Caron

Helas m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye
Helas que pourra devenir a 3

Edition and comments by

Peter Woetmann Christoffersen

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http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH/CH092.html

This edition is extracted from the online project *The Copenhagen Chansonnier and the 'Loire Valley' chansonniers*, which consists of linked html-files and a great number of single PDF editions. It can be accessed at http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/.

Each html-file about a song contains lists of sources, and edition and translation of the poetic texts, discussion of the main sources and comments on text and music. Separate files hold lists of contents and descriptions of the sources. Other files contain papers and notes on related topics. The online edition offers many cross references and links to online facsimile editions. These links had to be simplified in the present edition.

Each version of a song is regarded as a valid performance by a scribe/musician, and therefore they are published separately. In most cases there will be no attempts to imagine the intentions of the composer or to reconstruct exactly what the composer had written when the music left his pen. Rather the aim is to interpret the written music in largely the same way as 15th century performers may have read it. Many details, which in one source are different from other sources, must be accepted by the editor as valid elements in a performance of the actual source. Sources marked by an asterisk * are included in the edition.

Sigla

The related 'Loire Valley' chamsonniers

Copenhagen	Copenhagen, The Royal Library, MS Thott 291 8° http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/702/dan/0+recto/
Dijon	Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, Ms. 517 http://patrimoine.bm-dijon.fr/pleade/img-viewer/MS00517/viewer.html
Laborde	Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MS M2.1 L25 Case (Laborde Chansonnier) https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200152631.0/?sp=1
Leuven	Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number (Leuven Chansonnier) https://data.idemdatabase.org/IE9381778/representation?fl_pid=FL9382190
Nivelle	Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Rés. Vmc. ms. 57 (Chansonnier Nivelle de la Chaussée) http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55007270r/f1.image
Wolfenbüttel	Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag. http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=mss/287-extrav

Other sources

Augsburg 25	Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, 4° Cod. mus. 25
Bologna Q16	Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q16
Bologna Q18	Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q18
Bratislava 33	Bratislava, Miestne Pracovisko Matice Slovenskej, Inc. 33
Florence 229	Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Banco Rari 229
Florence 27	Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Ms. Panciatichiano 27
Kraków 40098	Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellonska, Ms. Mus. 40098 (Glogauer Liederbuch)
Paris 15123	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. f.fr. 15123 (Chansonnier Pixérécourt)
Paris 676	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Déppartement de Musique, Rés. Vm7 676
Perugia 431	Perugia, Biblioteca Comunale Augusta, Ms. 431
Petrucci 1501	Petrucci, *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton A*, Venezia 1501
Rome 2856	Roma, Biblioteca Casanatense, Ms. 2856
Rome XIII.27	Roma, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Cappella Guilia, XIII.27
Segovia	Segovia, Archivio Capitular de la Catedral, MS s.s.
Sevilla 5-1-43	Sevilla, Biblioteca Capitular y Colombina, MS 5-1-43
Trento 89	Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e Collezioni Provinciali, Ms. 89 (1376)
Uppsala 76a	Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, Musik i Handskrift 76a
Verona 757	Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, Ms. DCCLVII

Text sources

Berlin 78.B.17	Berlin, Staatsliche Museen der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, Ms. 78.B.17 (Chansonnier Rohan)
Jardin 1501	*Le Jardin de plaisance et fleur de rethoricque*, Paris, [Antoine Verard, 1501]

Literature

Fallows 1999	David Fallows, *A Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 1415-1480*. Oxford 1999
Löpelmann 1923	M. Löpelmann (ed.), *Die Liederhandschrift des Cardinals de Rohan* (Gesellschaft für romanische Litteratur, Band 44) Göttingen 1923

Helas m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye 3v · Caron
Helas que pourra devenir

Appearance in the group of related chansonniers:

*Dijon ff. 81v-82 »Helas que pourra devenir« 3v Caron
*Laborde ff. 12v-13 »Helas m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye« 3v Caron
*Leuven ff. 61v-63 »Helas que pourra devenir« 3v
*Wolfenbüttel ff. 49v-50 »Helas que pourra devenir« 3v

Other sources:

Augsburg 25 f. 4 »Dess mayen lust« 3v
Bologna Q16 ff. 128v-129 »Helas que pour devenir« 3v
Bologna Q18 ff. 35v-36 »Helasso« 4v (+C)
Bratislava 33 no. 1 »Mit treuen herzen« 2v [3v] (S and T only)
Florence 229 ff. 222v-223 »Helas que pourra devenir« 3v Caron
Florence 27 ff. 35v-36 »Helas« 4v (+C) Caron
Kraków 40098 ff. A3v/A3v/A3v »Der seyden schwantcz/Ave sydus clarissimus« 3v
Paris 15123 ff. 33v-34 »Hella que poura devenir« 3v
Paris 676 ff. 12v-13 »Hellas que pora advenire« 3v
Perugia 431 ff. 59v-60 »Helas« 3v
Petrucci 1501 ff. 15v-16 »Helas que poura devenir« 4v (+C) Caron
Rome 2856 ff. 45v-46v »Hellas mon ceur« 3v Caron
Rome XIII.27 ff. 71v-72 »Hellas« 3v Caron
Segovia ff. 114v-115 »Elaes« 4v (+C) Caron
Sevilla 5-1-43 ff. 39v-40 »Hellas« 3v
Trento 89 ff. 416v-417 *Without text* 3v
Uppsala 76a ff. 13v-14 »Helas que pourra devenir« 3v
Verona 757 ff. 19v-20 *Without text* 3v

For citations and use of material see Fallows 1999, pp. 181-182.

Text: In most sources the text (or the incipit reference) is a rondeau cinquain, "Helas, que pourra devenir", which appears in full in Dijon, Leuven and Wolfenbüttel, also in Berlin 78.B.17 ff. 130-130v, ed.: Löpelmann 1923, p. 232. A different rondeau quatrain, "Helas m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye", is found complete in Laborde – also in Berlin 78.B.17 ff. 156v, ed.: Löpelmann 1923, p. 294. The incipit in Rome 2856 "Hellas mon ceur" is probably a conflation of the two first lines of "Helas, que pourra devenir" and not a reference to "Helas mon cueur, helas mon oeil", a bergerette in Berlin 78.B.17 f. 90, ed. Löpelmann 1923, p. 138, and in Jardin 1501 f. 87v, which cannot fit the music.

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After Laborde:

Helas m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye,	Alas my love, my more than perfect girlfriend,
si ne vous plaist m'estraindre vostre grace,	if it does not please you to include me in your grace,
je ne requier heure, temps, *lieu,* ny espace (1)	I will not need hour, time, place nor space
de vivre plus, fors en merencolie.	anymore to live, except in sadness.
Ad ce faire Desir si me convie	Desire so drives me to be like this
pour le plaisir que prans en vostre face,	for the pleasure I get from the sight of you,
helas *m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye,*	alas my love, my more than perfect girlfriend,
si ne vous plaist m'estraindre vostre grace.	if it does not please you to include me in your grace.
Vostre beaulté a ma pense ravie	Your beauty has ravished my mind
si griefvement que je ne scay que face;	so devastatingly that I do not know what to do;
et si Pitie ma grant douleur *n'efface,* (2)	and if Pity does not efface my great pain,
en dangier suis que sus pietz je desvie.	I am in danger of losing my way back on feet.
Helas *m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye,*	Alas my love, my more than perfect girlfriend,
si ne vous plaist m'estraindre vostre grace,	if it does not please you to include me in your grace,
je ne requier heure, temps, lieu, ny espace	I will not need hour, time, place nor space
de vivre plus, fors en merencolie.	anymore to live, except in sadness.

1) Laborde, line 3, the word "lieu" is missing,
2) Laborde, line 11, the last word is missing.

After Dijon:

Helas, que pourra devenir	Alas, what shall become
mon cueur, s'il ne peut parvenir (1)	of my heart, if it cannot fulfil
a celle haultaine enteprise	that elevated enterprise
ou sa voulenté c'est soubmise (2)	to which it has subjected its will
pour mieulx sur toutes advenir?	in order to fare better than all others?
C'est chois sans aillieurs revenir,	It was chosen without turning to others,
eslicte pour temps advenir (3)	elected for times to come
avoir plaisance a sa device.	to have pleasure as its device.
Helas, *que pourra devenir*	Alas, what shall become
mon cueur, s'il ne peut parvenir	of my heart, if it cannot fulfil
a celle haultaine enteprise?	that elevated enterprise?
Or est contraint pour l'avenir, (4)	Now it is pressed about the future,
car Desir l'a fait convenir	for Desire has forced it come to an agreement,
qui l'a mis hors de sa franchise;	which has made it loose its privilege;
et desja la cause est commise (5)	and already its case is rejected
a excuser pour souvenir. (6)	and laid aside for remembrance.
Helas, *que pourra devenir*	Alas, what shall become
mon cueur, s'il ne peut parvenir	of my heart, if it cannot fulfil
a celle haultaine enreprise	that elevated enterprise
ou sa voulenté c'est soubmise	to which it has subjected its will
pour mieulx sur toutes advenir?	in order to fare better than all others?

1) Wolfenbüttel, line 2, "mon povre cueur, si ne ..."
2) Leuven, line 4, "... est submise"
3) Leuven, line 7, "... pour tout temps ..."
4) Dijon, line 12, "... advenir"; Leuven, "... pour la venir"
5) Dijon, line 15, "est a la cause c'est soubmise"; Leuven, "et desja est sa cause ..."
6) Leuven, line 16, "a excercer par ..."; Wolfenbüttel, "pour en juger a son plaisir"
– many differences in spelling.

Evaluation of the sources:

This song is found in many sources - in four of the later sources with an added high contratenor. The only four sources that have complete texts for the music are found among the 'Loire Valley' chansonniers, and here the song was copied by four different scribes using different exemplars. These exemplars were closely related, since three of them, for example, had an error in superius bar 37.2 in common, but still they must have been different.

The Laborde scribe copied a version in which the song had the decasyllabic rondeau quatrain "Helas m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye" as text, and this version was not very insistent on hexachordal signatures in the lower voices. The scribe placed a flat at the start of the tenor part only, and then wrote it and the following contratenor continuously on the page without any further signatures. The flat at the top of the page was probably meant as a sort of indication of the default choice in a performance of the lower parts, as they both evidently in all cases except one (T b. 45.2) call for flattened Bs. The single flat in the tenor can also be understood as just an indication of the fact that the tenor and the superius for most of the chanson move in strict intervallic canon at the fifth below.

The Dijon, Leuven and Wolfenbüttel scribes supplied one-flat hexachordal signatures explicitly in the tenor and contratenor parts; and their exemplars transmitted the song with a completely different poetic text, the rondeau cinquain "Helas, que pourra devenir". On the one hand this provides more words for the long canonic sequence, which ends the song's first section (bb. 19-29), but on the other hand its octosyllabic lines fit the remainder of the lines less well than the longer lines in "Helas m'amour".

The wolfenbüttel scribe's version of the poem was certainly corrupt, as the last line "pour en juger a son plaisir" does not fit into the poem's pattern of *rimes leonines*. The last word has to be "souvenir" as in the versions of the poem in the MSS Berlin 78.B.17 and in the Dijon and Leuven chansonniers. Moreover, the 2nd line contains an extra word at "mon *povre* cueur", which really makes it difficult to fit the now many words to the melisma. The differences in the musical text between Wolfenbüttel and Laborde are very few: they concern figurations (S bb. 9 and 62), coloration (S bb. 44.2-45.1), ligatures (T bb. 7-8, 47.2-48.1 and 50.2-51.1), and an accidental (C b. 28.2).

The poetic text in Dijon is slightly better, but it too is somewhat corrupted. Here line 15 is muddled, "est a la cause c'est soubmise", which provides the correct syllable count, but not much meaning. The decay probably started, when someone in the chain of transmission inadvertently repeated the end of the 4th line in the *tierce*. Compared to the Laborde version, the musical text of the Dijon copy is again very similar, if one disregards errors: the differences occur at plainer cadential decoration (S bb. 12 and 62) and ligatures (S bb. 49.2-50.1, T bb. 7-9, C bb. 46-51). Only in bar 53.2 in the contratenor we find what could be a trace of the Dijon scribe's intervention; the dissonant clash between *e* and *f* in the lower voices has been softened by the introduction of a dotted figure.

A different set of poetic variants can be found in the Leuven chansonnier (see above), including an inconvenient supernumerary syllable in line 7. Musically it is very similar to the Laborde version. Disregarding some minor differences and errors, the main variants are the ligatures in the opening gesture in all three voices, which help to make the declamation of the octosyllabic line effective (also found in several later sources), its renouncing of the leap of a fifth for a standard cadence figure in bars 28.2-29.1 in the upper

voice, which in all other sources is part of the fifth canon, and that the contratenor begins the second section on *a* instead in unison with the tenor. This unison start is only found in Dijon, Laborde and Wolfenbüttel, and it could go back to a writing error in a common ancestor. Likewise, the missing *punctus additionis* in the superius bar 37.2, an error common to these three sources, is surely not missing in Leuven. Taken together, this could indicate that the Leuven scribe had acquired his exemplar for this song from a tradition different from the other 'Loire Valley' scribes.[1]

The existence of four different, but as regards the music very similar, exemplars when the song was entered into the 'Loire Valley' chansonniers, shows that Caron's composition already had been in circulation for a long time, and that scribes had struggled with solutions to the problem of fitting it with a text.

Comments on text and music:

This is a virtuoso setting of a rondeau – and it is unique among Caron's songs. The original text probably was the rondeau quatrain preserved in Laborde, but at an early date the song became firmly associated with the rondeau cinquain that all later sources specify. An explanation of this change of text can only be purely speculative, as none of the poems excel in poetic clarity or striking images; the loss of some words in Laborde's transmission of the rondeau quatrain could be part of en explanation.

In Laborde we meet a setting that is quite clear in its declamation of the poem, which fits its four musical phrases. It is written for two voices in relatively high tessituras, supported by a contratenor that occasionally moves above the tenor. The whole point of the setting lies in its extensive use of rhythmically free canons between the upper voices, in which the contratenor in two instances partakes with shorter statements. The song opens in calm note values, the superius imitates the tenor at the octave after three *brevis*-bars, while the contratenor makes a "fake" imitation and hurries on to the obligato counterpoint to the tenor. From there on (b. 15) the song follows a pattern: The superius begins the remaining three phrases in *semibreves* (plain or dotted), which takes care of for most of text's syllables; it is followed by the tenor in canon at the fifth below at the distance of one or two *sembrevis*-values, which sooner or later becomes reduced to a *minima*-value (bb. 17, 36-38, 48). The resulting close fifth canons then run on to just before the cadences.

The restrictions posed on the single voices by the fifth canons could have made this song quite tedious. The mechanical melismas are relieved by the fast tempo in a *diminutio* mensuration, and by the contrasts created by the line-beginnings. Especially the opening of the second section is spectacular: The staggered descending thirds and triads in dotted values sung by all voices suddenly suspend the steady beat of the preceding long melisma and transform the sound into a glittering turning wheel. A reflection of this reappears in the 4th phrase (from b. 46) in a different combination and shorter note values; the four consecutive descending thirds sung by the contratenor in bars 31-33 now appear in the superius bars 49-51.

1 For the differences and relations between the other sources, see Allan W. Atlas, *The Cappella Giulia Chansonnier. Roma, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, C.G.XIII.27* (Musicological Studies Vol. XXVII/1-2), New York 1975-76, vol. I, pp. 146-148, Howard Mayer Brown, *A Florentine Chansonnier from the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificient. Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale MS Banco Rari 229* (Monuments of Renaissance Music VII) Chicago 198, vol. II, p. 481, and Martella Gutiérrez-Denhoff (ed.), *Der Wolfenbütteler Chansonnier. Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Codex Guelf. 287 Extrav.* (Musikalischer Denkmäler X), Mainz 1988, pp. 138-140.

David Fallows has commented, "... there is a good case for believing that the music was conceived independently of any text."[2] It is easy to concur to this given the abstract construction of the piece, the confusion concerning the texts, and the fact that the music does not show up a single instance of the note repetitions, which in many pieces help the singers to place the syllables. However, it is precisely the formal construction of the piece that makes the presence of the poem a necessity. The composition is a brilliant execution of the formal layout of the rondeau, including the full repetition scheme. A simple run though the music would hardly display its brilliance, as only the reappearance of the second section in the *tierce* after three repetitions of the first section can give it its full, mind-blowing effect. The excitement thus produced must be the secret behind the popularity of the song. Fallows is right in stating that the music's relation to the text is weak. I, as well, cannot detect any connection between the two depressed love poems and the music; if anything, it should be that Caron is making fun of the poetry. The words function rather like a scaffolding for a play with the form of the rondeau. In this game the text transmitted by Laborde, "Helas m'amour" is the best candidate for being the original text.

In this connection, it is interesting to remark that the rondeau quatrain also fits Heinrich Isaac's reworking of Caron's song. It can be laid under all the voices in a natural way without word repetitions, and quite different from the strained text underlay in the version published by H.M. Brown.[3] In most sources, Isaac's setting has the word "Helas" as a text marking; in Florence 229 only, it has the incipit "Helas que pourra mon cueur", which similarly to the appearance of Caron's song in Rome 2856 probably is a conflation of the two first lines of the rondeau cinquain. Concerning Tinctoris' and Isaac's use of Caron's "Helas", see further my comments on Tinctoris' »Helas«.[4]

Tinctoris and Caron's song

That Johannes Tinctoris was well acquainted with this song has often been discussed in the musicological literature. Most important are the contributions by Karol Berger, Peter Urquhart and Margaret Bent.[5] In his *Liber de arte contrapuncti, Liber secundus* of 1477, *Capitulum XXXIII* on discords, also called false concords, which all are to be avoided, Tinctoris says: "... ne mi contra fa in concordantiis perfectis admittant. Verumtamen saepissime apud infinitos compositores etiam celeberrimos oppositum comperi, [...] et apud Caron etiam in uno carmine quod dicitur "Hellas", sicut hic patet: [Music examples] Et profecto quomodo errores tam evidentes a tantis compositoribus committi video, nullo prorsus alio modo eos excusandos arbitror quam per hoc dictum Horatii quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus, id est, ut Acro exponit, quandoque errat bonus poeta, unde et bonum etiam musicam aliquando errare non est mirandum."[6] (... not to admit *mi* against *fa* in perfect concords. Nevertheless, I have often discovered the opposite in works by a great many composers, even the most famous, as ... and with Caron in a song called "Hellas", as

2 David Fallows, *A Catalogue of Polyphonic Songs, 1415-1480*. Oxford 1999, p. 182

3 Brown 1983 no. 6; see further http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH_X/Flo229_006.html.

4 At http://chansonniers.pwch.dk/CH_X/Sev5-I-43_60.html.

5 Karol Berger, *Musica ficta. Theories of Accidental Inflections in Vocal Polyphony from Marchetto da Padova to Gioseffo Zarlino*. Cambridge 1987, pp. 93 ff; Peter W. Urquhart, 'False Concords in Busnoys', in Paula Higgins (ed.), *Antoine Busnoys. Method, Meaning, and Context in Late Medieval Music*. Oxford 1999, pp. 361-387; Margaret Bent, 'On False Concords in Late Fifteenth-Century Music: Yet Another Look at Tinctoris', in A.-E. Ceulemans & B.J. Blackburn (eds.), *Théorie et analyse musicales 1450-1650*. Louvain-la-Neuve 2001, pp. 65-118.

6 After http://www.chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/15th/TINCON2_TEXT.html.

seen here: [Examples] And indeed, when I see such evident errors committed by so many composers, I think that these men can be excused in absolutely no other way than by this statement of Horace: "When the good Homer slumbers", that is, as Acro explains, when the good poet errs; hence it is not to be wondered at that a good musician sometimes errs.)[7] The outcome of the discussions seems to be, that Berger and Urquhart find that Tinctoris (grudgingly) accepts these diminished fifths at certain cadence combinations, while Bent establishes that Tinctoris of course strongly disapproves in the cases shown in his examples.

One may, however, wonder why the Caron song was singled out for critique at all. Tinctoris shows bars 41-46 of the tenor with a one flat signature, and the same five bars of the contratenor without any hexachordal signature. His example seems to be taken from the version preserved in Laborde (on this, see further my comments on Tinctoris' own setting of «Helas»), where it appears as a song without hexachordal signatures in superius and contratenor and with only a suggested b-flat in the tenor. All the needed flats in the lower voices can so easily be supplied by the performers that Tinctoris probably would deem it "asinine" to notate them,[8] and accordingly no one in their right mind would sing a *b*-flat in the tenor in bar 45. However, for most of the song, the tenor is dependent on the superius in strict intervallic canon at the lower fifth; the *b*-natural in bar 45 only appears after the actual stretch of canon ends. Therefore, Tinctoris must have read the hexachordal signature of the tenor as an indication of transposition, as a prescriptive sign. And in this situation, Caron ought to have supplied a *b-quadratum* before bar 45 in order to make things crystal clear to the performer - and to avoid the scorn from the methodical music theorist.

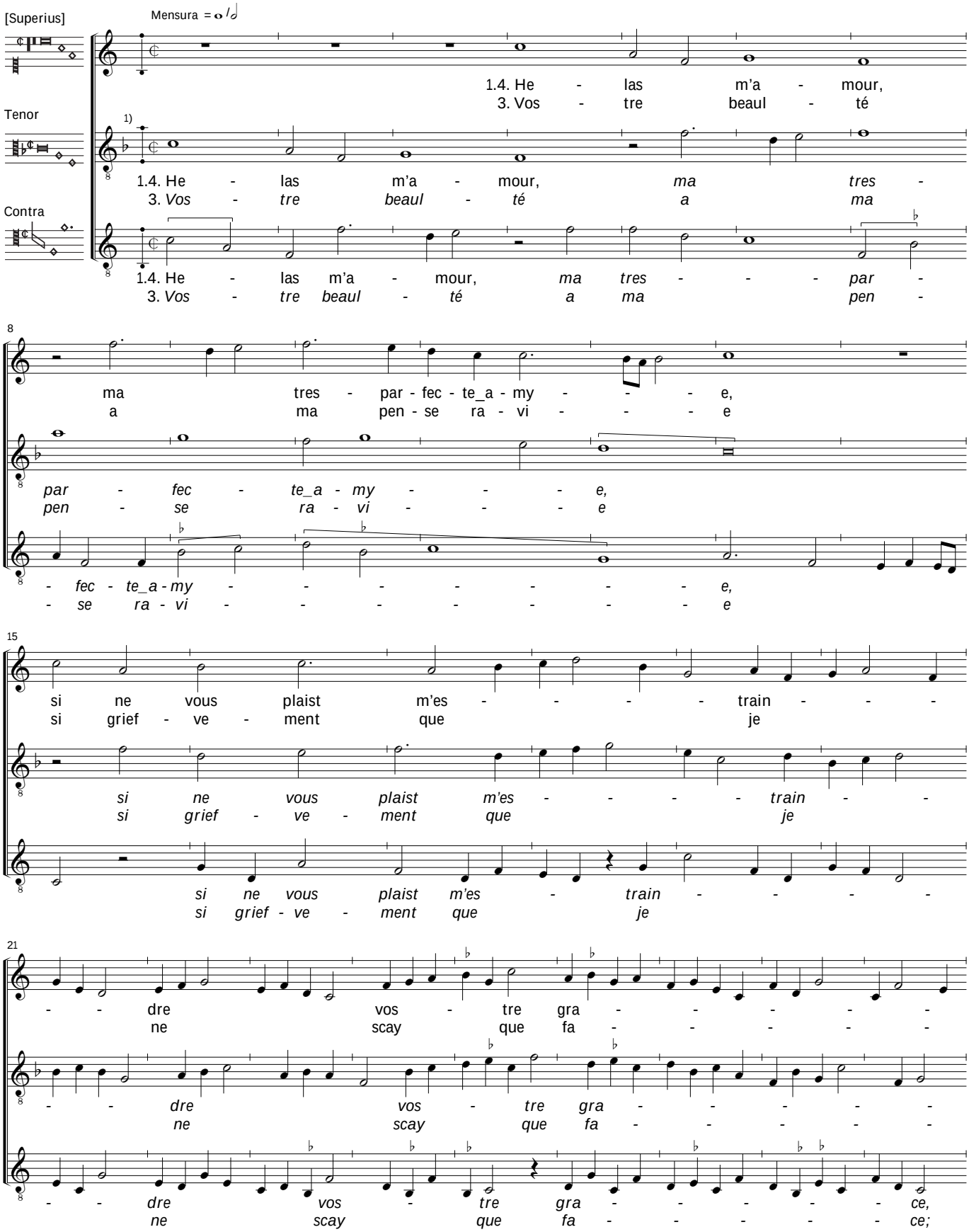
7 Translation based on Bent 2001, pp. 88-89, and J. Tinctoris (Albert Seay ed.), *The Art of Counterpoint (Liber de arte contrapuncti). Translated and edited by Albert Seay* (Musicological Studies and Documents 5), American Institute of Musicology 1961, pp. 130-131.

8 Cf. latest Bent 2001, p. 71.

Laborde no. 4

Caron, *Helas m'amour, ma tresparfecte amye*

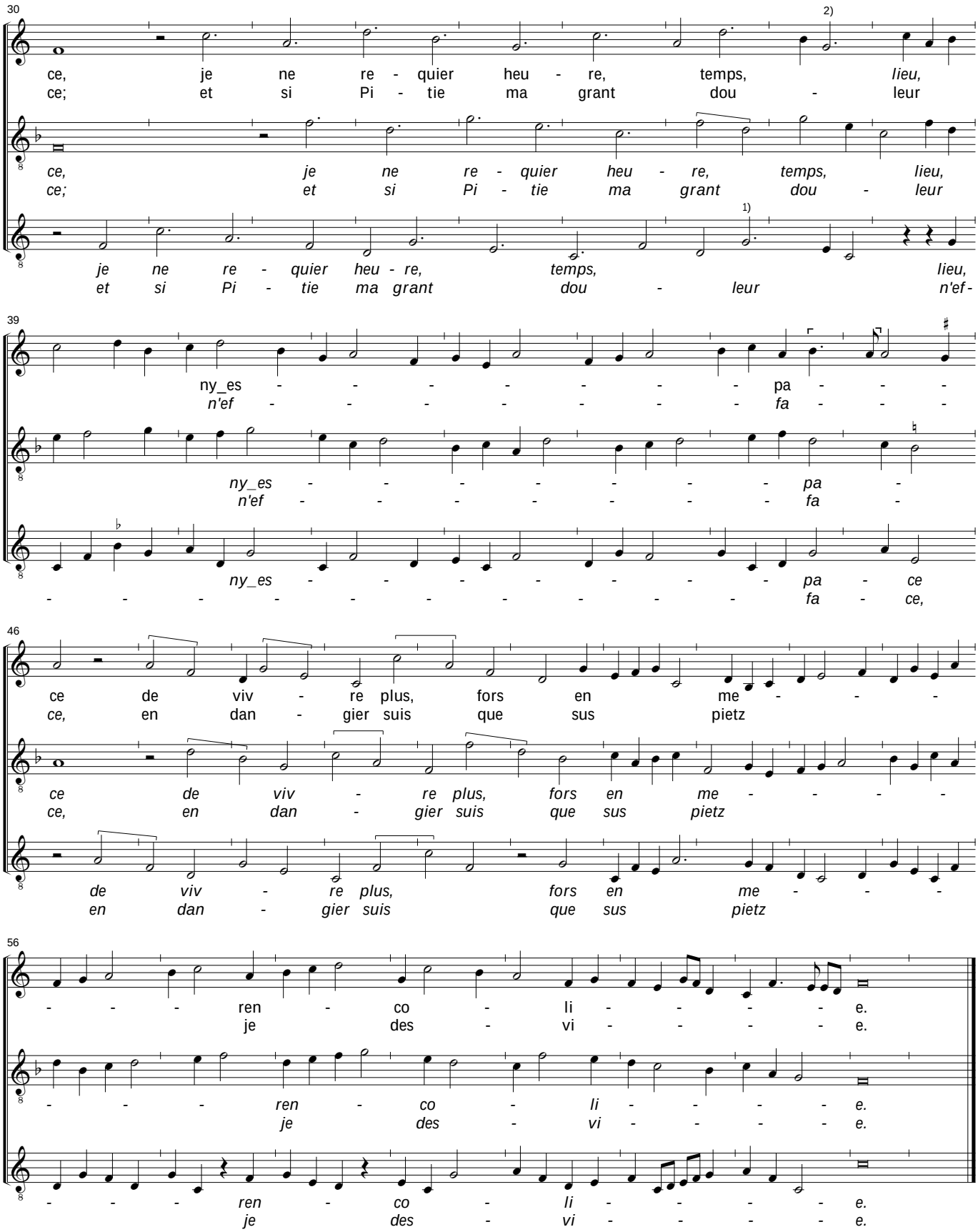
Washington D.C., Library of Congress, MS M2.1 L25 Case, ff. 12^{v}-13



1) *Tenor*, the signature of one flat is written once only, at the start of the part. Probably the copyist intended it as an indication of the default choice.

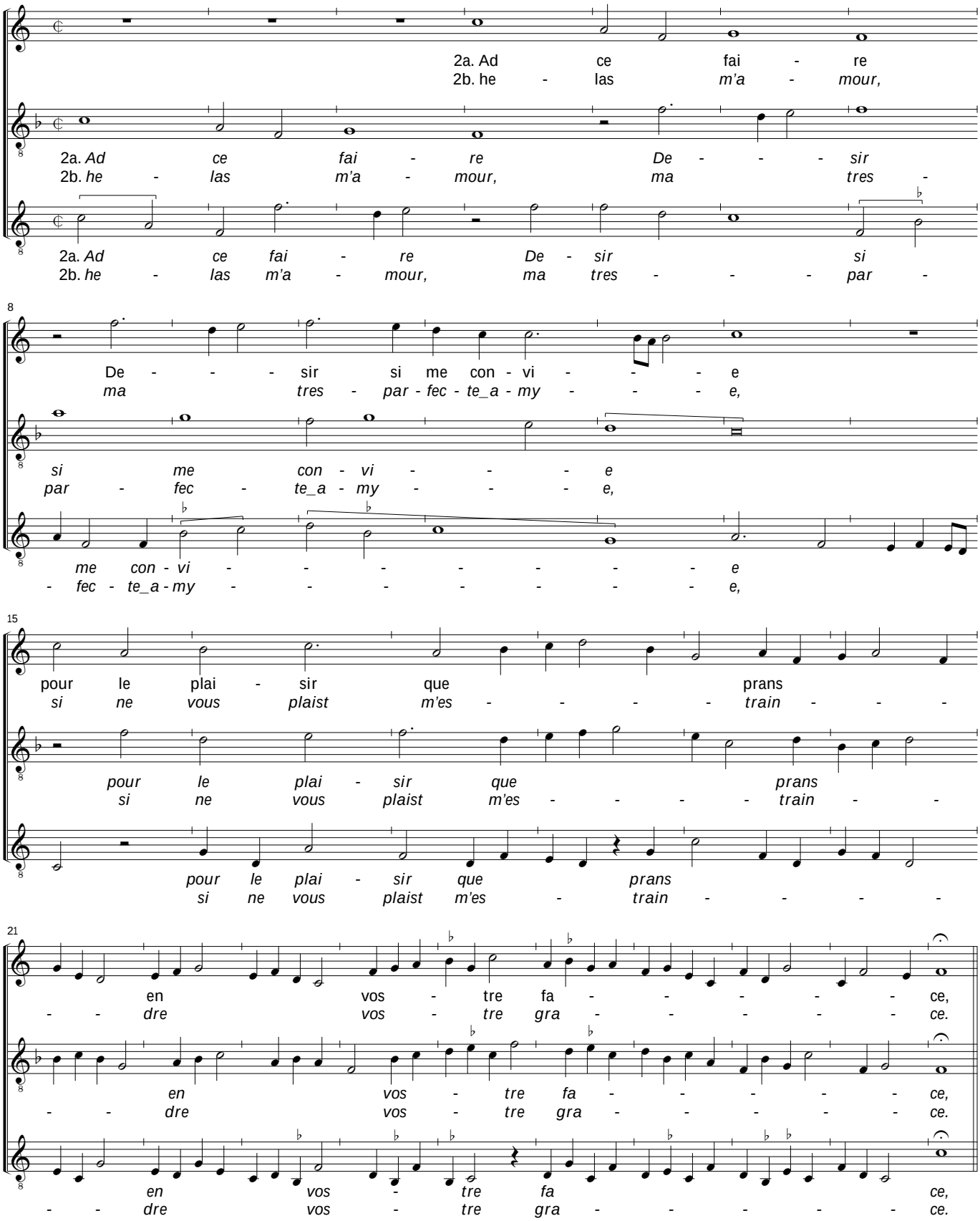
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1) *Contra*, bar 36.2, the *semibrevis* is missing the *punctus* (error).
2) *Superius*, bar 37.2, the *semibrevis* is missing the *punctus* (error).

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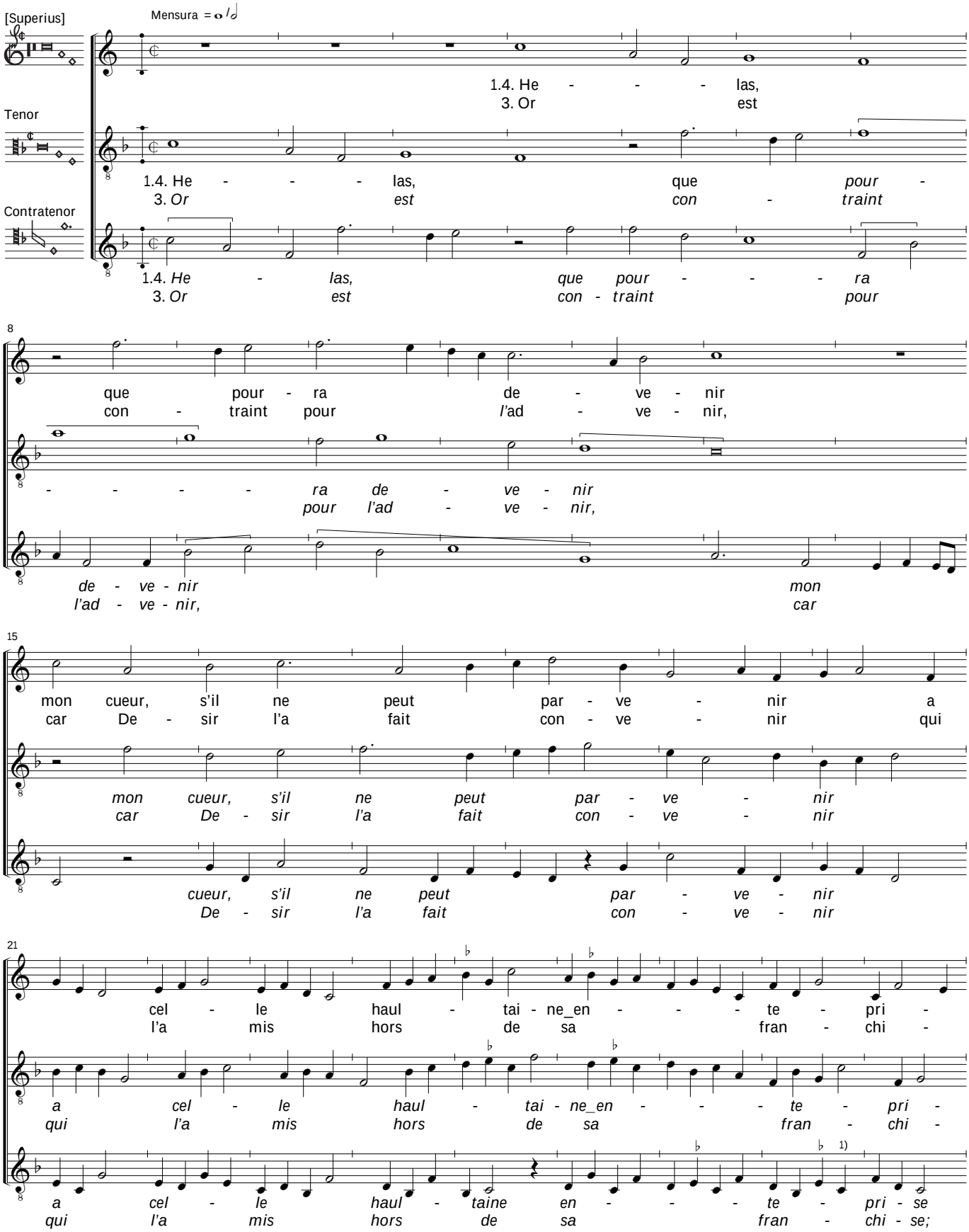


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Dijon no. 69

Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 517, ff. 81v-82

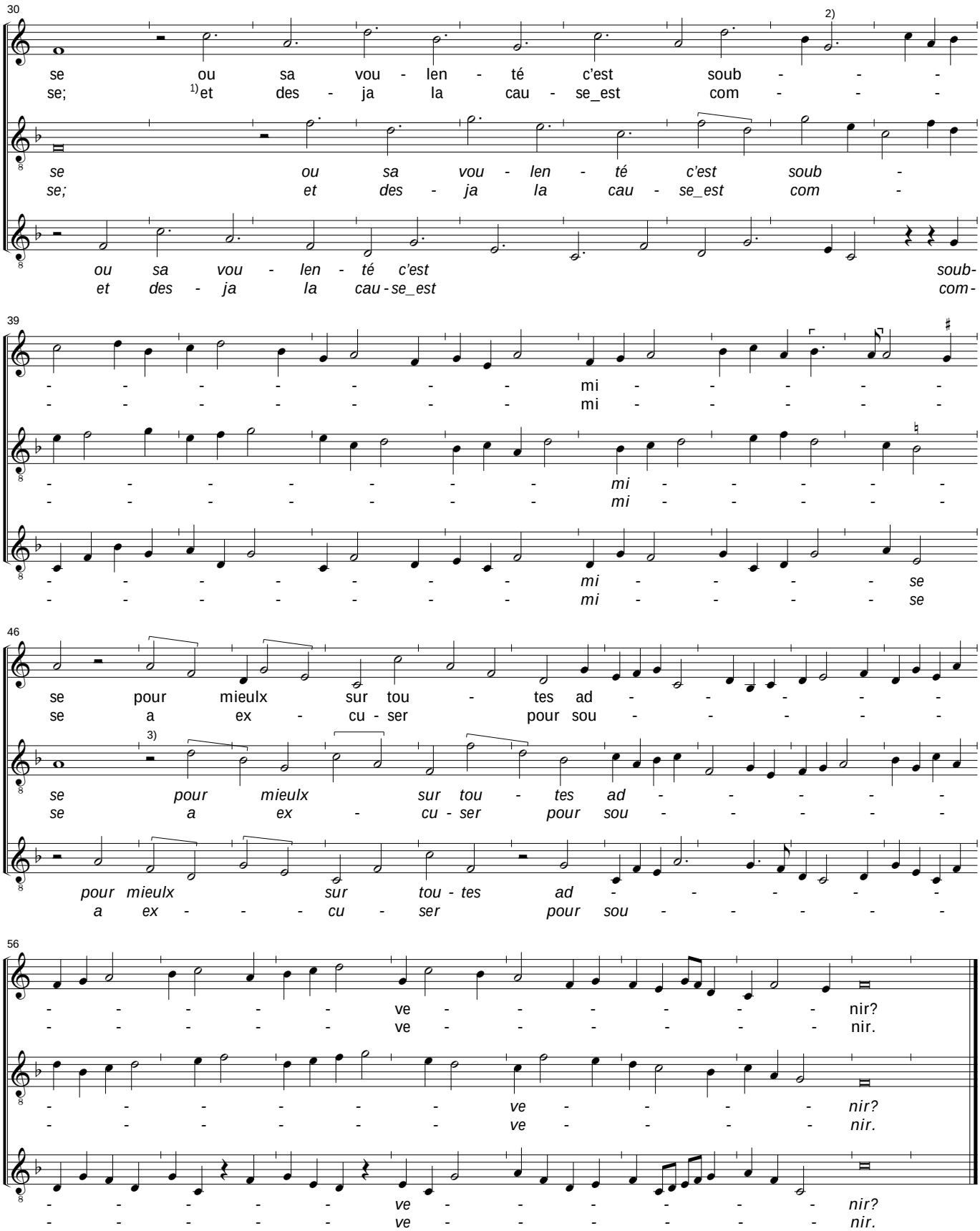
Caron, *Helas que pourra devenir*



1) *Contratenor*, bar 28.2, the last note is *d* (error).

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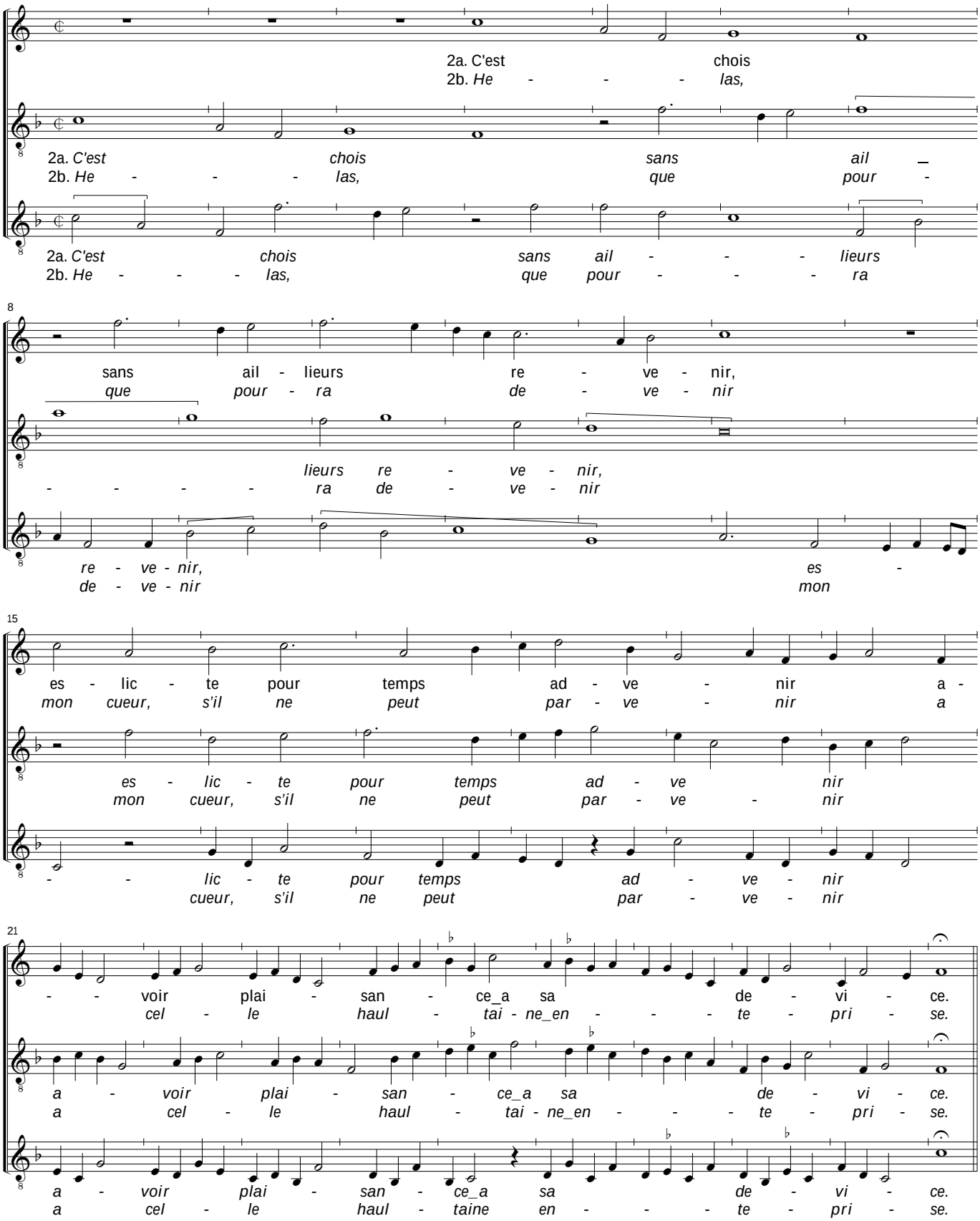


1) *Superius, text 3*, bars 31.2 ff, "est a la cause c'est soubmise" (error); corrected in accordance with Wolfenbüttel and MS Berlin 78.B.17.

2) *Superius,* bar 37.2, the *semibrevis* is missing the *punctus* (error).

3) *Tenor,* bar 47.1 is missing (error).

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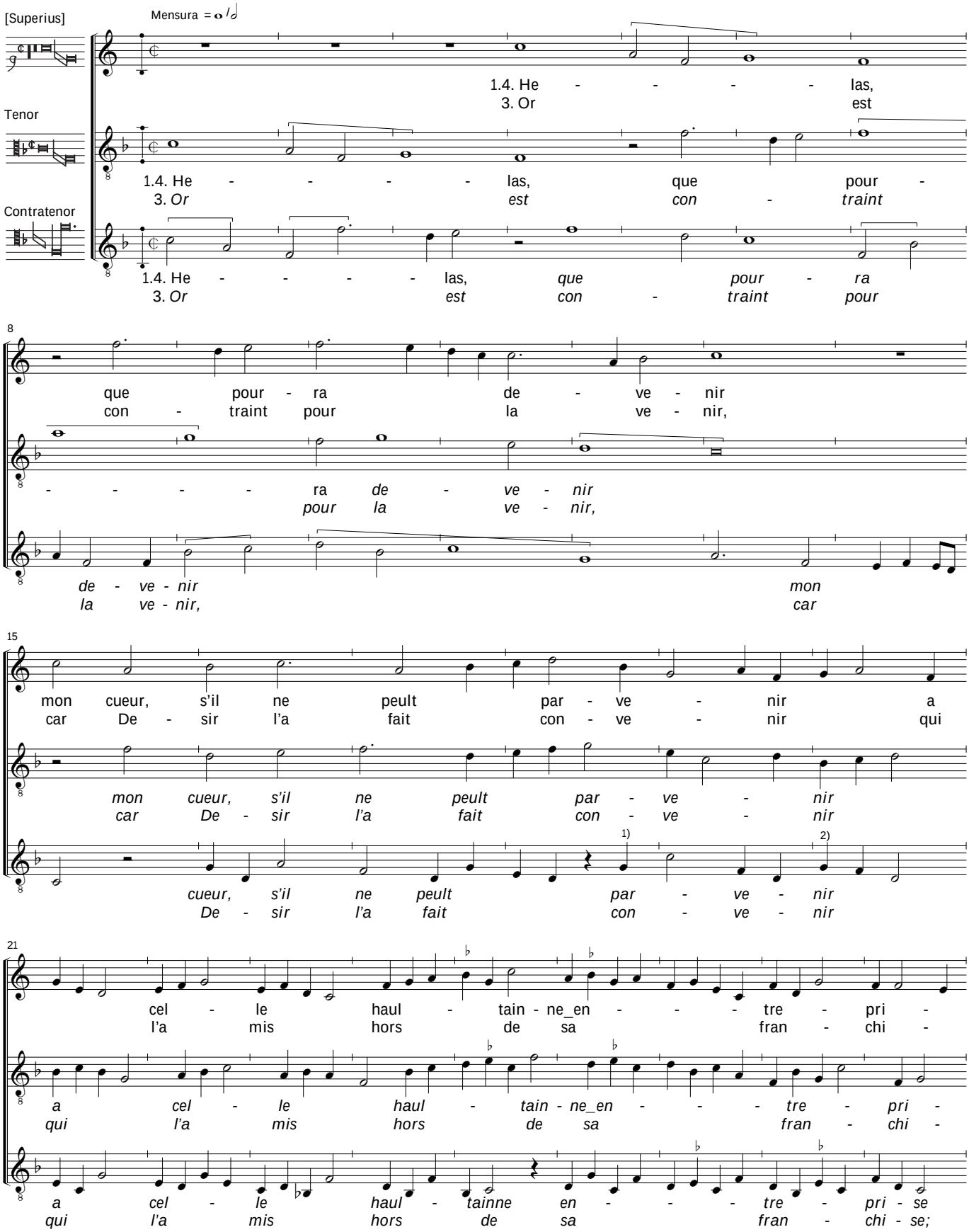


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Leuven no. 39

Helas que pourra devenir [Caron]

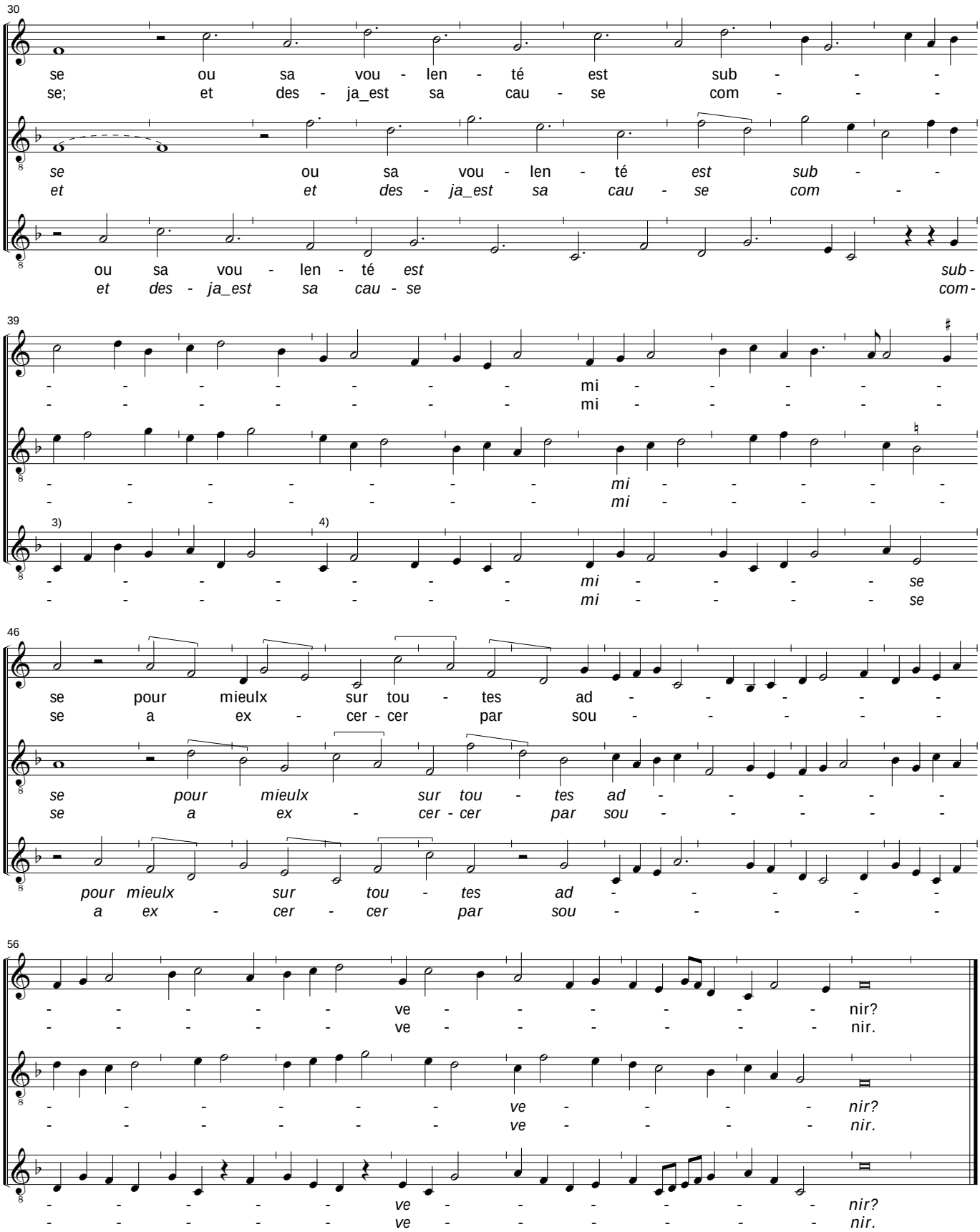
Leuven, Alamire Foundation, Manuscript without shelf number, ff. 61v-63



1) *Contratenor*, bar 18.2, *a* (error).
2) *Contratenor*, bar 20.1, *a-f* (error).

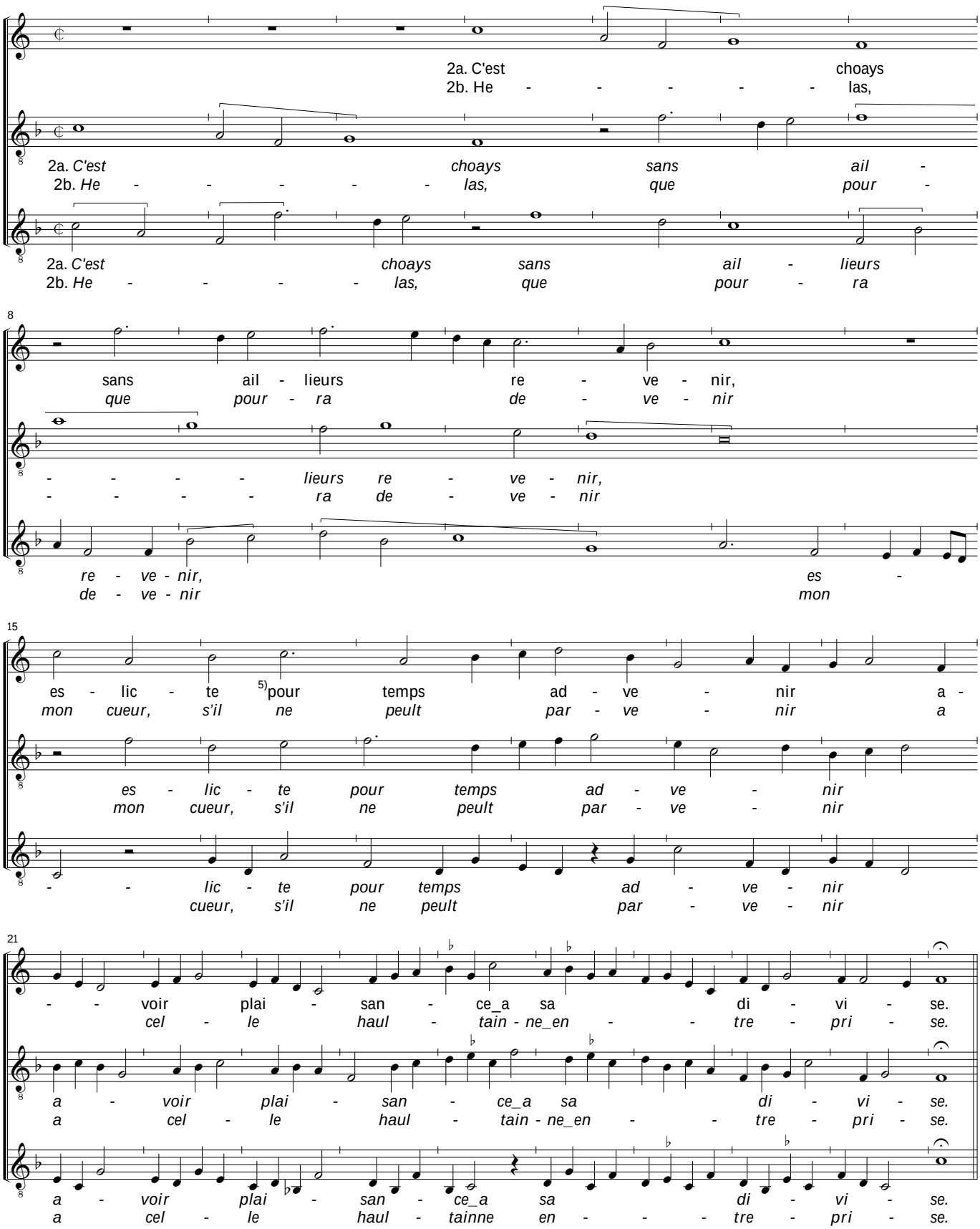
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3) *Contratenor*, bar 39.1, *d-f* (error).
4) *Contratenor*, bar 41.1, *d-f* (error).

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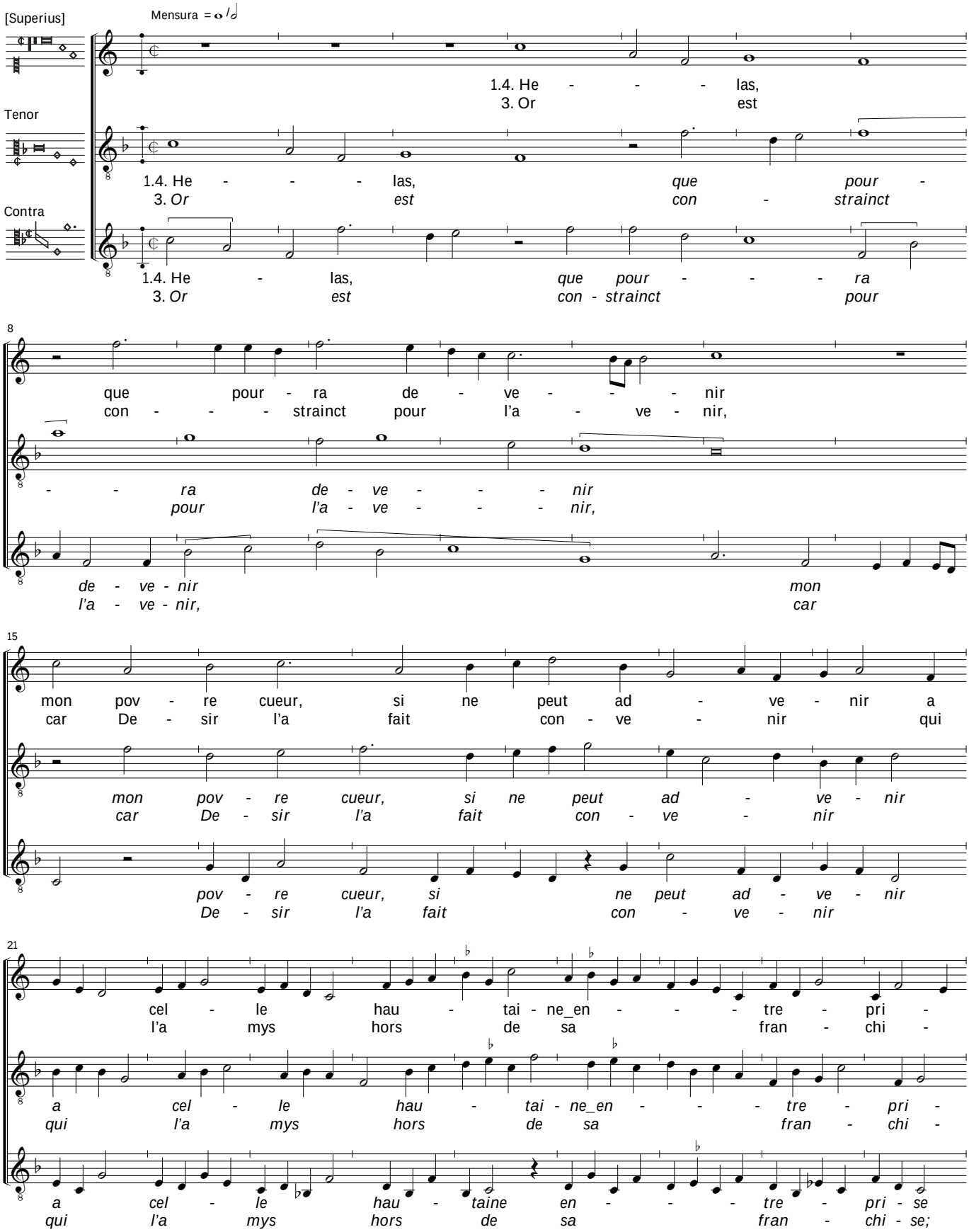
5) *Superius, text 2a*, bars 15.2 ff, “pour tout temps”.

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Wolfenbûttel no. 40

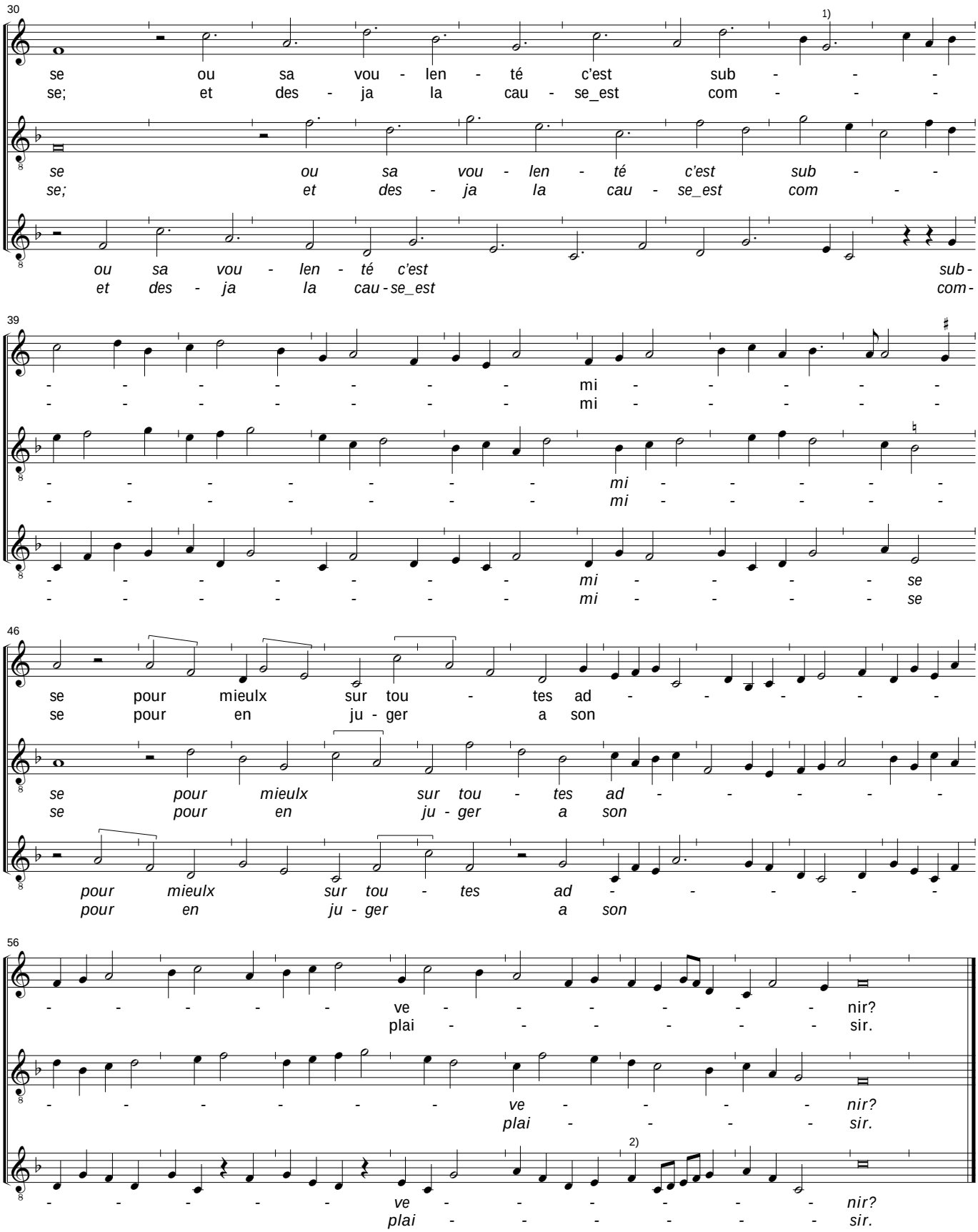
Helas que pourra devenir [Caron]

Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codex Guelf. 287 Extravag., ff. 49v-50



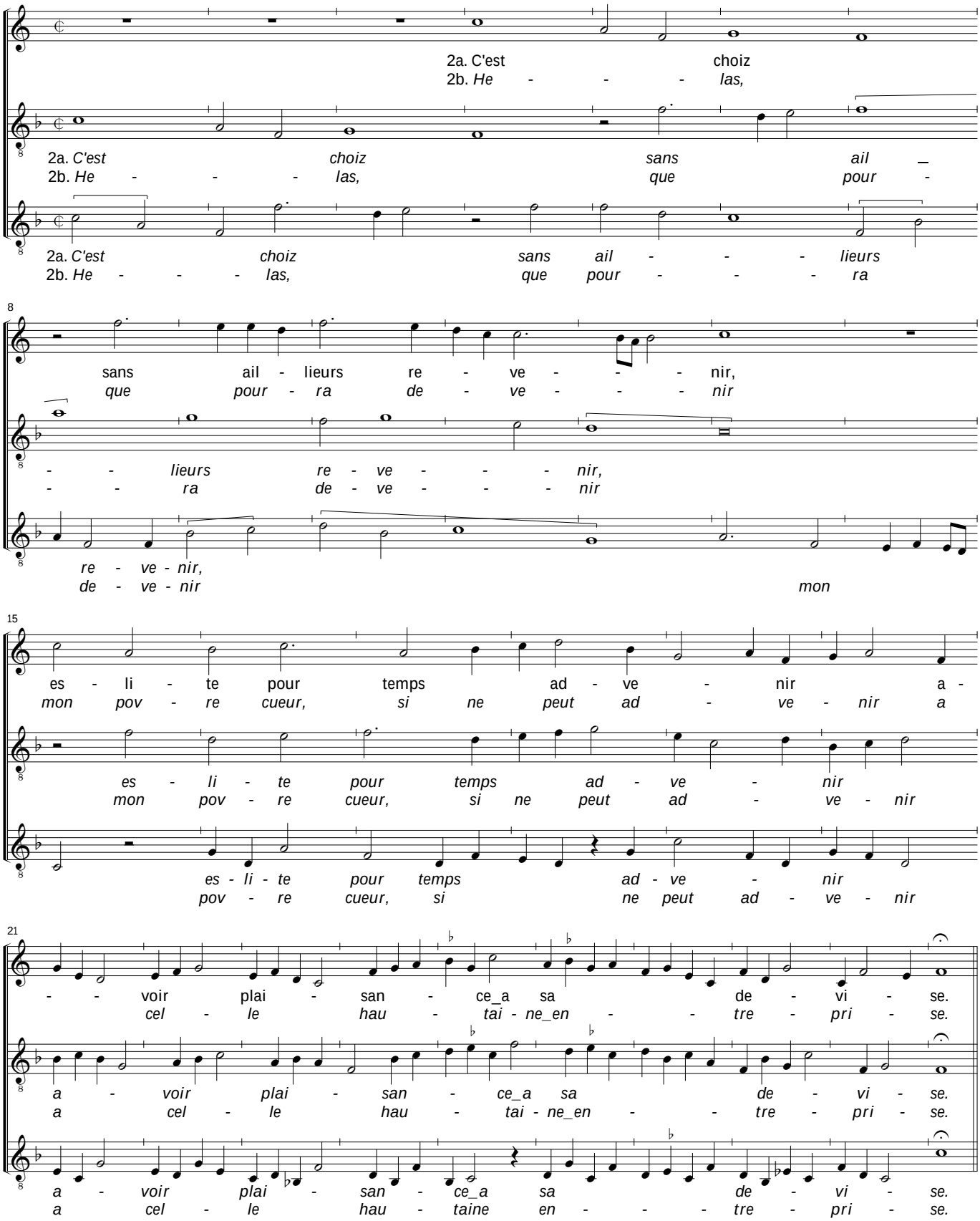
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1) *Superius,* bar 37.2, the *semibrevis* is missing the *punctus* (error).
2) *Contra*, bar 61.1, the first note is a *semibrevis* (error).

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