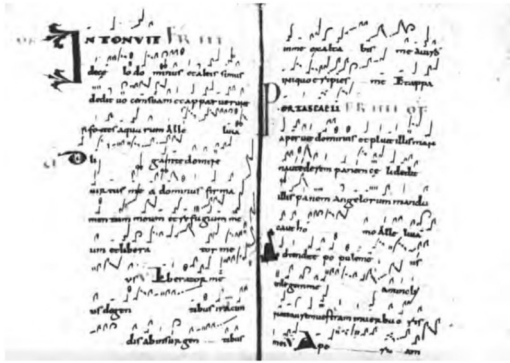
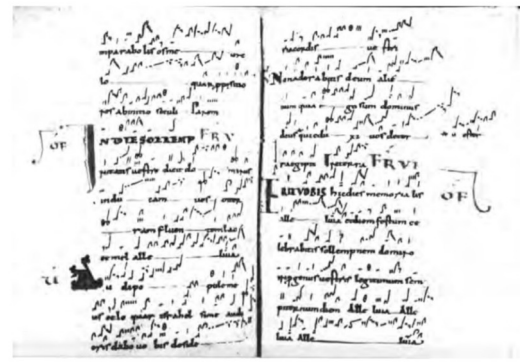


III. 3: Oxford, Bodl. Libr. Douce 222, 11th c., fol. 141v/142



Offertories for Easter Week (Novalesa neumatic notation)

III. 4: Oxford, Bodl. Libr. Douce 222, 11th c., fol. 142v/143



Offertories for Easter Week (Novalesa neumatic notation)

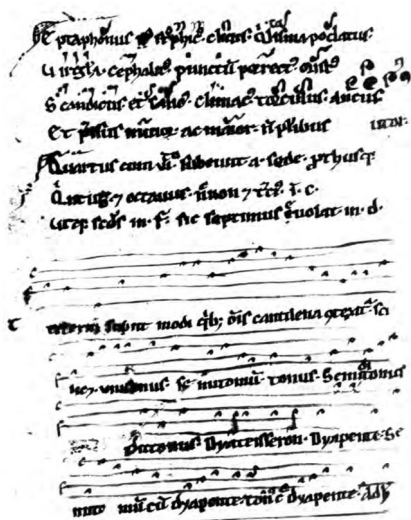
Fig. 1— Constantin Floros (2011, p. 24, 25). The cantillation pattern of accents (ekphonia) that belonged to the poiesis of reading, before the advent of song as matter (res) and phrase as lyrics. No doubt the emergence of metrics as tone length and punctuated sentence, plays a role in the emergence of what we in modern parlance call fiction.

After visiting the NLN’s exhibit on [King Magnus Law-Mender](#), I wanted to return to the question of the musical notation of *neumes*, and their relation back in time to cantillation patterns of [ekphonia](#). The latter being a topic I may have picked up from Tim Ingold’s book on lines (2007)—*Lines: a brief history*—featuring specifically *song-lines*: how they were instructed in a system of *accents* over the script, indicating the twists and turns of cantillation between the beginning and the end of a sentence (the cantillation indicating the beginning and end, with *no* distance between words).

In the *Origins of Western Notation* (2011/197), Constantin Floros goes into a specialised detail of research in this area where the comparison between not only the Byzantine and Latin systems, but also Armenian antecedents, were discussed. Bringing considerably more nuance into former theories on how the *neumes* were derived from the *ekphonic* systems that came from Greece. This holds only in some aspects, while in others they developed in parallel. So, the Greek system developed in the 2nd century C.E. by the Alexandrian grammarians was the discussed starting point.

And what we usually understand by neumes—in the visual cliché, or stereotype—dates about 1000 years later, and then is studied in its evolution over this time. From the vantage point of a generalist reader, like myself, there is a gross transition from *meter* as rhythm to *meter* as length. At the end of this thousand year period, the meter was *chronometric* featuring in the relative length of a tone: such as *punctum* and *virga* (to keep it simple). It became musical in that sense. While the problem of the ekphonic accents is *readability*: how to articulate the script into meaningful sentences.

That is, a lateral drift from extracting the matter at hand—*res, non verba*—to the melodic impetus through which language acquired a certain kind of transcendentality. What is important to retain, from a generalist vantage point, is that the changes (with their diffusion and local variation) occur at the level of sign and language *at the same time*: it is *not* the one first and then the other. Which indicates contingency (in the sense that semiotic and linguistic are *alongside* and *touching*): an adjacent relation between sign and language *in a lateral drift from cantillation to song*.



Nomina neumarum: "Tabula brevis"

Fig. 2—Constantin Floros (2011, p. 124) 12th century transcript of accents to neumes. This transposition coincides with the appearance of punctuation in writing (punctum-stop and virga-comma).

This *difference is one that makes a difference* even today, in some milieus: during a synagogue service in 1995 I heard aficionados in the attendance complain—*we have come here to pray, not listen to opera!* There was a cantor from Johannesburg who was a little bit on the flowery side in his ways of chanting prayers and reading the Torah. So, this adds an anthropological layer to the linguistic and semiotic finery that we find in studies like that of Constantin Floros. The anthropological layer is also one that affords transitions of a wider range than between sign and language alone.

What the anthropological layer adds is the *application*. *Not* by something being designed—semiotically and linguistically—and *then* applied, but application articulation of contingency itself, in the social organisation/structures of cultural encounters: there are transactions going on, between semiotics and language through cantillation/song that are prone to drift laterally into previously uncharted domains. For instance, as when punctum and virga drifted unto writing practices, indicating the length of silences in a written sentence, rather than the length of tone in song. Examples?

Yes. An example of this—in the millennium after the drift from ekphonic accents to musical neumes—featured in certain conventions for type-writing: with double distance after the *punctum*/stop and a simple distance after a *virga*/comma. These practices were developed and upheld in the same period as Roland Barthes distinguished between *studium* and *punctum*, in the analysis of photography. In *Camera Lucida* (1980) he defines the punctum as (p. 27): “sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (...)”.

His statement that the punctum is *uncoded* (while the studium, featuring the motif, is coded) is the big question here. Since the notion of perforation, hole or stigmata—which he uses to characterise the *punctum*—links to *caesura*, in music and theatre, and readily links to the notion of pause/break of a certain length. The prick, after all, is not of infinite extension. Though it could be infinite in thought. As Ane Thon Knutsen's artistic research on *The mark on the wall* by (1917) Virginia Woolf could seem to indicate. The story is cut short as Leonard Woolf explained that it was a snail.

So, adding to the anthropological layer (above) there appears to be a *literary* layer, that does *not* apply an idea, form or structure but rather applies as it stands in the *middle* of contingency: that is, *in medias res* in the sense that concerns us here. Which brings us to the core issue (following Constantin Floros methodological injunction—*res, non verba*): can we get a better handle on the contingencies of *lateral drift* in time, as in the paragraphs above, by *mapping* them unto the piecemeal influence of *contemporary* practices that are also parallel to one another and local?

That is, by mapping the said lateral drift from its *operational* mode in history, unto its *distributive* mode in its local variation? Possibly, if we accept that what we observe in the latter are clusters in which some of the elements are the *same*, some are *similar*, *different* and *other*. Which means that a have groups that telescope between mapped as the same, to others that are objectively separate with aspects that are similar and different in between. This is by no means trivial since the *middle* area—featuring the [meantime](#)—may be the ones that are subject to learning through [feedback](#).

Oddly, this appears to escape Constantin Floros in a passage where he accounts for Dom Huglo's classification in his *Études grégoriennes* (op.cit. p. 13): “It distinguishes between four classes of



Fig. 3—Studium: Aby Warburg in his psychotic period. Punctum: the piece of string out of his breast pocket. Cf. Roland Barthes.

signs: the *neumes premiers* (virga and punctum), the *neumes dérivés* (signs derived from virga and punctum), the *neumes d'ornement* (apostropha, oriscus, quilisma, trigon and signs derived from the first two mentioned signs) and the *neumes liquescents*.” Oddly, Floros rounds up a classification of *three*, rather than four: leaving out the *neumes dérivés* (derived neumes). That is, *leaving out* the similar, *keeping* the different.

But Dom Huglo's classification contains virga and punctum as the *same*, the derived neumes as the *similar*, the *neumes d'ornement* as the *different*, and the liquescent neumes as the *other* (bridging over to locally conceived *ligatures*). The point being that—in the scope of contingency—it is the *compound* of these elements/the group (same, similar, different, other) that *learns*. If we follow the method (*res, non verba*), we should be able to trail the feedback between the similar and different: featuring Aby Warburg's hatching *Mnemosyne* (1928): the Atlas of memory. There are two possible explanations for Aby Warburg's madness: 1) that he was genetically and personally disposed to it; 2) that he was somehow culturally possessed [which [Warburg's lecture on the snake ritual of the Hopi](#) indicated]. An observation: when he was discharged from the asylum, he *also* regained his long lost voice.