case of Rome itself we may be assured that Roman cantors and precentors had a relatively clear view of their own tradition and consequently a fair idea of the spurious claims to Roman authority of the part of the Romano-Frankish chant.

3 The literature on this is enormous and has not been thoroughly explored in terms of primary sources; a convenient if tendentious sample appears in Stäblein, *Die Gesänge*, pp. 62*–83*.

4 If we are to believe some of the medieval writers, e.g., John the Deacon, *Vita Gregorii Magni*, in Migne, *Patrologia latina*, 75, were primarily musical rather than textual or liturgical.

5 The suspicion and condemnation of innovation pervades patristic writing and the writings of later chroniclers and theologians until well into the middle ages. Cf. F. de Groot, *Conspectus historiae dogmatum ad aetate patrum apostolicorum usque ad saeculum XIII*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1931) and Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 3 vols. (Utrecht, 1950–1960).

The ways in which the Gallican liturgies of Merovingian Gaul differed from that of Rome and from the new Romano-Frankish liturgy are relatively well known.⁶ What we do not have truly clear picture of however is the exact nature of the chant and the musical forms that were part of that liturgy. Remnants of it, displaced and probably transformed, survive in the Gregorian repertoires, but to my knowledge no systematic effort has been made to sift, identify, collect, and analyze these remnants. This is something that may turn out to be a long, complex, and infinitely frustrating task, but one that needs to be undertaken with increased urgency if we are to understand properly certain aspects of the Gregorian style itself. Comparison with the Mozarabic liturgy can be useful up to a point but is hampered by the insuperable barrier of silence that surrounds the written-down Mozarabic melodies. Comparison with the Ambrosian is also useful but it is hard to avoid the suspicion that the Gallican melodic ethos was almost as far removed from that of Milan as from that of Rome. The common view of Gallican chant, which stresses its prolixity and its «irrationality,»⁷ could be reinforced by examination of some of the putative Gallican survivals such as the Offertory *Elegerunt apostoli* – provided the melody does indeed reflect the Gallican tune for it – which is, at least textually, prolix and not entirely well organized, but they are contradicted by the simplicity and regularity of the bilingual *trisagion* in all of its various melodic garbs, all of which seem to go back to a common ancestor.⁸ In any case, given the paucity of sources and repertory and the very wide area they cover we need to pay very close attention to Michel Huglo's *caveat* when he states that there were probably considerable differences in the repertoires that we subsume today under the term Gallican.⁹

In any case, the imposition of the Roman liturgy and the Romano-Frankish chant over most of transalpine Europe in the historically brief period of two or three generations caused a serious dislocation of liturgical thought and of liturgical practice as it resulted in a rupture with local traditions and the introduction of new musical forms and categories into the local worship, and even if in retrospect we can perceive numerous continuities between the old and the new forms such insight is not usually given to those who live through the change. Thus it is perhaps no coincidence that the rise of some of the even «newer» Frankish forms such as tropes and sequences comes about right at the time when the imposition of the Romano-Frankish liturgy and its music is being completed. In fact, among the earliest references to one of the new musical forms are the rubrics «cum sequentia» found in the Mont Blandin Antiphoner, which is in turn one of the earlier written witnesses for the choral pieces of the new Romano-Frankish liturgy.¹⁰ Notker's letter to Liutward points in the same direction with its impli-

6 See the very useful summary in Michel Huglo, «Gallican Rite,» *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London, 1980), 7, 113–125.

7 See Edmund Bishop, «The Genius of the Roman Rite,» *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford, 1918), pp. 1–19. The contrast made by Bishop between Roman and non Roman rites, though valid, has been perhaps overemphasized.

8 Kenneth Levy, «The Trisagion in Byzantium and the West,» *International Musicological Society, Report of the Eleventh Congress, Copenhagen, 1972*, ed. Henrik Glahn et al. (Copenhagen, 1974), 2, 761–765.

9 Huglo, «Gallican Rite,» p. 114.

10 See René-Jean Hesbert, ed., *Antiphonale Missarum Sextuplex* (Brussels, 1935), No. 199a.

cation that the style of the new *versus ad sequentias* was apparently well known to his teacher Iso.¹¹

With the exception of Paul Evans, who regarded the musical style of the tropes as an essential continuation of the Gregorian style,¹² most recent scholarship on these genres has laid stress on their novelty and their differences from the chant, at least from our present perspective, and has sought to explain the differences in a number of different ways.¹³ Other studies have pointed out what seem to be considerable differences of style and tradition in the musical settings of the same trope texts in different regions.¹⁴ In my own work preparing a critical edition of the corpus of tropes from Beneventan and central Italian manuscripts¹⁵ I have been working with a repertory that survives in circumstances particularly favorable to the examination of the musical and formal cross-currents generated by the displacement of an older liturgy and chant in favor of the Gregorian repertory and by the rise of the new forms and categories, since in the south Italian manuscripts we have in transcribable notation: 1. A substantial amount of the non Gregorian music sung at these localities presumably before the adoption of Gregorian chant. 2. The Gregorian chants that supplanted the earlier music, copied in the versions sung locally. 3. Some apparently new local pieces composed in conformity with the new Gregorian music. 4. Tropes, prosulae, and sequences imported from other centers and copied with or without local alteration. 5. Tropes, prosulae, and sequences that seem to be of a purely local origin.

One of the most notable traits of the demonstrably local trope melodies in central and south Italian sources is the extent to which they seem to avoid the melodic patterns and procedures of the Gregorian chants that they complement. The entire melodic ethos of the tropes is different from that of the chant not only in terms of melodic formulae but even in terms of the general intervallic vocabulary. The distinction between melodic patterns or formulae and intervallic vocabulary is a hard one to make but it is, I think, worth stressing. One of the traits of the northern trope repertory that led Evans to his view that tropes represent merely a continuation of the style of Gregorian chant is precisely a similarity of intervallic vocabulary rather than one of melodic behavior between tropes and chant. The relatively rich intervallic vocabulary of the authentic tetrardus chants is also present, albeit utilized in a different manner, in the tropes to chants in that

11 Wolfram von den Steinen, *Notker der Dichter und seine geistige Welt*, 2 vols. (Bern, 1948), 2, 8–11.

12 Paul Evans, *The Early Trope Repertory of Saint Martial de Limoges*, Princeton Studies in Music, 2 (Princeton, 1970), p. 73, but cf. Sarah Fuller's review in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, XXVI (1973), 157–158.

13 For example, Bruno Stäblein, «Der 'altrömische' Choral in Oberitalien und im deutschen Süden,» *Die Musikforschung*, 19 (1966), 3–9; Richard Crocker, «The Troping Hypothesis,» *The Musical Quarterly*, 52 (1966), 182–203, and *The Early Medieval Sequence* (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 110–123; and Alejandro Enrique Planchart, *The Repertory of Tropes at Winchester*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1977), 1, 207–210.

14 Cf. Planchart, *loc. cit.*; Günther Weiss, «Zur Rolle Italiens im frühen Tropenschaffen. Beobachtungen zu den Vertonungen der Introitus-Tropen *Quem nasci mundo* und *Quod prisco vates*,» *Festschrift Bruno Stäblein*, ed. Martin Ruhnke (Kassel, 1967), pp. 287–292; Ellen Reier, «The Introit Trope Repertory at Nevers: MSS Paris B. N. lat. 9449 and Paris B. N. n. a. lat. 1235,» 3 vols., Ph.D. dissertation (University of California at Berkeley, 1981), 1, 74–213.

15 Alejandro Enrique Planchart and John Boe, eds., *Beneventanum troporum corpus* (in preparation).

mode.¹⁶ This is simply not the case in south Italian tropes, which have a tendency towards wholesale repetition of extended melodic patterns – something noted in connection with the Old Beneventan chant¹⁷ – and an equally pronounced tendency to use a very restricted intervallic vocabulary.

A few examples may illustrate this. Example 1 gives you the Beneventan and Roman version of one of the Latin Kyries most widely used in the region.¹⁸

Example 1

Ky-ri - e ley- son.
 Auc - tor ce-lo - rum de - us e - ter - ne.
 Kyrie ū Qui po - lum for - mas - ti nec - ne so - lum.
 Kyrie ū Ab om - ni ma - lo tu nos de - fen - de.
 Xpis - te ley son.
 ū Xpis - te de ce - lis suc - cur - re no - bis.
 Xpe ū Per cru - cem qui cunc - ta ad te tra - xis - ti.
 Xpe ū In - fer - ni mors ex - is - tens et mor - su.

16 Evans, *Early Trope Repertory*, pp. 73–118.

17 Thomas Kelly, «Music for Easter in the Old-Beneventan Rite,» Paper read at the Forty Fourth Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Minneapolis, 1978.

18 The version given is that of Benevento 40, fols. 21r–21v, but I have written out in full the final melisma, which is given in the manuscript only as a text incipit. Liquescentes and quilismas are not shown in the transcription.

Ky-ri - e ley son.
 ū Spi - ri - tus cor - di - um il - lus - tra - tor.
 Kyrie ū Pu - ri - fi - ca sanc - te cor - da nos - tra.
 Kyrie ū Qui tri - nus re - gnas de - us et u - nus.
 A - men.

Example 2

Auc - tor ce - lo - rum de - us e - ter - ne.
 Ky - ri - e ley - son.

The melody of the Latin verses has no interval larger than a second, while the melody for the melismas has only two thirds in it. Both melodies have B as the effective reciting tone with C as an upper structural tone that sets off the B, but the melody of the Latin verses is so baldly schematic that it risks being meaningless in the sense that there is barely enough time to hear the modal gesture of the melody were it not for the preceding melisma with its extreme insistence on the B as a main melodic tone. Now, the north Italian version of the Kyrie, given in Example 2 in a reconstruction from Verona 107, shows the same modal dialectic as the southern melody but with telling differences in the melodic detail. I have given only the first verse and the first melisma, as all the others are identical, but already there is a structural difference from the southern version in the precedence of the Latin verse, which brings this version of the Kyrie closer to the northern transalpine tradition. Further, the northern version «opens up» the melody so to speak. The crucial C in the Latin verse is now approached by a leap, the only leap in the melody, while the melisma has now four thirds in it. The two

thirds moving by contrary motion at the end of the word «Kyrie» and the leap of a third up from the F and into the final cadential formula are common melodic gambits of the Gregorian repertory, and the approach to the final cadential formula of the melisma is a procedure that was taken over also by the northern trope and sequence repertory to the point of becoming one of the most common endings. These, however, are simply not part of the normal melodic vocabulary of south Italian tropes. By the same token, the insistence on the alternation of B and A found in the southern version of the Kyrie which recalls the melodic behavior of Old Roman chant and in particular of some of the Old Roman introits, is effectively eliminated from the northern version of the melody.

It is not my intention here to argue for precedence for either version; both versions are removed from the melodic ethos of Gregorian chant, but the northern version is less so for it shares with it and with the transalpine trope repertory a number of surface melodic traits. The southern version instead seems to approximate itself to forms of melodic behavior that are more prevalent in Old Roman chant and perhaps in Old Beneventan chant though the extent of the Old Beneventan repertory does not give us an entirely clear picture of the style.

The differences in melodic behavior suggested by the two versions of the Kyrie are present in an even more marked manner in the Introit tropes, though the south Italian tendency towards large scale repetition of melodic patterns could also be found in the Gloria tropes, e.g. the *Gloria Rex hodie Christus*, as well as the tropes to the Sanctus and the Agnus dei. In addition to the melodic repetitions and the restricted intervallic vocabulary some of the introit tropes in the Italian sources show a tendency to present a continuous discourse that is only casually related to the text of the introit. The end result is not a gloss, however remote, of the chant text such as one finds in the northern tropes,¹⁹ nor even what Stäblein once characterized as an attempt to bring the psalmodic texts of the Mass closer to tenth and eleventh century sensibilities,²⁰ but rather a text that simply coexists with that of the chant instead of interacting with it in any manner.

Example 3 gives you an Italian introit trope that survives with two melodies, one in the Beneventan Graduals and the other in Pistoia C 121.²¹

19 The relatively coherent and gloss-like nature of many northern trope texts has been pointed out forcefully by Ritva Jonsson in an unpublished paper on the Easter troper of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, latin 9448, delivered at the University of California at Santa Barbara in November of 1978.

20 Bruno Stäblein, «Zum Verständnis des 'klassischen' Tropus,» *Acta Musicologica*, 35 (1963), 88–89.

21 I do not indicate liquescences or quilismata in these transcriptions since at this point my concern is only with the pitch structure itself. The spelling and punctuation in all examples is that of the manuscripts.

Example 3

Benevento 38, 47v-48r.

[1] 8 Mu - li - e res que ad se - pul - crum ue - ne - rant

an - ge - lus di - xit iam sur - re - xit do - mi - nus. Resurrexi.

[2] 8 Ci - to e - un - tes di - ci - te di - sci - pu - li

qui a sur - re - xit sic - ut di - xit do - mi - nus. Posu[isti].

[3] 8 Ue ti - bi iu - da qui tra - di - dis - ti do - mi - num

et a iu - de - is ac - ce - pis - ti pre - ti - um. Mirabil[is].

Pistoia C 121, 34v.

[1] 8 Mu - li - e - ri - bus que ad se - pul - chrum ue - ne - rant

an - ge - lus di - xit re - sur - re - xit do - mi - nus. Resurrexi.

[2] Ci - to e - un - tes di - ci - te di - sci - pu - lis
qui - a sur - re - xit sic - ut di - xit do - mi - nus. Posuisti.

[3] Ve ti - bi iu - da qui tra - di - di - sti do - mi - num
et a iu - de - is ac - ce - pi - sti pre - ti - um. Mirabilis.

Both show large scale repetition of melodic phrases not only within each trope verse but from one trope verse to the next, and it is possible that both go back to a common ancestor since the ending of each half-verse is identical in both. The north Italian melody is less consistent throughout the piece than the southern one, and some of the variations in it do seem triggered by the introit melody, so that verse three of the trope, which follows a phrase of the introit ending on F rather than E, shifts to a new opening gesture for the verse, even though the new gesture quickly assimilates itself to the melodic pattern of the previous phrases. The northern melody also gives more emphasis to the final of the mode with its play upon the third E–G as an articulation point in the first part of each half-verse. The southern melody gives instead no hint that we are dealing with a E mode until the final cadence of each half-verse, and even so the beginning of the second half of each verse with the same pattern as the opening but a step down effectively nullifies the cadence of the first half of each verse by subsuming it into an elaborate flex from D to C and back to D. Further, the articulation point of each half verse is now on D rather than on E, so that were it not for the final cadence of each full verse it would be possible to understand the melody as some form of protus. This in turn does suggest that the southern trope melody comes out of a tradition where D was by far a more common final than E, in other words from a tradition closer to a two rather than a four finals system of modality. The reading of the text provided by both melodies is both very clear and extremely formal. The articulation points in the southern melody make this if anything even more clear than those of the northern one. The melody «punctuates» the first verse as follows:

Mulieres / que ad sepulcrum uenerant // angelus dixit / iam surrexit dominus.
and in a putative «grammatically correct» reading of the opening word «Mulieribus» rather than «Mulieres» (as in Pistoia C 121) the extra syllable probably

would be taken, as it is in all the remaining five opening figures, by an extra note at the beginning of the phrase. There is for all intents and purposes only one interval larger than a second in the southern melody, and it is the gap that alternates between a third and a fourth and serves to point out the articulation and define the flex-like function of the pitch change in the first part of each half verse. The range of the southern trope melody is virtually identical to the range of the introit melody, but juxtaposed in actual performance the difference in what I have called melodic ethos between the trope and the introit is quite striking.

Example 4 gives you the Easter introit antiphon as it appears in the Beneventan Graduals.

Example 4

Benevento 38, 48r.

Re-sur - re - xi et ad - huc te - cum sum. Al - le - lu - ia.

Po - su - is - ti su - per me ma - num tu - am.

Al - le - lu - ia, Mi-ra - bi-lis fac - ta est

sci - en - ti - a tu - a. Al-le - lu-ia al - le - lu - ia.

The introit despite its narrow range opens up its own melody by a careful use of leaps. The F is defined very early as the main melodic note – the effective reciting tone of the antiphon itself – even though the E on the third syllable of *Resurrexi* softens the stark contrast of D and F that opens the introit in the northern traditions. The alleluias at the end of each phrase define the effective range of most of the antiphon through two leaps, D–F and E–G, and the lowest note of the piece is approached by the widest leap and permanently abandoned by another leap. All of these amount to simply a different «manner of singing» from that implied by the trope.

In the trope the repetition of the same melody for each verse, a repetition that in the southern version is carried to each half verse, has the effect of bringing all the phrases of the trope into close connection despite the gaps produced by the intercalation of the introit phrases. The connection between the extremely regu-

lar trope melody and the far less regular introit also points to the very loose connection that exists between trope and introit at the textual level. Such a connection ranges from the casual in the turn from Verse 1 to *Resurrexi et adhuc tecum sum* to the meaningless in the turn from Verse 4 to *Mirabilis facta est scientia tua*. In contrast the three verses of the trope, their bond strengthened by melodic similarity and regularity, present us with a continuous discourse couched in almost dramatic terms that ranges from the announcement to the Marys to the command to tell the disciples and to an emotional climax in the sudden exclamation against Judas, an exclamation that in the context of the resurrection takes an apocalyptic tone. In other words, the trope tells its own story, and it is at best loosely connected with what the introit antiphon is talking about.

To be sure a number of the south Italian introit tropes are more closely connected textually to their antiphons. *Martyr Laurentius*, for example, presents all the characteristics of extreme repetition of phrases albeit far more expansive and ornamental ones found in *Mulieres que ad sepulcrum*, but its textual connection to the introit is closer. But it is also perhaps no coincidence that in this case the introit itself is part of a body of Romano-Beneventan music that probably originated in south Italy itself.²²

I have used as examples two south Italian chants, but I believe that a similar case can be made for both northern and Aquitanian tropes and sequences belonging to the oldest layers of those repertoires.²³ The very nature of the tropes, however, prevented most of them from achieving the kind of coherence as musico-textual genres that would become ultimately a satisfactory medium for the expression if you will of the mixture of new and old forms of expression that appear to be rising in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. It is worth noting that the genres that survived the longest in these categories are those where the chant did not really interrupt the flow of the newly composed pieces, most notably the Kyrie verses and the sequences, and that among the proper tropes the introit tropes survive for the longest time but reduced to essentially short introductions to the introit, which allows them albeit in a modest scale to present their text and music uninterruptedly.

In the long run also the Gregorian chant became something of an accepted tradition though we cannot ever be certain that it was a true musical vernacular except in a very restricted area of northern Europe and for a relatively short time considering its long life as a musical language. Chant-derived musical vernaculars do spring up in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries in Italy, France, Germany, England, and Spain, but our knowledge of these vernacular is still fragmentary and clouded by views of them as decadent, though recent interest in such repertoires as the rhythmic offices, the victorine sequences and their derivatives, and the interfaces of chant, conductus, and secular music hold a promising prospect for the future.

22 The introit *Probasti domine* can be seen in *Paléographie musicale*, 15, fol. 217v. It is restricted to my knowledge to Italian manuscripts from the south.

23 Huglo, «Gallican Rite,» *passim*, suggests that such a case can be made with some of the northern tropes.