One of the forms of late-medieval popular polyphony in Central Europe was the circular canon, which in fifteenth-century theoretical treatises was termed a rotulum. Analysis of preserved repertoire shows that this is a very simple canon, usually notated in the form of single melodic line. The melodic line is divided into three or four parts of equal length (depending on the number of voices), with special symbols – signa congruentiae – indicating the entrances of successive voices. The repetition of the musical material ad infinitum is suggested by a melodic and textual incipit notated at the end of the piece.

The notation is not the only way to recognise a circular canon: these forms are identified in compositions which seem to be monophonic. Good examples include Ave virgo sanctissima from the manuscript PL-WRu I Q 132, interpreted as a rotulum.
by Fritz Feldmann,\textsuperscript{3} and the offertory Glorioso flos from the Gradual of Eleanor of Brittany (F-LG 2(17)), in which Marcel Péret identified a canon.\textsuperscript{4} The reverse situation occurs in manuscript D-TRs 322/1994, held in the Stadtbibliothek Trier. A composition entitled Epulemur in azimis (fol. 210r) exhibits all the notational peculiarities of a rotulum, but was not interpreted as such because of many ambiguities in the writing of the melodic material. These ambiguities make it almost impossible to correctly coordinate the voices according to the rules of counterpoint. The possibility of a canon occurring in this piece was first hypothesised by Paweł Gancarczyk, who drew my attention to this source and provided crucial materials.\textsuperscript{5} The edition included in this article represents an attempt to reconstruct Epulemur in azimis in the form of a circular canon.

\textbf{SOURCE DESCRIPTION}

The manuscript D-TRs 322/1994 belonged to the Augustinian monastery of Eberhardsklausen in Klausen until 1802. During secularisation, it was transferred to the Jesuit library in Trier (and later to the Stadtbibliothek). The manuscript consists of two parts, not directly related to each other. The provenance of the first part (according to modern foliation, fols. 1–107) is unknown. It contains sermons written c.1400.\textsuperscript{6} The second part of the manuscript (fols. 108–215) was probably copied at Eberhardsklausen.\textsuperscript{7} Fols. 108–206v contain the philosophical poem Liber Alani de planctu naturae, while fols. 207r–215r carry a musical part, which was discovered at the end of the nineteenth century. It was described in detail for the first time by Rudolf Ewerhart in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{8} The manuscript measures 285 × 210 mm. The folios of the second part (108–215) were initially larger, but were trimmed to the same size as the first part, with no damage to the musical notation.\textsuperscript{9}

The manuscript D-TRs 322/1994 includes twenty-six mono- and polyphonic compositions written in black mensural notation. Its features (e.g. the shapes of the custodes) indicate that the manuscript was probably copied at the beginning of the fifteenth century (c.1430). Taking also palaeographic features into account

\textsuperscript{3} Fritz Feldmann, \textit{Musik und Musikpflege im mittelalterlichen Schlesien}, Breslau 1938, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{4} That interpretation was borne out by a performance of this piece as a canon during workshops with Marcel Péret as part of the Poznań Katharsis Festival (23–25 May 2018).
\textsuperscript{5} I am grateful to Prof. Paweł Gancarczyk for all his help with preparing this article.
\textsuperscript{7} This hypothesis was discredited by Marco Brösch. He analysed the dialect of the German-language texts and suggested that the manuscript came from a region located further north than Trier (close to the border of Lower Rhein and the Netherlands), see Marco Brösch, \textquoteleft Die Klosterbibliothek von Eberhardsklausen und ihre Bestände. Von den Anfängen bis ins 16. Jahrhundert\textquoteright, PhD dissertation, Trier 2010, p. 604.
\textsuperscript{8} R. Ewerhart, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., pp. 4–5.
(e.g. *prolatio* signs), Paweł Gancarczyk claims that the polyphony dates from the second quarter of the fifteenth century.\(^\text{10}\) Analysis of the watermarks confirms this dating: the paper was produced between 1380 and 1425.\(^\text{11}\) The polyphonic pieces were written on paper folios dating from the fourteenth century.\(^\text{12}\) Palaeographic analysis revealed that the compositions were probably copied by two scribes: the first one was responsible for the text, the second for the musical notation.\(^\text{13}\) The artwork of the manuscript is very meagre. The initials have been marked with the same brown ink as the other elements. The ornaments are limited to a few small drawings, integrated with initials and lateral lines. They depict fish, dragon and two fighting characters – one armed with a crossbow, the other with a spear. The clumsiness of these caricatural images may indicate that they were not drawn by an illuminator, but by a copyist, who, perhaps jaded from his arduous work, amused himself by ornamenting the manuscript.\(^\text{14}\)

Some ‘amateur’ elements appear in the musical notation as well. The writing is not always legible (the notes overlap the text, there is a lack of keys in many places), in which it resembles musical fragments of Central European provenance.\(^\text{15}\) The used forms (*cantio*, motet, rotulum) and concordances (including with the Speciálník Codex – CZ-HK II A 7, and the Spiš Fragments – H-Bn lat. 534) also link the manuscript to this region. Moreover, the composition *Jesus Christus nostra salus*, based on a text by Jan Hus, was included in the manuscript.\(^\text{16}\)

The pieces in the manuscript D-TRs 322/1994 represent the *devotio moderna* movement for religious reform. It is an important example of music cultivated under the influence of the Congregation of Windesheim. The texts, as befitting *devotio moderna*, are ascetic: they have a simple, strophic form and a prayerful, laudatory character. The dominant themes related to Christ and Mary.\(^\text{17}\) The musical settings correspond to the texts. They are often limited, in the form of monophonic singing or simple polyphony (which accords with the principles of *devotio moderna*).\(^\text{18}\)

---


\(^\text{12}\) P. Gancarczyk, op. cit.

\(^\text{13}\) B. Wehner, op. cit.

\(^\text{14}\) Such drawings were popular at this time throughout Europe; see Maciej Gutowski, *Komizm w polskiej sztuce gotyckiej* [The comic element in Polish gothic art], Warszawa 1973, pp. 229–238.

\(^\text{15}\) See manuscripts H-Bn lat. 554, PL-WRu I F 269, PL-GD 2153a and D-Gs XXX,1.


\(^\text{18}\) Ibid., pp. 323–325.
Epulemur in azimis was transcribed first by Ewerhart,¹⁹ and then by Christoph Burmester, in the most recent edition of D-TRs 322/1994, published with the CD heylich ist der dag by the ensemble Vox Nostra.²⁰ Both authors interpreted the piece in monophonic form, possibly due to difficulties with coordinating the voices when reading the *signa congruentiae* as voice cues. The transcription presented below is a proposed reconstruction in the form of a rotulum, as is suggested by the notation. It required making some fundamental assumptions and implementing many modifications.

There are a lot of ambiguities in the notation. At the beginning, the key is missing. It appears only later, which, thanks to the repeat of the incipit at the end, allows us to assume the clef C₄. It is difficult to determine the mensuration. The beginning seems to be written in duple time (*tempus imperfectum cum prolatione imperfecta*), but the first *signum congruentiae* is followed by the appearance of a trochaic rhythm, which implies *prolatio perfecta*. Because of the concurrence with the rotulum *Ex trinitatis culmine* from PL-GD 2153a,²¹ in the transcription below, a ternary metre was assumed. Like *Ex trinitatis culmine*, Epulemur in azimis begins with a *semiminima*, which could play the role of an ‘upbeat’ – a short, unaccented note. By means of analogy, I interpret it as a *minima* preceding a *prolatio perfecta* division. With this assumption, the arrangement of the phrases implies *tempus perfectum*.

¹⁹ R. Ewerhart, op. cit., p. 100.
²¹ A facsimile and transcription of this piece can be found in Elżbieta Zwolińska, ‘Musica mensuralis in Polish musical sources up to 1600’, in: Notae musicae artis, op. cit., pp. 482–485.
The piece was written in a single melodic line. The form of a three-part rotulum is indicated by two *signa congruentiae* in the shape of a cross within a circle and the repetition of the opening notes and the textual incipit at the end. The first *signum congruentiae* unambiguously indicates the entry of the second voice. The entry of the third voice and part of the melody after it cause more problems. The sign is written between the notes *b* and *c*. In order to close the canon properly, it was necessary to add a breve note *c*. In the following parts of the piece, many rhythmic changes had to be made to achieve the desired contrapuntal relations, and they are still not always satisfactory, due to the frequent unisons and octaves.

Given the chaotic notation (the most salient example appears in the group of notes written almost above each other and separated by a line, which suggests that they belong to the passage before the change of the key), it can be assumed that the piece was written from memory or that the copyist only knew the beginning well (clear and unambiguous notation) and thereafter partly ‘improvised’. The transcription given below is not the only possible solution. It is an attempt to reconstruct the potential polyphonic form of this composition.

**Epulemur in azimis**

*D-T Rs 322/1994*

![Musical notation](image)
1) in ms. semiminima
2), 4) in ms. only semibreves
5) in ms. ligature d-f
6) in ms. f
7) in ms. semibreves
8), 14) in ms. minimae
9), 11) in ms. minima
10) c repeated, it does not occur in ms.
12) notation of rhythmic value not precise, semibreves with unclearly added caudae?
13) repetition of the note d omitted
15) note c added to close the canon properly
The text consists of two strophes. Each of them uses the whole musical material and consists of six lines, the last two rhyming. It was necessary to repeat the last words of both strophes (i.e. ‘nostra vicia’ and ‘miseri’) to close the canon properly.

As already mentioned, the subject of the composition is linked to devotio moderna. The text is of a laudatory character and features Mary (‘Virgin of God’) and Christ (‘her Son’). One also finds an interesting hint about the intended use of the piece and performance practice: a call for Jesus Christ and Mary to be extolled through singing with the accompaniment of string instruments (‘chordis’) and with dance (‘pedibus’). It can be assumed that this composition was used for private prayer (as was emphasised by the exponents of devotio moderna), probably not in church (if in church, then unofficially).

Given below is the text as it appears in the Wolfgang Katzenschlager edition (the words in square brackets originally occur in the manuscript; they are retained in the musical transcription as well).\(^{22}\)

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Epulemur in azimis} \\
\text{sinceritatis veteris } \text{[vinctis]} \\
\text{et veritatis gressibus} \\
\text{mundi huius solacium} \\
\text{donec purgando vetera} \\
\text{quo premimur nos } \text{[nostra] vicia} \\
\text{gratulemur in laudibus} \\
\text{precelse dei virginis } \text{[virgine]} \\
\text{det [ut] nobis suum filium} \\
\text{chordis canamus pedibus} \\
\text{zima purgato vteri} \\
\text{quo firmentur miser i.}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Let us feast with the unleavened bread} \\
\text{of erstwhile honesty} \\
\text{and truth! This is solace} \\n\text{on the path through this world,} \\
\text{until we are cleansed of the old sins} \\
\text{which [still] oppress us.}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Let us give thanks in praise} \\
\text{to the sublime Virgin of God,} \\
\text{that she may give us her Son.} \\
\text{Let us sing with strings and feet [with dance]:} \\
\text{cleanse the old leaven,} \\
\text{that the weak might be strengthened.}\(^{23}\)
\end{align*}\]


\(^{23}\) Translation based on the Latin text and German translation by Wolfgang Katzenschlager published with the above-mentioned Vox Nostra album.
Jedną z form popularnej polifonii, charakterystycznej dla okresu późnego średniowiecza w regionie Europy Środkowej, jest kanon kołowy, w piętnastowiecznych traktatach teoretycznych występujący pod nazwą rotulum. Kanon ten zapisywany był zazwyczaj w formie pojedynczej linii melodycznej, podzielonej, w zależności od liczby głosów, na trzy lub cztery równej długości odcinki za pomocą symboli (signa congruentiae), wyznaczających zarazem wejścia kolejnych głosów. Powtarzanie materiału muzycznego „w nieskończoność” sugeruje notacją początku melodii wraz z incipitem tekstowym na końcu utworu.

Powyższe cechy odnaleźć można w notacji kompozycji Epulemur in azimis z rękopisu przechowywanego obecnie w Bibliotece Miejskiej w Trewirze pod sygnaturą 322/1994, wykazującego wiele związków z regionem Europy Środkowej. Przy odczytaniu signa congruentiae jako symboli oznaczających wejścia kolejnych głosów okazuje się, że liczne niejednoznaczności w zapisie materiału muzycznego uniemożliwiają skoordynowanie głosów zgodnie z zasadami kontrapunktu. Dlatego też w wcześniejszych edycjach (autorstwa Rudolfa Ewerharta i Christopha Burmestera) utwór transkrybowano w postaci jednogłosowej.


Ryszard Lubieniecki

Keywords / słowa kluczowe: late medieval music / muzyka późnego średniowiecza, Central Europe / Europa Środkowa, rotulum, circle canon / kanon kołowy, devotio moderna.