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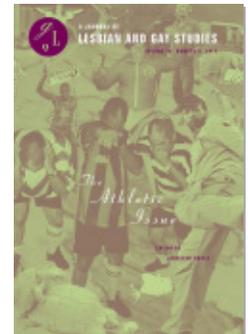
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## Listening to the Sirens: Music As Queer Ethical Practice

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# LISTENING TO THE SIRENS

## Music As Queer Ethical Practice

Judith A. Peraino

The history of Western music is, among other things, a history of sexual anxiety, ambivalence, and negotiation. This article examines four moments in this musical-sexual history, each no less than eight hundred years from the next: the Siren episode in the *Odyssey* (c. 700 B.C.E.), the writings of Augustine (composed 387–413), the music and writings of Hildegard of Bingen (composed 1150–75), and the performances of Marilyn Manson in 1996. I choose these moments for the sake of coherence; their resonances demonstrate how music transhistorically functions as a technique for conceiving, configuring, and representing queer subjectivity. In other words, music invites individuals to question subjectivity as it is composed according to the structure of “compulsory heterosexuality” in phallogentric, patriarchal culture.<sup>1</sup>

In exploring how music functions in this questioning process, I use the word *queer* as a sexually freighted synonym for *questioning*. The etymology of *queer* is uncertain. One source suggests its origin in the early English *cwer* [crooked, not straight].<sup>2</sup> Another possible origin is the Indo-European root *-twerkw*, which yielded the Latin *torquere* [to twist] and the German *quer* [transverse]. The word first appears, however, in early-sixteenth-century Scottish sources as an adjectival form of *query*, from the Latin *quaerere* [to question].<sup>3</sup> The question associated with *queer* clearly became one of sexuality and gender in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the word peppers such novels as Henry James’s *Turn of the Screw* (1898) and Radcliffe Hall’s *Well of Loneliness* (1928) and appears as a label for dissident sexuality in at least one sociological study from 1922.<sup>4</sup> In the early 1990s the word *queer* emerged as a term of resistance to the 1970s identity labels *gay* and *lesbian*; these identities were rooted to a large extent in gender separatism and in a naturalized hetero/homosexual binary.<sup>5</sup> “Queer,” according to David M. Halperin, describes a subject position “at odds with the normal, the

legitimate, the dominant . . . an identity without an essence.”<sup>6</sup> In Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s words, it is “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren’t made (or *can’t be* made) to signify monolithically.”<sup>7</sup>

Queer theory, then, questions given concepts of identity based on same-sex desire, expanding their scope to include intersections of gender and sexuality with race, class, ethnicity, and institutions such as family, religion, and nation-states. As a term of relation, *queer* describes neither a simple binary opposition to normative heterosexuality nor a position outside in dialectic with the status quo, but a threat—the sexual ignition of cultural phobias. These phobias, primarily about gender confusion and the displacement of the patriarchal heterosexual family, become anxieties about the integrity of the self, subjectivity, and social identity. Today individuals who live openly as gays and lesbians, or who live outside or between the male/female gender binary, constitute the main queer threat igniting such phobias and thus are themselves threatened with the greatest material and political consequences.<sup>8</sup> In past historical eras, formations of queer subjectivity condensed not so explicitly around sexual practices but around sexualized identities, such as being a “Saracen” or a “Lollard,” or around other sexualized practices, such as music.<sup>9</sup>

Music is notoriously resistant to legibility, let alone monolithic signification, and though cultural, feminist, and queer theorists in musicology have worked hard to reveal the signatures of subjectivity and ideology in musical sounds, it is this resistance to legibility that allows for the use of music as a strategy for configuring queer subjectivity. As a discursive practice, music is double-tongued, participating in both the normalizing and the *ab*normalizing of the subject, as Philip Brett’s groundbreaking article “Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet” describes.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, Suzanne Cusick, in another pioneering article, explores how music allows for a rethinking of sexual pleasure as nongenital and thus outside the phallic economy of power.<sup>11</sup> As these and other scholars show, music demarcates a space and time wherein gender and sexuality lose clear definition.<sup>12</sup> In my opinion, that is part of music’s enduring appeal and cultural work.

Dating back at least to the time of Homer, musical creatures, musical gods and demigods, musical humans, and music-addled or -inspired listeners have been lightning rods for ethical deliberation in much mythological and philosophical thinking, participating in what Michel Foucault calls the “genealogy of desire as an ethical problem.” Foucault sees this genealogy as a stimulus for ascetic practices, or “technologies of the self.”<sup>13</sup> Technologies of the self are the means by

which individuals perform operations on their bodies, thoughts, and behaviors “so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”; in other words, they transform our relationship to ourselves, but, importantly, ourselves in relation to in-place constitutions of truth and power.<sup>14</sup> They are fundamentally ascetic in that they entail “an exercise of the self on the self,” and they are fundamentally ethical in that they take into account positive or negative feedback accorded by the moral codes or acceptable ranges of conduct produced in the given matrix of truth and power.<sup>15</sup>

Over the last fifteen years ethics has emerged as a central topic in critical theory.<sup>16</sup> Foucault’s seemingly solipsistic conception of ethics stands in opposition to the philosophical writings of Emmanuel Levinas, who has enjoyed something of a renaissance in the recent “ethical turn.”<sup>17</sup> Levinas understands ethics as an unconditional and universal responsibility and receptivity to another person, and this social sensibility defines humanness, or, in his words, subjectivity: “The humanity of man, subjectivity, is a responsibility for others, an extreme vulnerability. . . . Prior to consciousness and choice, before creation is assembled into the present and into a representation and becomes an essence, man approached man. He is made of responsibilities.”<sup>18</sup> For Levinas, there is no independent or internal self prior to an apprehension of an other, no being before responsibility, no ontology before ethics.

In sum, Levinas speaks of universal truths of humanity, while Foucault argues for a rigorous historicization of all truths and of humanity itself.<sup>19</sup> Alexander Nehamas and James Miller have argued that Foucault’s historicism, his pursuit of the exclusionary practices attendant on all claims of universal truth and formations of the subject, and his later consideration of individual resistance to institutionalized domination similarly reflect his affiliation with disenfranchised groups such as homosexuals, the mentally ill, and left-wing political radicals.<sup>20</sup> Foucault’s and Levinas’s ideas intersect, however, in their projects to decenter the human subject and expose its contingencies: Foucault, through genealogies and archaeologies of knowledge and human self-definition, and Levinas, through positing subjectivity as an abnegation of the self to an other.<sup>21</sup> Foucault’s turn toward ethics in his late writings seems to recenter the autonomous human subject as the principal focus of intellectual and philosophical inquiry. Based loosely on ancient Greek thought, which Foucault explores in the second and third volumes of his *History of Sexuality*, his theory of ethics as a practice of the self notably encompasses aesthetics.<sup>22</sup> Foucault, Nehamas writes, “believed that the care of the self was not a process of discovering who one truly is but of inventing and improvising who one can be. Foucault’s model for the care of the self was the creation of art.” In

this way Foucault maintains his long-held view of subjectivity as fundamentally mutable, formulated by institutionalized domination, while newly recognizing the possibilities for individual resistance that arise from internal processes striving toward “the artistic creation of the self.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, the goal was aesthetic—life as a work of art—and the practice was ethics: life as a discipline of desire, including the desire to be complacent or acquiescent. Levinas, by contrast, remains suspicious of art, which he deems at worst a displacement of the ethical face-to-face moment by mere images and representations and at best a temporal realization of material essence (i.e., a composition for cello is about cello-ness), or an expression of Being that never engages the ethical, which he refers to as “otherwise than being.”<sup>24</sup>

Foucault’s integration of ethics and aesthetics, which describes the central issue of how an individual conducts her or his life under normalizing pressures exerted by social institutions and symbolic systems, holds promise for an account of how music participates in both forming and questioning subjectivity. In the four examples I present here, music instigates exactly those ethical questions of individual conduct and self-definition in or against in-place social and symbolic structures in the individual’s effort to *be otherwise*.

### The Queer Song of the Sirens

The *Odyssey*, one of the earliest documents of Western civilization, transmits an archetypal story of music, sexual seduction, and questioning in the Siren episode from book 12. Sirens are sea creatures who sing so beautifully that those who hear them become entranced, hopelessly and irrationally drawn not only to the sound but ultimately to their deaths on the rocky shore.<sup>25</sup> Odysseus and his crew, making a long and much-interrupted journey home to Ithaca from the Trojan War, are forewarned of the Sirens by the sorceress Kirke, who instructs Odysseus how he alone might listen to their song while avoiding its threat to his reunion with wife and child:

The Sirens you will come to first, who charm [*thelgousin*] all men—anyone who comes to them. Anyone who approaches in ignorance and hears the Sirens’ voice, for him his wife and infant children do not stand at his side or take delight in him on his return home: no, the Sirens charm [*thelgousin*] him with their clear-sounding [*ligurêi*] song [*aidêi*] as they sit in their meadow with a huge pile of bones round them from decaying men whose skins wither round them. Press on past them, and smear your comrades’ ears with honey-sweet wax [*meliêdea*] after kneading it, so that none of the

others hears them. Hear them yourself if you want: let them [the crew] tie you up hand and foot in the fast ship, upright in the mast-socket, and let ropes [*peirat*] be fastened [on you] from [the mast] itself, so that you can hear and enjoy [*terpomenos*] the voice of the Siren pair. If you beg your comrades, and order them to release you, they are to tie you up then with even more bonds [*desmoisi*]. (12.39–54)<sup>26</sup>

The *Odyssey* is filled with significant names and wordplay. The name of Kirke, who held Odysseus and his men captive for a year, stems from *kirkos*, a bird of prey, such as a hawk or falcon, whose name also connotes a limit, as in the related English word *circle*.<sup>27</sup> So, too, the Greek name of the Sirens, *Seirênes*, may derive from *seirê*, meaning “rope” or “cord,” though the word for “rope” in this episode is consistently *peirat*, derived from *peirar*, meaning “end,” “limit,” or “boundary.” Thus the Siren story is filled with a variety of words (*seirênes*, *peirat*, *desmoisi*) alluding to or describing bondage and containment.<sup>28</sup> Yet these words are paired with other words that connote sexual pleasure and magical enchantment. The verb *terpô* describes pleasure and enjoyment associated with listening to bardic song as well as with sexual activity. Even the meadow from which the Sirens sing has erotic associations in Greek poetry, as does the word *thelgousin*, (from the verb *thelgô*, meaning “to touch with magic power”) which Kirke uses in her description of the beguiling effects of the Sirens’ song and which also describes the effects of Kirke’s potions.<sup>29</sup>

The *Odyssey* also includes three other renditions of this scene of bondage. In the first of them Odysseus passes the message on to his crew, turning Kirke’s flirtatious suggestion into a compelling proposition:

It was the sound of the divinely-inspired Sirens and their flowery meadow that she instructed us to avoid. She instructed me alone to listen to their voice: but tie me in harsh bonds so that I stay fast where I am, upright in the mast-socket, and let ropes be fastened from [the mast] itself. If I beg you and order you to release me, you are then to load me down with more bonds. (12.158–64)

The second is Odysseus’s own:

They bound me in the ship, hands and feet together, upright in the mast-socket, and fastened ropes from [the mast] itself. Sitting down themselves they struck the grey sea with their oars. When we were as far away as a man’s voice carries when he shouts, lightly pursuing [our course], the

swiftly-bounding ship did not go unnoticed by them as it sped close, and they furnished their clear-sounding song [*ligurên aoidên*]. (12.178–83)

In the third *Odysseus* requires more lashes to hold him to the mast:

So they spoke, projecting their fair voices, and my heart wanted to listen. I ordered my comrades to release me, frowning at them with my eyebrows, but they fell to and rowed on. At once Perimedes and Eurylochos got up and tied me with more bonds [*desmoisi*] and weighed me down more. (12.192–97)

Pietro Pucci observes that throughout the *Odyssey* Odysseus suffers from “a sort of self-destructive nostalgia” for his past warrior identity, which he must shed to return to domestic life.<sup>30</sup> The Sirens sing of Odysseus’s famed heroism in the Trojan War, as recounted in the *Iliad*, reproducing the diction and rhetoric of that epic and claiming the power to bestow knowledge and pleasure [*terpsamenos*], like the epic Muses:

Come hither, Odysseus of many stories, great glory of the Achaeans. Stop your ship, listen to our voices. Never has any man passed by in his black [*melainêi*] ship without hearing the honey-sweet [*meligêrun*] voice from our lips [*stomatôn*], but he has taken his pleasure [*terpsamenos*] and has gone on with greater wisdom. For we know all the pains Argives and Trojans suffered in the wide land of Troy because of the gods’ will, and we know whatever happens on the bountiful earth. (12.184–91)<sup>31</sup>

The Sirens dress forgetfulness in the guise of past and future knowledge, enticing Odysseus to wallow in nostalgia for adventure, which threatens his spiritual odyssey. Such pining for the past appears elsewhere in the *Odyssey*, when the minstrel Demodokos, at the request of an unrecognized Odysseus, sings of the hero’s conquering of Troy. Odysseus becomes an engrossed listener of his own story, to the point that he empathizes with his victims, for Homer describes him weeping like a woman grieving for her husband killed in war (8.523).<sup>32</sup> Odysseus’s song-sparked lamentation occurs after the Siren episode in the chronology of events, but prior to it in the circuitous narrative of the epic, for he narrates the Siren episode in his own recital of his wanderings since the *Iliad*. Thus the Sirens’ song is both the first and the last singing of Iliadic stories in the *Odyssey*, and this epic-scale temporal knot is tightened in the entwining of past and future in the song.

The lure and deceit of the Sirens point a finger at all “tellers of tales,”

Odysseus and Homer included, and implicates the audience in its own desires to suspend time with bardic songs. Odysseus, himself a cunning storyteller, perhaps listens to the Sirens as an apprentice or thief,<sup>33</sup> his apparently victorious emergence representing a self-reflexive moment celebrating the skill of enthralling listeners through words and music. Unlike Achilles in the *Iliad*, however, Odysseus does not sing, and his “triumph” over the Sirens is also a milestone in the story of his resocialization into the domestic sphere, a step forward in the reconciliation of the individual and his social and domestic responsibilities. Though his enchantment betrays a “readiness to leave the wandering of the *Odyssey* in favor of the splendid toils of the *Iliad*,”<sup>34</sup> Homer forces Odysseus to stay on course, binding him to the mast of the ship and hence to the agenda of the present poem.

But what of that tightly trussed body? The metanarratives of heroic transcendence or authorial self-reflection do not account for the attention paid to the scene of the hero’s bondage and his utter failure of mind in the presence of this music.<sup>35</sup> The *Odyssey*’s listeners sail past the meadow of the Sirens without stress or restraint, knowing only that they have not really heard the Sirens’ song. The euphony of *melainêi* [black] and *meligêrun* [honey-sweet] recalls the honey-sweet wax [*meliêdea*] that protects the crew of the ship from the Sirens’ song, that *melos* [melody] implied in all three words but never actually described except for the phrase *ligurên aoidên* [clear-sounding or shrill song].<sup>36</sup> It is this clear and penetrating melody, issuing paradoxically from the viscous voices of the Sirens, that enchants Odysseus, while the audience’s ears remain forever protected by temporal distance, just as the crew’s are by the filter of *meliêdea*.

The Sirens’ song is fundamentally a song of seduction that nets the audience and Odysseus in rumor, for Kirke’s foretelling of the aural encounter describes the song’s enchanting, paralyzing effect. In the *Odyssey* sexually assertive women, such as Kalypso and Kirke, threaten Odysseus’s physical and spiritual return home; the Sirens’ seduction has the same sexual tone, even though its expression is purely aural.<sup>37</sup> Kirke, who enters the narrative singing and weaving (10.210–23), initiates the Sirens’ song through the power of suggestion, inviting Odysseus to continue his experience of her undomesticated eroticism and her song (of weaving) as it is extended in the Sirens. Odysseus’s cunning here is not his own; rather, by subjecting himself to the Sirens’ peculiarly disembodied sexual attraction, he seems to serve Kirke’s purpose—perhaps even her continued pleasure.

To the masculine-gendered rational mind, sexually assertive women can represent the irrational, the corporeal, the emotional—and can represent them as threats. But not to Odysseus: hearing the song, he is taken by it, body, mind, and soul. The drama of this narrative is his desire to experience aural eros, and his

mental and physical strain against his bonds. For the Homeric audience, *erôs* signified an acute desire akin to hunger and thirst stimulated principally by visual beauty.<sup>38</sup> The *erôs* provoked by the Sirens is thus something quite unusual: Odysseus's desire stems solely from hearing, specifically from hearing a song about himself. The audience then envisions his *erôs*—his musical autoeroticism—through the descriptions of his bondage, which strikingly depicts Odysseus as a tortured slave rather than a heroic leader. Page duBois argues that the ancient Greek practice of torturing slaves reflected and reinforced “the dominant notion . . . that truth was an inaccessible, buried secret.” Torture guaranteed the emergence of truth from a body that by nature could not access the truth through reason (as could a free citizen). DuBois also notes that in the *Odyssey* quests for truth are frequently associated with female-gendered images of interiority, such as Odysseus's journey to the underworld (a space deep in the female-gendered Earth), where he gains important knowledge from his dead mother. DuBois argues that women's and slaves' bodies were analogous, signifying spaces of containment and potentiality for the revelation of truth.<sup>39</sup> In this sense, it might be said that Odysseus becomes both slave and woman, forced by bondage on an inward torturous search for the truth that his body encases—a truth that is, paradoxically, not sustainable. The ropes that bind him mark the meeting of two seemingly opposed forces, the psychosexual reach of the Sirens' song and the psychosocial magnet of homeland and family.

The Sirens' song exposes the porous nature of mind, body, and humanly determined boundaries, calling into question the desire to remain bound by them. Odysseus knows beforehand the schismatic dangers of listening: they include the rupture of social order, as when a crew must tie the captain to the mast and not heed his orders; the contamination of identity, as when Odysseus's motives are indistinguishable from Kirke's; and the threat of regression in his own awareness, when the boundary between knowing and forgetting collapses in listening to the Sirens' song. Odysseus knows all this; he knows also that the Sirens have no knowledge of any value to offer a listener doomed ahead of time to death on the rocks.

The Siren episode, I propose, is not a story of genius, craftiness, transcendence, or authorial self-reflection, but one of controlled transgression and indulgence in sexualized self-curiosity. It is about the desire to become “otherwise,” to question and to be questionable, to risk self-obliteration in music in order to become queer to oneself.

Indeed, it would be a special kind of curiosity that drove a man to take such risks. In the second volume of his *History of Sexuality* Foucault links curiosity to existential and ontological concerns. He describes his own swerve off the

original course of his investigation presented in the first volume as motivated by “the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself. . . . the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks . . . is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.”<sup>40</sup> If we apply this notion of curiosity—a search “to get free of oneself”—to the Siren episode, then Odysseus achieves this getting free by subjugating his will to Kirke’s design and to the bonds that discipline his desire.<sup>41</sup> In this case, bondage allows, or even constitutes, freedom, and that is only one of the paradoxical aspects of the Siren episode, particularly when considered together with subsequent events in the *Odyssey*.

Odysseus’s conduct, even though antiheroic, in the end distinguishes him from the status quo of the crew members (who cannot hear the song), as well as from those who have perished in hearing it. It is also paradoxical that his successful transit past the Sirens is followed by a string of disastrous encounters that eventually wipe out his crew and lead to his sexual enslavement by the nymph Kalypso. Odysseus is bound again, this time in an unnatural union of human and divine, until Zeus himself intercedes.

In light of these latter events, the Siren episode seems an odd triumph: a relatively harmless encounter with queer sexual desire. It is harmless because it is solitary, policeable, musical. It is not, however, without effect, for it infuses Odysseus with a surge of desire to continue listening, and this desire energizes him to struggle against his bonds, those of crew as well as of family. As readers, we follow the gradual release of that energy until it drives him to Kalypso. And ultimately Odysseus, the only one to hear the Sirens’ song, is the only one left to be heard, and to be heard about; he alone survives in song. We can note that a woman told him how.

### **Augustine and the Questionable Self**

The Sirens emerge anew with the first administrators of the burgeoning Christian religion, who struggled to define their religious practices and rituals against those of various pagan and Jewish cults. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) turned the Odyssean episode into Christian allegory in which the Sirens’ song represented the lure of pagan myths, distracting the hearts and minds of people from God; the mast represented the Christ to which the pious should bind themselves.<sup>42</sup>

While the early Christian church made use of idealized ascetic practices rooted in radical pagan sects, such as the Manichaeans,<sup>43</sup> pagan rituals of all kinds

were treated as idolatrous and lascivious foils by the church fathers. Their writings about musical practice concern the control of music primarily through a condemnation of, and injunction against, musical instruments and dance such as might be associated with Apollonian or Dionysian rituals.<sup>44</sup> Christian writers found in the Scriptures, by contrast, accounts in which music's power to affect the soul is harnessed in the service of good. In particular, David, putative author of the Psalms, is said to be able to change the heart and mind of a king with his singing (like his pagan parallel Orpheus). Similarly, the singing of psalms served as the foundation of early Christian worship. Saint Ambrose (c. 339–97) considered the unison performance of psalms the “agent of silence” and the great equalizer that united all of God's creation: “For all speak (together) [*omnes loquuntur*], and none make noise. Kings sing the psalms with no pride of power. David himself rejoiced to be seen in this service. The psalm is sung by emperors; it is jubilated [*jubilatur*] by the people. . . . Even the stones [*saxa*] respond.”<sup>45</sup>

Early Christian musical practices idealized a unity of sound and voice—many bodies coming together as if one voice, producing one sound, and becoming one body (the church). This is the doctrine of singing *una voce* that distinguished Christian musical practice from that of the pagans. The ideal of singing the praises of God with one voice stems from the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego, the three Jewish officials who refuse the imperial order “that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up” (Dan. 3.5).<sup>46</sup> As punishment, the three men are thrown into a “fiery furnace” but miraculously survive. The Latin Vulgate Bible of Saint Jerome (c. 347–420), translated from Greek and Hebrew texts, preserves an extended description of how the three men glorify God amid the flames and contains the relevant phrase “*tunc hii tres quasi ex uno ore laudabant et glorificabant et benedicabant Deo in fornace dicentes . . .*” [then these three as if from one voice [or mouth] were praising, glorifying, and blessing God in the furnace, saying . . .] (Dan. 3.51).<sup>47</sup> The striking contrast between the description of many instruments calling one to worship the golden idol and the univocal praise of God by the pious Jews gave the early Christian church a powerful model in its struggle for cultic definition and distinction. For Clement of Alexandria, “The union of many, which the divine harmony has called forth out of a medley of sounds and divisions, becomes one symphony [*symphonia*], following the one leader of the choir and teacher, the Word.” Here the Word functions as a conductor who unites diverse voices in miraculous monophony.<sup>48</sup>

Yet even Christian chant—the sonically united body of the Christian faith-

ful—had its complications, for sounding music always represented the potential temptation of the flesh; it threatened the degradation of the greater sum into its weaker parts. Singing, in other words, might induce individualism through private pleasure or public exhibitionism. Perhaps the most eloquent and passionate account of this double bind appears in the *Confessions* of Augustine (written between 397 and 401), in which he recounts his tortuous path to conversion and his subsequent moral interrogation of all sensual stimuli, including those of his own fantasy. Near the moment of his conversion, which he equates with the moment he renounces sex, Augustine imagines his many sexual partners calling to him, “plucking at [his] garment of flesh.” But “the austere beauty of Continence” counsels him to “stop your ears against your unclean members, that they may be mortified. They tell you of delights, but not of such as the law of the Lord your God tells.” The Kirke and Siren reference is close to the surface here. Augustine, like Odysseus, feels an erotic pull from his past life that necessitates a passionate questioning of himself. “This was the controversy raging in my heart,” he writes, “a controversy about myself against myself” (8.11).<sup>49</sup>

For Augustine, the performing and listening experience of all music requires surveillance and prompts an incessant questioning of motive. While the mind wants to go toward the spirit and away from the flesh, the body is subject to unwanted desires, clearly signaled for Augustine by the involuntary erection. The problem of the involuntary erection haunts much of Augustine’s writings, yielding a phallogocentric discourse of asceticism and morality that ironically makes sexuality central to the formation of subjectivity.

In *The City of God* (c. 413), Augustine presents his influential interpretation of the fall of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3) as caused by the corruption of the human will by pride. As punishment, God bound man’s spirit to the flesh, which “by its disobedience [testifies] against the disobedience of man.” After eating the fruit forbidden them, Adam and Eve suddenly know “their members warring against their will . . . a shameless novelty which made nakedness indecent” (14.17).<sup>50</sup> The involuntary erection is not the original sin but the original punishment. Furthermore, it is reproduced in every generation and in all forms of wanted and unwanted physical arousal. Only through rigorous self-examination and the renunciation of all sexual practices and sensual appetites can one achieve purity of intention and continence.<sup>51</sup> This belief created a new interior terrain for the practice of piety; as Foucault observes, the spiritual struggle now consisted primarily of “turning our eyes continuously downward or inward in order to decipher, among the movements of the soul, which ones come from the libido.”<sup>52</sup> Fredric Jameson similarly argues

that from this “space of a new inwardness,” predicated on “the new entity called sexuality,” emerged another new concept: the self, which linked sexuality and truth by way of subjectivity and asceticism.<sup>53</sup>

In the *Confessions* music provides a mode of examining that “space of a new inwardness” where sexuality and piety paradoxically compete with and complement each other in the formation of individual identity. Augustine describes how in the initial days after his baptism the hymns and canticles made him weep for joy: “[I] was powerfully moved at the sweet sound of Your Church’s singing. Those sounds flowed into my ears, and the truth streamed into my heart: so that my feeling of devotion overflowed, and the tears ran from my eyes, and I was happy in them” (9.6). He then explains that “it was only a little while before that the church of Milan had begun to practice this kind of consolation and exhortation [*genus hoc consolationis et exhortationis*], to the great joy of the brethren singing together with heart and voice [*fratrum concinentium vocibus et cordibus*]. . . . the custom has been retained from that day to this, and has been imitated by many, indeed in almost all congregations throughout the world” (9.7). Augustine’s rhetoric—“*genus hoc consolationis et exhortationis*” and the “*fratrum concinentium*”—points to the ideal of singing *una voce* as a pious practice both for himself and for the expanding collective body of the church.

Later in life Augustine worries about the sensual pleasures of such practices. In an often-cited passage from the *Confessions*, we encounter another allusion to the Sirens in his rich description of being entangled [*implicaverant*] and yoked or subjugated [*subjugaverant*] by song:

The pleasures of the ear did indeed entangle and yoke me more tenaciously, but You have set me free. Now when I hear those sounds [*sonis*], in which Your words breathe life, sung with sweet and skillful [*artificiosa*] voice, I do, I admit, find a certain satisfaction in them, yet not such as to hold me fast [*haeream*], for I can depart when I will. . . . I observe that all the varying emotions of my spirit have modes proper to them in voice and song, whereby, by some secret affinity, they are made more alive. It is not good that the mind should be enervated by this bodily pleasure. But it often deceives me [*fallit*] . . . [and] having been admitted to aid the reason, strives to run before and take the lead.

Then Augustine ponders and rejects the radical elimination of music both for his own benefit and for that of the church:

Yet there are times when through too great a fear of this temptation, I err in the direction of overseverity—even to the point sometimes of wishing that the melody of all the sweet songs with which David’s Psalter is commonly sung should be banished not only from my own ears, but the Church’s as well. . . . Yet when I remember the tears I shed, moved by the songs of the Church in the early days of my new faith: and again when I see that I am moved not by the singing but by the things that are sung—when they are sung with a clear voice and most accordant [unified, orderly] rhythm [*cum liquida voce et convenientissima modulatione cantantur*—I recognize once more the usefulness of this practice. Thus I fluctuate between the peril of indulgence and the profit I have found. (10.33)<sup>54</sup>

This passage also seems to depend on the notion that sounding music potentially creates a split between mind and body such that music’s sensual gratification leads the mind astray from the words that engage it in piety. Bruce W. Holsinger argues that this passage from the *Confessions* betrays Augustine’s “inconsistency” and even “disingenuousness” when placed side by side with passages from his commentaries on the Psalms that seem to celebrate wordless music, or “jubilation,” as a more direct means than verbal utterances for communing with God.<sup>55</sup> Yet the passage contains one remarkably specific description of musical performance—“*cum liquida voce et convenientissima modulatione cantantur*”—that I believe is key. Many translations of this passage interpret *convenientissima* generically, to mean “appropriate,” “suitable,” or “proper”;<sup>56</sup> however, the more apt meaning of the adjective *conveniens* is “agreeing” or “accordant” (from the verb *convenire* [to come together, to unite]). Similarly, *modulatione* has been translated generically as “melody” or “music,” but it bears a connotation of rhythm, of the rhythmic aspect of performance rather than of melody—and Augustine’s early treatise on rhythm, *De musica*, uses it in this way.<sup>57</sup> Thus we can read the passage as describing a performance that has the superlative quality of “coming together,” of being unified. This description, together with the qualifying phrase *liquida voce* (*liquida*, when applied to the voice, has the connotation of “clarity”), suggests the singing *una voce* of the schola or congregation. *Confessions* 10.33 is not inconsistent with Augustine’s idealizations of rustic wordless *jubilatio*, for *jubilatio* describes a purity of motivation and intention in performance more than a purity of musical sound, and the *una voce* performance of sacred words works to keep pure the intentions of listeners as well as performers.

Augustine’s peace of mind, then, can be attained only through a joining of the individual to the collective that ensures a pious reception of the music. At the

heart of his concern, I believe, is not so much a split between mind and body as the splitting off of the individual body from the body of the church through the distraction of self-gratification, expressed most strongly in concupiscence but also, to a lesser extent, in the indulgence of other organs, such as the ear, eyes, and mouth. Furthermore, for Augustine, the human use of words to contemplate and preach about God was “the precise analogue” of God’s salvational “Word made flesh.”<sup>58</sup> In the *Confessions* he writes, “Clearly You are calling us to the realization of that Word—God with You, God as You are God—which is uttered eternally and by which all things are uttered eternally” (11.7). Congregational singing of psalms and hymns *quasi una voce* may, even so, open the doors for divisive mischief. Augustine, remarkably, ends his interrogation of aural pleasure in the *Confessions* with an anguished cry over his indecision regarding the pros and cons of hearing sacred songs. Here we can also note his appeal to a community of faithful: “Weep with me and weep for me, all you who feel within yourselves that goodness from which good actions come. Those of you who have no such feeling will not be moved by what I am saying. But do Thou, O Lord my God, hear me and look upon me and see me and pity me and heal me, Thou in whose eyes I have become a question to myself; and that is my infirmity” (10.33).<sup>59</sup> As in the *Odyssey*, sounding music instigates a questioning of the self and a partitioning off of the individual from the social. From this incessant questioning is born a subjectivity that walks a fine line between ascetic and excessive self-practice, between a moral goodness and an infirmity of the soul.

In the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault traces three historical technologies of the self, each of which calls for a different calculus of intellectual and physical, relational and solitary, ascetic practices for the constitution of an ethical subject according to socially valued objectives. These technologies can be summarized as the Platonic “care of the self” for political ends, the Stoic “administration of the self” for aesthetic ends, and the Augustinian “hermeneutics of the self” for juridical ends.<sup>60</sup> Foucault explains that the “care of the self” characterized a finite period of learning for young men, especially those with political aspirations but gaps in their education. Pedagogy was an occasion for sexual involvement between teacher and student; thus the young subject was not only a subordinate but essentially a receptacle, both intellectually and physically. The “care of the self,” however, marked the transition from youth to adulthood, from subordination to domination, when the youth might also resist sexual advances as a display of self-mastery. The Stoic era shifted the telos of the earlier technology from politics to personal aesthetics, an art of life, of self-fashioning. One did not simply take care of the gaps; rather, one constantly practiced a type of self-creation. As the *Confessions* bear witness, Augustine inherited from the Stoic

philosophers a confidence in the powers of human reason and will, after proper education and training, to make correct judgments between good and evil and to order our desires accordingly. Marcia L. Colish has investigated how Augustine mitigated Stoic rationalism with Christianized Neoplatonic transcendentalism in the notion that man's apprehension and practice of virtue depends on his relationship to God, from whom spring all goodness and virtue. For Augustine, applying judgment to the interior terrain of the self ultimately helped one know and love God better and created a sustained contact with God through a united practice of mind and body.<sup>61</sup>

Though musical worship served as a technology of the self that united mind and body and directed both toward God, Augustine considered it a crutch that could isolate the individual from the community of the faithful. For Hildegard of Bingen, as we shall see, musical worship was not simply a means to an end but the end itself—not only the practice of unity but the practice of an impossible subjectivity. Technologies of the self are really available only to individuals who have sovereignty over themselves, namely, adult free males—not slaves, not youths, not women—but not being a citizen within the truth-power-ethics matrix does not necessarily give one freedom from its laws. So applying this concept to Hildegard and her nuns will have its gaps. But gaps are precisely the issue.

### **The Singing Self**

Much is known about the life of Hildegard of Bingen from her many extant letters and writings and from a biography written in the thirteenth century by two monks. She was born to noble parents and in early childhood experienced visions and was clairvoyant. At the age of eight she was committed by her parents to the Benedictine monastery at Disibodenberg, where she learned Latin and read both the Scriptures and the writings of the church fathers, including Augustine. In 1136, at the age of thirty-eight, she was elected *magistra* of the convent associated with the monastery, and five years later she began to record her visions, auditions, and revelations after receiving a divine commission. Hildegard wrote on a wide array of subjects and left a substantial body of work: six major works, including creative, scientific, and contemplative writings; six minor works, such as biblical commentaries and saints' lives; and seventy-seven musical compositions. She also wrote letters to many important religious figures in Europe and went on preaching tours. In 1147 her mystical gifts were endorsed by the pope. Taking advantage of her growing fame as healer and oracle, and resisting the tide of monastic reform, Hildegard and her nuns broke away from the monastery and formed their own convent at Rupertsberg.<sup>62</sup>

Many scholars have commented on the unusual primacy of music in Hildegard's theological and devotional writings. Some regard her music and poetry, her distinctive melodies and image-rich gynocentric lyrics, as renegade and homoerotic.<sup>63</sup> While Hildegard was certainly exceptional, her work can be understood as a remarkable creative response to cultural circumstances that place music, sexuality, and women in an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship to constructions of moral behavior.

On the one hand, Augustinian inwardness resulted in a more democratic understanding of piety and faith (chastity, after all, can be practiced by any class or gender); on the other hand, the corollaries of sexuality and subjectivity placed women in extreme positions within Christian theology. Even though Augustine was most concerned with Adam's involuntary erection as the transmitted infraction against God, it was Eve, the instigator of the Fall, who metonymically represented rampant sexuality and the corrupting body. The impossibility of visually locating women's involuntary arousal found correction in the generalization of woman *as* sexuality, and her projection onto all sources of sensory pleasures, such that music, poetry, visual arts, and even food became gendered as feminine.<sup>64</sup> Yet the figure of the Virgin Mary—the ultimate symbol of sanctified inwardness—not only redeemed (virgin) women from the curse of Eve but placed them beyond the physical, in the realm of the pure idea.

In the Middle Ages the requisite chastity of body and mind extended to both subject and object positions. R. Howard Bloch notes that “in the patristic totalizing scheme of desire, there can be no difference between the state of desiring and of being desired”: to look at, to speak of, to think about a virgin was to defile her.<sup>65</sup> In this sense, a true virgin must remain a signifier without a signified, an ideal, absolute virginity without an empirical referent. The Virgin, then, also connotes that internal, subjective space born of self-examination in light of sexuality. Indeed, how do we express the inexpressible, or show what cannot be revealed, except through its seeming opposite, recognizing, in effect, the contamination of terms in a binary opposition? Thus sexuality points to virginity just as virginity points to sexuality; man [*vir*] is always present in the term for his absence.

Hildegard's music and poetry frequently articulate this peculiar situation of virginity as sexuality by envisioning the Virgin Mary's womb as materially as well as spiritually potent. In *O quam preciosa*, a responsory for the Blessed Virgin, Hildegard dwells on impregnation and birth, particularly the paradox of initially bypassing but ultimately passing through the female genitalia.

Verse 1 (solo):

O quam preciosa est virginitas virginis huius,  
 que clausam portam habet:  
 et cuius viscera sancta divinitas calore suo infudit:  
 ita quod flos in ea crevit.

Respond (chorus):

Et Filius Dei per secreta ipsius quasi aurora exivit.

Verse 2 (solo):

Unde dulce germen, quod Filius ipsius est,  
 per clausuram ventris eius paradisum aperuit.

Respond (chorus):

Et Filius Dei per secreta ipsius quasi aurora exivit.

Oh how precious is the virginity of this virgin  
 who has a closed gate  
 and whose womb Holy Divinity suffused with his warmth  
 so that a flower grew in her.

And the Son of God through her secret passage came forth like the dawn.

Hence the tender shoot which is her Son  
 opened paradise through the enclosure of her womb.

And the Son of God through her secret passage came forth like the dawn.<sup>66</sup>

The poem describes the birth of Christ in terms of the Virgin's own erotic experiences: the initial potentiality of her vaginal state (the "closed gate"); the divine impregnation ("suffused with his warmth"); the expansion of her womb and the engorging of her genitals ("a flower grew in her"); the opening of her vagina and the orgasmic salvational ejaculation ("the Son of God through her secret passage came forth like the dawn"); and, finally, an ongoing pleasure in a type of reverse penetration from the inside out: Christ, "the tender shoot," emerges from the Virgin's womb to penetrate the world and open paradise. Holsinger interprets this poem in terms of its architectural metaphors: "O quam preciosa' allows the nuns of Rupertsberg to participate in Christ's own passage through the Virgin's 'secret' anatomy as they travel through the monastery."<sup>67</sup> Such a reading, I believe, misaligns the nuns' identification with Christ rather than with the Virgin. One can, of course, read the poem in its patriarchal context: the reference to the masculine

divine(s) assures that God the Father and Christ the Son are ultimately responsible for virginal/vaginal ecstasy and worldly salvation. However, the actions of Father and Son seem contingent on Mary's virginity. It is the preciousness of her vagina—her closed gate, her secret passage—that opens paradise. Hildegard seems to link through juxtaposition the womb's sequestered space with images of expansiveness and growth (flowers, shoots, dawn).

In a number of writings Hildegard uses a second imagery, that of music and musical instruments, to convey the sexual potency of Mary's womb. One striking example places the description in the mouth of Mary herself: "O most beloved Son, to whom I gave birth in the womb by the force of the revolving wheel of the holy Godhead which created me and formed all my members and set up in my womb every kind of musical instrument in all the flowers of the modes."<sup>68</sup> The Virgin's womb thus provides the space in which music and sexuality are equated: to be a virgin is to be in a heightened state at once sexual and musical; one term points toward the other.

Many scholars have noted that Hildegard's chants are distinctive for their extravagant style: frequent dramatic leaps, long melismas, ranges that often span more than two octaves. Holsinger, for example, argues that her use of "wind" as a metaphor for female sexual arousal finds its musical analogue in her wide melodic ranges.<sup>69</sup> A few musicologists counterbalance such emphasis on Hildegard's idiosyncrasy by placing her choice of chant genres and melodic style into their musical and liturgical contexts.<sup>70</sup> Chants for the Mass were fixed long before the twelfth century, but the antiphons and responsories for the Divine Office—the weekly cycle of daily psalm recitations practiced by all monastic communities—were frequently customized or newly written to fit the needs of a particular community. Hildegard, predictably, wrote mostly for the Divine Office in the grand, expansive style characteristic of the eleventh-century responsories and antiphons, especially the Marian Antiphons, which she occasionally used as models.<sup>71</sup> Responsories like *O quam preciosa*, sung at matins, functioned as moments of communal musical meditation after a reading from the Scriptures, a saint's biography, or patristic literature.

For Hildegard, these musical moments signified the pinnacle of devotion, when the Holy Spirit inhabits the body and exposes the divine to the faithful. In accord with Augustine's Christianized Stoic ethics, and against the mysticism of her contemporary Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegard believed that humans had the rational capacity to know God, and she emphasized "the importance of correct living" rather than of "grace conferred through the sacraments."<sup>72</sup> But for Hildegard, this knowledge was achieved fundamentally through a musical practice of piety:

And so the words symbolize the body, and the jubilant music indicates the spirit; and the celestial harmony shows the Divinity. . . . And as the power of God is everywhere and encompasses all things . . . so, too, the human intellect has great power to resound in living voices, and arouse sluggish souls to vigilance by the song.

. . . And you also, O human, with your poor and frail little nature, can hear in the song the ardor of virginal modesty embraced by the blossoming branch; and the acuity of the living lights, which shine in the heavenly city; and the profound utterances of the apostles . . . and the procession of virgins, blooming in the verdancy of Heaven.<sup>73</sup>

Thus music arouses the soul for the purpose of knowing (through hearing) various mysteries of faith (significantly, virgins begin and end this list), and music is also incarnational, giving a “living voice” to the Holy Spirit. We have seen in *O quam preciosa* that the Virgin Mary experienced a suffusion of “warmth / so that a flower grew in her.” The feast of the Annunciation, based on Luke 1.26–38, celebrates the impregnation of Mary by the Holy Spirit. Medieval art depicts this event as simultaneous with the hail of the angel Gabriel: “Ave [Maria] gratia plena Dominus tecum” [Hail you [Mary] who are full of grace, the Lord is with you] (Luke 1.28). The Holy Spirit is typically represented as rays of heavenly light shining on Mary and/or as a dove hovering over her head or singing into her ear.<sup>74</sup> The latter motif doubles Gabriel’s already potent vocality.

Writing about the Annunciation, Hildegard describes how “the power of the Most High overshadowed her [Mary], for he so caressed her in his warmth that . . . he utterly cleansed her from all the heat of sin.”<sup>75</sup> Hildegard directly relates warmth to sexual arousal in women: “For if she [woman] did not have the fluid of fertility with heat, she would remain fruitless like dry ground. . . . this fluid of fertility is not always inflamed into the ardor of desire in a woman, unless she has previously been touched by a man and so knows the passion of the ardor of desire; for desire in her is not as strong and burning as in a man” (*Scivias*, 2.3.22). Barbara Newman notes that for Hildegard, the heat of the Annunciation paradoxically cools and purifies the sin of the Virgin’s own conception: “There is an unlike likeness between the fallen intercourse, with its ardor and moisture, and virginal union with the Spirit.”<sup>76</sup> But just as important as the infusion of the Holy Spirit’s cooling warmth is Mary’s own utterance: “Ecce ancilla Domini mihi secundum verbum tuum” [Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to thy word] (Luke 1.38). One German depiction of the Annunciation from c. 1290 shows the verbal exchange of Gabriel and Mary in scrolls; Gabriel’s

words fall to the ground, while Mary's float above her as if to represent their holiness. Only a dove intrudes on them, singing to her inclined head.<sup>77</sup> Hildegard compares Mary's response to Gabriel with the creational utterances of God in Genesis: "Through the Word all creatures . . . came into being; and the same Word was incarnate of the Virgin Mary as in the twinkling of an eye, when she said with humility, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord.'" <sup>78</sup>

Thus, according to Hildegard, music arouses the ardor of the soul and incarnates the Holy Spirit, just as masculine "heat" provides the warmth that arouses women's desire in the service of reproduction. So, too, the Holy Spirit filled the Virgin Mary with warmth through her ear with the Word, and Mary responded with her own words, thus begetting Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate. The nuns through their singing become themselves like the Virgin Mary, suffused with the warmth of the Holy Spirit that comes to them through music, and they respond in kind, participating in an incarnational sonic loop, from voice to ear to voice. Though the Incarnation through Mary corrected the sins of Eve, singing was for Hildegard's nuns as much self-incarnation as *imitatio Mariae*.<sup>79</sup> For one "hears in the song the ardor of virginal modesty embraced by the blossoming branch . . . and the procession of virgins, blooming in the verdancy of Heaven."

The choral respond of *O quam preciosa* (fig. 1) offered one embracing musical "blossoming branch" that allowed Hildegard's "procession of virgins" to perform and experience the incarnational "ardor of virginal modesty." Hardly a modest melody, this chant comprises elaborate musical phrases that are not without precedent in the repertory but that Hildegard applied frequently and effectively in the musical language of the twelfth century.<sup>80</sup> This language was characterized by tight control of the final note over the organization of the other pitches—a goal-oriented melodic style that contrasted with the meandering, esoteric style of older chants.

The first half of this respond, from *Et* to *aurora*, lays out the vertical pitch space, exploring the tenth a-c<sup>2</sup> that surrounds the d<sup>1</sup> final. Technically, this distribution of notes, with the final embedded in the middle of the range, places the chant in mode 2; however, the melody shares more melodic gestures with mode 1,<sup>81</sup> so in effect Hildegard pulls the low branch of the mode 1 pitch space farther downward, repeating and decorating the low a with greater frequency as the respond progresses. While in the first half the text is set in a modest style in which each word is given a group of notes, the second half consists of a single syllable, *ex- of exivit*, extended over many notes (called a melisma). For this, Hildegard organizes the melody into two parts: after a midpoint cadence on the final (see the end of the second line of music), the melodic phrase that opened the respond, setting

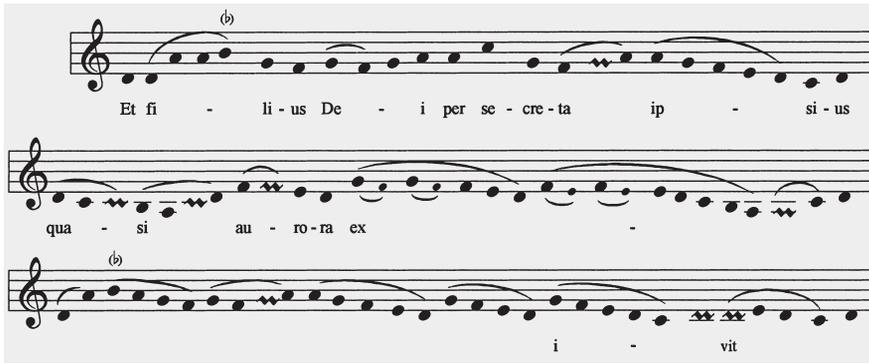


Figure 1. Hildegard of Bingen, choral respond from *O quam preciosa*

the words “Et Filius Dei,” returns in decorated form to complete the melisma. This serves as a melodic reference point that sets up the rest of the melisma as a type of regeneration. Just before the change of syllables that will complete the action of the text (“[he] came forth”), Hildegard seems to thematize musically the vertical downward expansion, as nearly every note group falls dramatically.<sup>82</sup> The setting of the word ends with a remarkable series of three runs, incremental branchings of a stepwise descending figure: first the top note moves, then the bottom note, ending in a final flourish or “dawn” of a doubly ornamented and encircled final.

Hildegard’s melisma over *exivit* is not only a musical meditation on the dawnlike emergence of Christ from the enclosed and secreted Virgin womb but a manifestation of this process in space and time through a slow “birthing” and flowering of the final. The nuns, themselves in a state of ornate enclosure, singing in unison, musically aroused to spiritual ardor, perform through chant their impossible but sanctioned sexuality.

We can well imagine that the homosocial communal performance of these chants, which described, celebrated, and enacted a type of exclusive female sexuality, released erotic energy among the participants.<sup>83</sup> Was their experience homoerotic, or autoerotic? Both erotic potentials were available, but I believe that these categories are inadequate for describing the complex sexual and self-reflexive religious fervor unique to these virgin nuns and inflamed by music. Music, as formulated by Hildegard, was not just a diffuse sexual practice of virginity (the “ardor of virginal modesty”); it was, more importantly, an ethical ontology—a technology of the self that produced through ardor virginal *modesty*. It was through Mary’s performance of virginal modesty, signaled by her utterance “Behold the handmaid of the Lord,” that she participated in the Incarnation. Although virginity—however sexualized—was a female subject position authorized by patriarchal discourse,

Hildegard's music and musical theology gave her nuns a means of verbal and material negotiation within the abstracting tendencies of that discourse.<sup>84</sup> With Mary's utterance, in addition to Christ's birth, as the model act, Hildegard's songs provided a solution to the ontological crisis of her nuns' impossible, gaping identity. For Hildegard and her monastic charges, singing cooled and disciplined virginal ardor as it substantiated virginal modesty, filling their ears and their wombs and transforming them from aesthetic signifiers to ethical subjects.

### Queer Musical Ethics of the Emasculated

Hildegard once argued that Satan is the spirit of discord and that he runs from the celestial harmony echoed in music.<sup>85</sup> But what happens when Satan forms a rock band and goes on tour? I am going to make another leap now, of roughly eight hundred years, from Hildegard of Bingen to Marilyn Manson. Though such a maneuver may seem more disjunct than vaulting the eight hundred years between Augustine and Hildegard, I will argue that Marilyn Manson embodies all the themes discussed thus far: the seduction of the Sirens, the antiheroics of Odysseus, the extreme asceticism of Augustine, and the self-incarnation of Hildegard.

In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus's queer musical individuation seems to unleash violent antisocial energy, which suggests an ultimately riotous effect of musical-sexual curiosity. Similarly, Manson's music and performances are frequently said to inspire violent antisocial behavior among adolescents, most seriously the high school shootings in Springfield, Oregon (May 1998), and Littleton, Colorado (April 1999). Such connections have been challenged, however; some reports claim that none of these shooters were Manson fans.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, the persistent finger-pointing, notably in the U.S. Senate hearing *Music Violence: How Does It Affect Our Children?* betrays a fearful reaction to Manson's extreme challenge to mainstream social mores.<sup>87</sup> An in-depth discussion of the complex relationship between inflammatory popular music and antisocial behavior is beyond the scope of this article. Admitting music's affective power, and not dismissing the possibility of its motivational power, my project is to deepen recent discussions of music and ethics by examining the queer attraction of Manson as a technology of the self that yields a powerful and yet *emasculated* ethical subject.<sup>88</sup>

Manson is the rock 'n' roll alter ego of Brian Warner, a self-proclaimed bullied "geek from Ohio," who concatenated the names of Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson for his stage name. "Marilyn Manson" affects a provocative and critical gesture toward the media that turns figures of violence as well as beauty into pop icons. Indeed, Manson claims a general critical agenda for his music and

pop persona: to examine and challenge status quo American values, to champion individuality and imagination, and to get people to take responsibility for their actions.<sup>89</sup> However, he delivers this message of responsibility in anti-everything lyrics and “death metal” music. This combines self-consciously dreary gothic rock, characterized by minor modes, thin vocal timbres, and bass-heavy textures, with power strumming, driving riffs, distortion, the gruesome visual theatrics of heavy metal (Alice Cooper, Kiss, Ozzy Osborne), and the audience taunting and self-mutilation of early punk (Iggy Pop, Sex Pistols). Manson entered the mainstream in 1995 with a cover of the 1980s synth-pop hit “Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This),” by the Eurythmics, but his real success and notoriety came with his 1996 concept album and stage show *Antichrist Superstar*. The latter is a satiric take on Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber’s rock theater show *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970). *Antichrist Superstar* also alludes to David Bowie’s *Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust* and Pink Floyd’s *Wall*, two semiautobiographical concept albums that trace the transformation of young men from regular humble mortals to mythic rock gods. In *Antichrist Superstar*, through a buildup of images rather than a clear narrative progression, we experience visions of the young Brian Warner, alias Wormboy, losing his innocence, gaining an exoskeleton, and then emerging as the Antichrist anti-rock superstar Marilyn Manson. As Manson, this figure is a harbinger of the apocalypse, but he also becomes, on a metatextual level, a superhero fighting against the fascism of popular culture and Christian fundamentalism. “The beautiful people, the beautiful people,” Manson screams. “It’s all relative to the size of your steeple.”<sup>90</sup>

The commemorative video of the *Antichrist Superstar* tour, called *Marilyn Manson: Dead to the World*, documents Christian groups picketing his concerts and fans emulating Manson in their pancake makeup, black lipstick, and self-lacerations.<sup>91</sup> The film also offers the “behind-the-scenes” Manson, solemnly talking about mild childhood traumas or raging like a diva about failed strobe lights (this after an instrument-demolishing final set). These scenes are saturated with self-mockery and irony, as well as nearly every kind of body fluid and effluvia. We see Manson or his band members urinate, vomit, defecate, spit at and be spit at by the audience, blow their nose and wipe it on the wall, cut themselves onstage, and drench themselves with blood and sweat. The missing liquid in this flood is semen: there is plenty of masturbation here, but the scenes of masturbation are all cheap and unsensual (but sensationalistic) sight gags, like a brief shot in which Manson rubs the Bible between his legs. One scene in particular makes a telling statement about the place of sexuality in Manson’s apocalyptic-satiric vision. A French prostitute sits naked on a bed making small talk with some band

members while one of them lies passed out in a chair. In sum, we experience an onslaught of bodies in a postphallic, postdesire, postsexuality state: ugly, porous, leaking, and numb.

Though Manson's bodies are sexually impotent, they are powerful aesthetic subjects. His performances, like Hildegard's chants, provide a meditation on an identity reconstituted from within the phallogentric discourse of sexuality. The performance of "Kinderfeld"—one of the most elaborately staged numbers in the show—portrays the moment of metamorphosis from Wormboy to demonic insect and presents the body transformed from the sexual to the aesthetic. Manson emerges from the shadows on metal stilts and elongated metal crutches, which appear to be organically connected to his unraveling mummified body; on his head he wears a form-fitting cap resembling an electric chair apparatus, with wires (or antennae) sprouting from the top. He is breathtaking, mesmerizing, lumbering slowly from one end of the stage to the other, an iron butterfly still shedding its former skin, waving its premature and handicapped wings.

The music for this song is a sonic portrait of menace, but one rich in sensual details. A heavy, slow bass groove supports a melody full of tritones and chromaticisms; phrases are punctuated by electronic buzzes and blips and humanoid laughing. Manson's voice sounds in an impressive number of guises here and throughout the recorded album: a near whisper that sporadically wanders into falsetto; electronically distorted low growls, on which screams are at times superimposed; timbres that morph from smooth beginning to raspy end. Indeed, there is a strange fragility to the identity of this voice, always mutating, never strongly defined in timbre or register. This fragility becomes thematized in one exquisite humorous detail in "Kinderfeld," when Manson plays a little flute (electronically distorted in the recorded version) during an instrumental break. The pathos of the misplaced idyllic instrument is almost campy, signaling lost innocence with its fractured, flimsy melody. But the flute is a complicated symbol: not only idyllic but phallic, and frequently an instrument of potent seduction in myths and legends. Manson has certainly proven his powers of seduction, attracting not only devoted fans but enraged Christian moralists and worried politicians, who inadvertently sail onto his rocky shores and serve as his best (publicity) agents of darkness. But Manson, the singing, piping Siren, becomes the antiheroic Odysseus, strapped to metal poles, bound in a corset, spitting into a sea of kids who gleefully spit back, both performer and audience enthralled by the sadomasochistic exchange.

Foucault believed that sadomasochism represented a practice of resistance to the hegemony of phallogentric sex and sex appeal, a "desexualizing of pleasure" and a dissociation of pleasure from desire. For Foucault, sadomasochism

potentially loosened the straightjacket of identities based on a fetishizing of genitals by fetishizing instead the performance and signifiers of power relations and nongenitally based erotic interactions.<sup>92</sup> As such, sadomasochism can be an ethical expression of freedom, an eroticization and performance of staged power relations, and a redistribution of bodily pleasure from the genitals to any location—even the ears. For just as Hildegard's chants allowed her virgin nuns to constitute themselves as aesthetic, sexual, and even penetrating subjects, Manson's music provides the phallic penetration that his body, so thoroughly and artistically broken down, cannot. With heavily distorted guitar and vocal timbres high in the mix, and frequently screamed choruses—songs bordering on industrial noise—Manson's music dominates its listeners, their bodies vibrating with excitation and distress.

Manson's performances provide a space in which to revel in the transgressive erotic pleasure of the emasculated body as an unlikely site of power and resistance. Like the Sirens, Manson calls to that ontological curiosity to get free of oneself—especially the self complacently bound up in oppressive configurations of masculinity, power, sexuality, and morality. For in Manson's musical universe, you are either the bullied victim, the fascist bully, or, as the allegory of Manson as Antichrist relates, the former turned into the latter. *Antichrist Superstar*, with all its rage and satire, poses a question to its audience: how will you become neither bullies nor victims but, rather, ethical subjects?

Ethical behavior demands that one work within a moral code, which Foucault describes as an ensemble of “values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches, and so forth . . . [forming] a complex interplay of elements that counterbalance and correct one another, and cancel each other out on certain points, thus providing for compromise and loopholes.”<sup>93</sup> One such self-canceling loophole is music, which on the one hand delimits a sphere of behavior exceeding the normative and the rational, while on the other hand it provides the means to police or sequester such nonnormative behavior, allowing for its incorporation into normative discourses. I have been arguing that music provides a technology of the self that allows one not just to “think differently” but to “think queerly,” such that identity becomes undermined and entirely new ways of being suddenly and abruptly come into view. Furthermore, the queer ethical subjects that emerge through musical self-practice potentially menace the subject authorized by institutions such as the home (in the case of Odysseus), the church (in the cases of Augustine and Hildegard), and the state (in the case of Manson).

The title of the 1997 U.S. Senate hearing, *Music Violence: How Does It Affect Our Children?* inadvertently constructs music as a productive agent in and of itself, for without intervening and nuancing prepositions (“violence *in* music”) or conjunctions (“violence *and* music”) or even adjectival forms (“*musical* violence,” “*violent* music”), “music violence” identifies a pernicious antisocial phenomenon, a contagion that spreads from performer to audience. Though the presiding senators take pains to explain that the hearing does not concern legislation, the very fact of a legislative body (or, rather, legislative bodies) defining a thing called “music violence”—and acting on it themselves—underlines the idea that music is potentially antagonistic to the state. As Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) explains:

We are not talking here about censorship, but about citizenship. You and I are not asking for any government action or bans. We are simply asking whether it is right for a company like Sony, for example, to make money by selling children records by the likes of Cannibal Corpse. . . . I hope the corporate leaders of the industry . . . [will] draw some lines they will not cross just to make more money, because on the other side of those lines is damage to our country and our children and ultimately to themselves. I hope particularly that Seagrams will start by disassociating itself from Marilyn Manson.<sup>94</sup>

Though Lieberman cites lyrics from songs by Cannibal Corpse that describe far more graphic misogynistic and violent images, such as “masturbating with a dead woman’s head,” Manson’s *Antichrist Superstar* serves as the primary exemplar of “music violence” and its challenge to citizenship—particularly and ironically the citizenship of corporations like Sony and Seagrams—but no less the citizenship of the musicians themselves (incidentally, no musicians were invited to speak at this hearing).<sup>95</sup>

The heinousness of Manson is threefold. First, Manson’s and Manson-like “vile material” has spread from urban to suburban and even rural (read: white) demographics. In his response to the testimony of the father of Richard Kuntz, a teenage Manson fan who committed suicide, Lieberman remarks, “It is in the movies, and your son in Burlington, North Dakota, not in some dark alley in one of America’s big cities, gets to tap into the lowest, most degrading aspects of our culture.”<sup>96</sup> Second, Manson has launched an assault on Christianity. The song “The Reflecting God” receives the most attention in the hearing because it mixes satanic parodies of biblical references, such as “I say it is and then it’s true” (a parody of

Genesis) and “When I’m God everyone dies” and “You’ll understand when I’m dead” (parodies of Christ’s self-sacrifice), with abstractly violent and nihilistic lines such as “One shot and the world gets smaller” and “Shoot motherfucker.”<sup>97</sup> The third charge against Manson is his androgyny and emasculation. Senator Kent Conrad (D-N.Dak.) sums it up as follows: “I think as the Chairman and the ranking members know, Marilyn Manson is a composite name. It combines Marilyn Monroe, who committed suicide, with Charles Manson, who is a mass murderer. I think that in itself says something about the mind-set of the performer.”<sup>98</sup>

The androgyny of Manson’s name, the names of his band members (which follow the same pattern of derivation), and the dress of his followers comes up (or out) time and again in the hearing, from the mouths of politicians, parents, experts, and even a twelve-year-old boy. Indeed, homophobic panic bubbles to the surface in the statement by Dr. C. DeLores Tucker, chair of the National Political Congress of Black Women, in her description of the cover art of *Antichrist Superstar*: “I just want to show you what this Marilyn Manson is all about. In this poster, he is with something I have never seen before, with two tubes extending from his genitals going into the mouths of two young people kneeling at his side.” The kneeling “young people” are his band mates, and they are wearing oxygen masks with tubes attached to Manson’s penis, covered to look like a miniature oxygen tank. In my opinion, the photo cleverly mocks how much popular culture lives and breathes the penis. Though unstated, Tucker’s insinuation is that Manson is “all about” homosexual pederasty through the homosexual association in the picture (i.e., the connection between one man’s face and another man’s genitals). She then argues that Manson panders to fourteen-year-old boys whose sexuality is unformed and implies that he influences them in the direction of homosexual perversity: “Manson has perfected his onstage antics, which include performing oral sex on a male guest, or strapping on a dildo—d-i-l-d-o; and mimicking masturbation.”<sup>99</sup> It seems that, for Tucker, Manson’s crime is one he shares with lesbians who use sex toys—namely, the displacement (or replacement) of the patriarchal phallus. That Manson should strap on a dildo is further evidence of his emasculated persona.

As if to illustrate the threat Manson poses to young boys, the entire hearing wraps up with the statement of a twelve-year-old named Chad, whom Tucker has brought from Philadelphia. She introduces his testimony thus: “Marilyn Manson was in his neighborhood this summer, and the young kids were lined up—black males, in skirts—for a Marilyn Manson concert. So I think that it is relevant to hear from a child.” Indeed, the young boy dutifully describes that “the males had on skirts, and they had devil signs and things like that,” and “it was just an embar-

rassment.”<sup>100</sup> Despite Chad’s apparent disgust, it would seem that mere exposure to “males, in skirts” potentially corrupts; the phrase itself seems to project the boy’s own fate should he have any sustained contact with Marilyn Manson fans. The aspect of race here is significant, for the cross-racial horror amplifies the menace of Manson and his transgression of socially structuring boundaries. White, middle-class, suburban teenagers are the main consumers of heavy metal and related styles of rock, and Manson’s decrepit masculinity and voided sexuality would seem an even less likely attraction for urban black teenage boys. Thus the phrase “black males, in skirts” is offered as the epitome of Manson’s decadence that has extended to the farthest reaches of America, from the African American neighborhoods of Philadelphia to the remote white town of Burlington, North Dakota.

Marilyn Mason’s name sums up his “mind-set,” his homosexual cover art is what he “is all about,” and his spawn are “black males, in skirts.” The conflation of the aesthetic with the ontological in these assertions paves the way for the intervention of the state; the infractions of gender, sexuality, race, and class made by Manson’s aestheticized emasculated body threaten the nation with ever more unbounded, ungovernable subjects, necessitating federal regulation. Shy of making legislation that might impinge on First Amendment rights, or on the profit margins of great corporations, however, the senators have no recourse but to become philosophers of citizenship, and in the process they come very near to Plato’s passages about the effect of music on the state in *Laws*. Compare the following quotes from Plato and Lieberman, respectively:

Gripped by a frenzied and excessive lust for pleasure, they [composers] jumbled together laments and hymns, mixed paeans and dithyrambs, and imitated the pipe tunes [*aulos*] on the lyre (700d). . . . This freedom will then take other forms. First people grow unwilling to submit to the authorities, then they refuse to obey the admonitions of their fathers and mothers and elders. As they hurtle along towards the end of this primrose path, they try to escape the authority of laws; and the very end of the road comes when they cease to care about oaths and promises and religion in general (701b–c).<sup>101</sup>

We don’t seem to blink when corporate citizens sell music to our children that celebrates violence, including murder of police and gang rape, and sexual perversity, including pedophilia. . . . these cultural indicators have very real implications. They bespeak a breakdown in the old rules and limits that once governed our public and private lives and the way we raised our children. We are left, I am afraid, with a values vacuum in which our

children learn more and more that anything goes and which I believe is at the heart of some of our society's worst social problems.<sup>102</sup>

Plato's "escape" from "the authority of laws" and Lieberman's "anything goes" (an elliptical phrase made famous by gay songwriter Cole Porter) describe the epistemological fantasies allegedly engendered in the young by unregulated music. For both Plato and Lieberman, music too easily leads to subjectivity gone awry. The unchecked aestheticization of mixture and transgression in the "coming-of-age" behaviors of youthful subjects results in a generation alienated from their parents and ultimately ungovernable. If Manson's *Antichrist Superstar* leads to the unnatural and antistate mayhem of "black males, in skirts," then by implication only "natural" bodies that belong to one of two "natural genders" (and one race) are conducive to citizenship.

In this essay I have attempted to show how music has been frequently associated with sexualities—undomesticated (the Sirens), involuntary (Augustine), virginal (Hildegard)—that call into question the structures of patriarchal phallogocentric culture and compulsory heterosexuality. Finally, to youthful subjects more recently navigating the waters of gender, sexual, and state citizenship, Manson offers an invitation to join his sadomasochistic musical dismantling of masculinity and phallic sexuality. Describing a recent project, Manson comments: "This is me coming out swinging. . . . But I want to do it in a beautiful way, so that they could still be humming a tune as they held their mouths on the way to the orthodontist."<sup>103</sup> It is not that his music packs a punch but that his punch is the music. The distinction is key, I believe, since this ordering places music as the endpoint ethical assertion of self, which produces pleasure as well as pain. And is that pain the product of Manson's "music violence"? I doubt it. Rather, it is the struggle of holding oneself open to beautiful, irresistibly hummable, Siren-like music—even as it threatens to obliterate the self in its instigation of a queer desire to become otherwise.

## Notes

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1. See Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 227–54.
2. See William L. Leap, *Word's Out: Gay Men's English* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 101–2.
3. See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed. (*OED*), s.v. "queer"; and Eric Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1966). Both the *OED* and Partridge state that the Scottish use precedes and has no connection to the German.
4. The *OED* cites the phrase "'queer' in sexual behavior" from William Healy, *Practical Value of Scientific Study of Juvenile Delinquents* (Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor, 1922), 8.
5. See Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), esp. 1–6, 72–100; and Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), esp. 33–40.
6. David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62. See also Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 98; and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xii.
7. Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 8.
8. The classic article on this issue is Gayle S. Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in Abelove, Barale, and Halperin, *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, 3–44.
9. Regarding the sexualization of Saracens and other associations with medieval Iberia, see Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hutcheson, eds., *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); regarding the Lollards, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 55–99.
10. Philip Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 9–26.
11. Suzanne Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in Brett, Wood, and Thomas, *Queering the Pitch*, 67–83.
12. Scholarship exploring music and gay, lesbian, and queer sexuality has grown exponentially since the early 1990s. Influential books and articles include Susan McClary, "Constructions of Subjectivity in Schubert's Music," in Brett, Wood, and Thomas, *Queering the Pitch*, 205–33; Mitchell Morris, "Reading As an Opera Queen," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 184–200; Wayne Koestenbaum, *The*

- Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Poseidon, 1993); and Elizabeth Wood, "Sapphonic," in Brett, Wood, and Thomas, *Queering the Pitch*, 27–66. For a thorough survey of and substantial contribution to this scholarship see Sophie Fuller and Lloyd Whitesell, eds., *Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), esp. 1–21.
13. Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, vol. 1 of *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, trans. Robert Hurley et al., 3 vols. (New York: New, 1997–2000), 266; Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," *ibid.*, 225.
  14. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 225. See also Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 263.
  15. Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self As a Practice of Freedom," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 282.
  16. See, e.g., Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz, eds., *The Turn to Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Robert Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism: Reading after Levinas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); Zygmunt Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); and Tobin Siebers, *The Ethics of Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).
  17. For an overview of this "ethical turn" and the centrality of Levinas see Lawrence Buell, "What We Talk about When We Talk about Ethics," in Garber, Hanssen, and Walkowitz, *The Turn to Ethics*, 1–13.
  18. Emmanuel Levinas, "No Identity," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987), 149.
  19. The opposing stances of Levinas and Foucault stem in part from their subject positions and cultural backgrounds. Levinas's elevation of social responsibility over individual resistance has roots in Judaism and Platonism. As a Jewish thinker and Talmudic scholar who suffered great personal loss in the Holocaust, Levinas is highly invested in exploring the nature of collective identities and in pursuing an ethics that transcends cultural boundaries. See Hilary Putnam, "Levinas and Judaism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33–62; for an example of how Levinas integrates his ethical philosophy with Talmudic reading see "The Pact," in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 211–26.
  20. See Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 157–88; Nehamas, "Subject and Object: The Examined Life of Michel Foucault," *New Republic*, 15 February 1993, 27–36; and James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993). Despite his extensive critique of the pathologizing rhetoric in Miller's biography (*Saint Foucault*, 126–85), Halperin maintains that Foucault's life, work, and activism are necessarily connected.

21. "Modern antihumanism, which denies the primacy that the human person, a free end in itself, has for the signification of being, is true over and above the reasons it gives itself. It makes a place for subjectivity positing itself in abnegation, in sacrifice, and in substitution. Its great intuition is to have abandoned the idea of persona as an end in itself. The Other (*Autru*) is the end, and me, I am a hostage" (Emmanuel Levinas, "Substitution," in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996], 94).
22. On the inaccuracies in Foucault's interpretations of Greek thought see Pierre Hadot, "Reflections on the Notion of 'the Cultivation of the Self,'" in *Michel Foucault, Philosopher: Essays Translated from the French and German*, ed. Timothy J. Armstrong (New York: Routledge, 1992), 225–32; and Arnold I. Davidson, "Ethics As Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics, and Ancient Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 115–40.
23. Nehamas, *Art of Living*, 178; see also 177–79.
24. On Levinas's opinions of art see Eaglestone, *Ethical Criticism*, 98–163.
25. The *Odyssey* is the first written account of sirens, and Homer does not describe their appearance, though contemporaneous and pre-Homeric vase and tomb decorations depict them as half human (most often woman) and half bird. Sirens appear in a variety of contexts in both pre- and post-Homeric art: as evil omens, as emissaries from the divine world, and in association with a number of deities, such as Artemis, Athena, and Dionysus. During the sixth century B.C.E. the siren became a symbol of a blessed afterlife. See John Pollard, *Seer, Shrines, and Sirens: The Greek Religious Revolution in the Sixth Century B.C.* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965), 137–45.
26. Unless specified, all translations of the *Odyssey* are quoted from R. D. Dawe, *The Odyssey: Translation and Analysis* (Lewes: Book Guild, 1993), 470–82. Dawe uses various typefaces to distinguish lines that he feels are late interpolations. I do not call attention to these lines, since they were transmitted in oral and written traditions despite ancient and modern arguments over their "authenticity." I also standardize the transliteration of κ to k.
27. For my discussion of ancient Greek words I have consulted Pietro Pucci and the Perseus Digital Library, an electronic resource for classical literature ([www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)), which includes an on-line edition of Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and enl. Sir Henry Stuart Jones (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940). For the etymology of the name Kirke see also L. Darcey, "The Name of Circe and the Portolans of Archaic Greece," *Les études classiques* 53 (1985): 185–91.
28. The name Siren may also stem from the Semitic *sir*, meaning "song." For other possibilities see Pietro Pucci, *The Song of the Sirens: Essays on Homer* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 8 n. 13; and Siegfried de Rachewiltz, *De Sirenibus: An Inquiry into Sirens from Homer to Shakespeare* (New York: Garland, 1987), 24. The following discussion owes much to these two studies.

29. For the sexual connotations of these words see Seth L. Schein, "Female Representations and Interpreting the *Odyssey*," in *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in Homer's "Odyssey"*, ed. Beth Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 21; Schein, introduction to *Reading the "Odyssey": Selected Interpretive Essays*, ed. Seth L. Schein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 25–26; and Pucci, "The Song of the Sirens," in Schein, *Reading the "Odyssey"*, 198–99.
30. Pucci, "The Song of the Sirens," 196.
31. Translated in Pucci, *The Song of the Sirens*, 1, with a minor adaptation. Pucci renders the opening epithet for Odysseus here as "skillful in telling stories" and elsewhere as "honored" ("The Song of the Sirens," 191) and "famous for your stories" (*Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the "Odyssey" and the "Iliad"* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995], 210). Dawe's translation is "much-praised Odysseus" (*The Odyssey*, 481). I attempt to maintain the ambiguity of the epithet.
32. For a discussion of this scene see Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos*, 214–27.
33. Rachewiltz, *De Sirenibus*, 15–16. Rachewiltz argues that Odysseus listens with impunity and thus effectively steals the Sirens' song. The theme of his thievery appears throughout the epic.
34. Pucci, "The Song of the Sirens," 196.
35. One vase decoration shows a pre-Homeric version of the Siren story in which the Sirens throw themselves into the sea in despair once Odysseus has safely passed. Homer's episode, then, represents a significant paradigm shift, in which the consequence to the Sirens is unimportant. "In the new context of the *Odyssey*, the victory of the man of many schemes, his successful outwitting of the Sirens and his breaking their spell, which no one has ever been able to withstand yet, becomes his suffering and escape" (Karl Reinhardt, "The Adventures in the *Odyssey*," in *Reading the "Odyssey"*, 76).
36. In 8.537 Odysseus also describes the instrument of Demodokos as a *phorminga ligeian* [clear-sounding phorminx].
37. On women in the *Odyssey* see Cohen, *Distaff Side*. For a feminist reading of the *Odyssey* see Lillian Eileen Doherty, *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the "Odyssey"* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995). Ann Carson notes that for ancient Greek writers, *stoma* (mouth, lips, entrance) can refer to the orifice of vocal activity as well as sexual activity, and she discusses constructions of female speech and sound as the antithesis to masculine self-control ("The Gender of Sound," *Thamyris* 1 [1994]: 10–31).
38. See David M. Halperin, "Platonic *Erôs* and What Men Call Love," *Ancient Philosophy* 5 (1985): 161–204; see esp. 163–66, 176–77.
39. Page duBois, *Torture and Truth* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 75. The following discussion refers to pp. 63–74 and 75–91 of this study. Carson argues that the connection of the female mouth and genitals points toward "women's allegedly definitive tendency to put the inside on the outside" and to discharge the unspeakable ("The

- Gender of Sound,” 28). Thus women were associated both with interiority and with its exposure.
40. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, vol. 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 8.
  41. Foucault writes about the Sirens’ song in the midst of a discussion of Blanchot’s writings in “Maurice Blanchot: The Thought of the Outside,” in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, vol. 2 of *Essential Works*, 160–63. He notes that Odysseus listens to a song that is only an elusive and fatal promise of a future song about his past identity. With its “speech that is indissociably echo and denial,” the Sirens’ dissimulating song effects what Foucault describes as a luring out of interiority and a voiding of identity. For Foucault, this immobilizing void is the seduction of the Sirens’ song; it is an attraction to an outside that will hollow out our identity. Though not rigorously developed here, Foucault is describing a getting free of the self: “To lend an ear to the silvery voice of the Sirens . . . is not simply to abandon the world. . . . it is suddenly to feel grow within oneself a desert at the other end of which (but this immeasurable distance is also as thin as a line) gleams a language without assignable subject . . . a personal pronoun without a person” (163).
  42. See Rachewiltz, *De Sirenibus*, 70–73.
  43. See Fredric Jameson, “On the Sexual Production of Western Subjectivity; or, Saint Augustine As a Social Democrat,” in *Gaze and Voice As Love Objects*, ed. Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 174–77; and Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
  44. For a detailed discussion of this struggle for definition see Johannes Quasten, *Music and Worship in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Pastoral Musicians, 1983), 59–120.
  45. I have modified the Latin translation from Paul F. Gehl, “*Competens Silentium*: Varieties of Monastic Silence in the Medieval West,” *Viator* 18 (1987): 138. The Latin reads: “Omnes loquuntur, et nullus obstrepit. Psalmum reges sine potestatis supercilio resultant. In hoc se ministerio David gaudebat videri. Psalmus cantatur ab imperatoribus, jubilat a populis . . . et saxa respondent.”
  46. I quote this verse from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 1071.
  47. I quote the Latin from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. Bonifatius Fischer, Iohanne Gribomont, H. F. D. Sparks, and W. Theile, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969), 2:1349. The translation of this phrase is my own. I was directed to this passage by a reference in a review article by Richard Crocker, “Two Recent Editions of Aquitanian Polyphony,” *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 3 (1994): 90; see 89–91 for a concise description of singing *una voce* doctrine. See also Quasten, *Music and Worship*, 66–72.
  48. For the Clement quotation see Quasten, *Music and Worship*, 67.

49. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. F. J. Sheed, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993). All translations from the *Confessions* are taken from this edition.
50. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1993).
51. See *Confessions*, book 8, for Augustine's agonizing prior to his conversion. See also Jameson, "On the Sexual Production of Western Subjectivity," 167–76.
52. Michel Foucault, "Sexuality and Solitude," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 182–83.
53. Jameson, "On the Sexual Production of Western Subjectivity," 177.
54. I modify Sheed's translation in this and the previous passage slightly.
55. Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 76–77.
56. James McKinnon, ed., *Music in Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 155 ("when sung with fluent voice and music that is most appropriate"); Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, 75 ("when in a fluid voice and with the most suitable measure"); *Confessions*, 198 ("When they are sung with a clear voice and proper modulation"). I thank Charles Francis Brittain and Richard Crocker for consulting with me on this matter.
57. Augustine defines *modulatio* in book 1.2.3 (see *On Music*, trans. Robert Taliaferro, in *Writings of Saint Augustine*, vol. 2 [New York: Cima, 1947]).
58. Gehl, "*Competens Silentium*," 129.
59. "Flete mecum et pro me flete qui aliquid boni vobiscum intus agitis, unde facta procedunt. nam qui non agitis, non vos haec movent. tu autem, domine deus meus, exaudi: respice et vide et miserere et sana me, in cuius oculis mihi quaestio factus sum, et ipse est languor meus" (Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. James J. O'Donnell, 3 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992], 1:139).
60. Summarized from Foucault, "Technologies of the Self."
61. Marcia L. Colish, *Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century*, vol. 2 of *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 207–38; see esp. 212–20. See also Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400–1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 28–29.
62. See Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia: A Critical Edition of the "Symphonia Armonie Celestium Revelationum"*, ed. Barbara Newman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 1–6. On Hildegard and monastic reform see Jo Ann McNamara, "Forward to the Past: Hildegard of Bingen and Twelfth-Century Monastic Reform," in Hildegard of Bingen, *Explanation of "The Rule of Benedict"*, trans. Hugh Feiss (Toronto: Peregrina, 2000), 15–16, 21–23.
63. See Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, esp. chap. 3; see also Kathryn L. Bumpass, "A Musical Reading of Hildegard's Responsory 'Spiritui Sancto,'" in *Hildegard of Bingen: A Book of Essays*, ed. Maud Burnett McInerney (New York: Garland, 1998), 153–73.
64. See R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), esp. 37–63; and Caroline Walker Bynum,

- Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), esp. 260–76.
65. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, 99; see also 97–109.
  66. Text translated by Newman, *Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Symphonia*, 134–35. Newman offers both literal and poetic translations of Hildegard’s lyrics. In all cases I quote from the literal translation.
  67. See Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, 104.
  68. This passage is from a prayer introducing three lyric pieces on the theme of nuns as brides of Christ in the miscellany appended to the *Symphonia* (late 1150s). The quote is from John Stevens, “The Musical Individuality of Hildegard’s Songs: A Liturgical Shadowland,” in *Hildegard of Bingen: The Context of Her Thought and Art*, ed. Charles Burnett and Peter Dronke (London: Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1998), 177. See also Newman, *Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Symphonia*, 69, item c.
  69. See Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire*, 114–18.
  70. See Stevens, “The Musical Individuality of Hildegard’s Songs,” 163–88; and Margot Fassler, “Composer and Dramatist: ‘Melodious Singing and the Freshness of Remorse,’” in *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and Her World*, ed. Barbara Newman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 149–75.
  71. Hildegard wrote a few chants for the Mass, but only in genres that were still “open” to new compositions: seven sequences (considered paraliturgical), one Alleluia, and one Kyrie. See Fassler, “Composer and Dramatist,” 151; on Hildegard’s use of a chant model see 166–68.
  72. Constant Mews, “Religious Thinker: ‘A Frail Human Being’ on Fiery Life,” in Newman, *Voice of the Living Light*, 62. See also Mews, “Hildegard and the Schools,” in Burnett and Dronke, *Hildegard of Bingen*, 103.
  73. Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. Columba Hart and Jane Bishop (New York: Paulist, 1990), 3.13.12–13. All translations from *Scivias* are taken from this edition.
  74. I have found two German sources for this image. The first, a depiction of the Annunciation in an initial from a gradual (c. 1300, probably from the convent of Sankt Kartharinenthal, at Lake Constance), shows the dove at the left ear of the Virgin (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, by exchange, 1982; the image is available through the Art Museum Image Consortium [AMICO] Library at [www.amico.org](http://www.amico.org)). The second is discussed below.
  75. This passage comes from a response letter to an unidentified group of priests. Quoted in Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: Saint Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 175.
  76. *Ibid.*, 175.
  77. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cloisters Collection, 1993.251.1; the image is available through the AMICO Library at [www.amico.org](http://www.amico.org).

78. This passage is from her famous letter to the prelates at Mainz, dated around 1178–79, explaining her theology of music in response to their interdict against her nuns singing the liturgy. It is quoted in Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, 194–95; see also Newman’s discussion here.
79. Barbara Newman and Rebecca L. R. Garber note that Hildegard seemed to ignore the affective Mariology of Bernard of Clairvaux and Elisabeth von Schönau. Garber writes: “She had no visions of Mary, no images of suckling from Mary’s breast, nor did she write a Marian legend. Neither did she encourage her nuns to give birth to Christ in their hearts in imitation of the Virgin. Within the *Scivias* and the Marian lyrics, Mary appears almost exclusively at the point of the Incarnation” (“Where Is the Body? Images of Eve and Mary in the *Scivias*,” in McNerney, *Hildegard of Bingen*, 124). See also Newman, *Sister of Wisdom*, 159–60. Garber briefly notes that singing Hildegard’s chants could be understood as a form of *imitatio Mariae* (123). For a more in-depth discussion of this idea see Fassler, “Composer and Dramatist,” 159–68, esp. 166–67.
80. Figure 1 is my own transcription of the respond from *O quam preciosa* (Riesencodex), Wiesbaden, Hessische Landsbibliothek, Hs. 2, f. 468. Fassler argues similarly that the popular image of the tree of Jesse functioned as a type of compositional model for Hildegard’s *Scivias* songs (“Composer and Dramatist,” 161). See also Fassler’s analysis of Hildegard’s responsory *O tu suavissima virga* (162–64).
81. A quick survey of other responsories shows that the leap of a fifth from d–a<sup>1</sup> and the use of a<sup>1</sup> as a hovering point are common to mode 1 responsories, whereas mode 2 responsories tend to hover around f and frequently dip down to C. See also Marianne Richert Pfau, “Mode and Melody Type in Hildegard von Bingen’s *Symphonia*,” *Sonus* 11 (1990): 53–71.
82. Melismatic extensions of important ultimate or penultimate words are common in the chant repertory, and by the early twelfth century there was a large repertory of “plug-in” or substitute melismas, many of which show repetition patterns such as aab, and descending sequences of note groups. For a transcription of some plug-in melismas and a discussion see Richard H. Hoppin, *Medieval Music* (New York: Norton, 1978), 146–48.
83. Holsinger, drawing on Wood’s idea of “Sapponics,” concludes that Hildegard’s music “creates sonorous spaces of lesbian possibility” (*Music, Body, and Desire*, 129). Susan Schibanoff attempts to connect Hildegard’s music to a specific and possibly erotic attachment to one of her nuns (“Hildegard of Bingen and Richardis of Stade: The Discourse of Desire,” in *Same Sex Love and Desire among Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Francesca Canadé Sautman and Pamela Sheingorn [New York: Palgrave, 2001], 49–83).
84. For a recent study of the authorization of virginity see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints’ Lives and Women’s Literary Culture c. 1150–1300: Virginity and Its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

85. Barbara Newman, "'Sibyl of the Rhine': Hildegard's Life and Times," in Newman, *Voice of the Living Light*, 27–28.
86. See Randall Sullivan, "A Boy's Life: Kip Kinkel and the Springfield, Oregon Shootings, Part 1," *Rolling Stone*, 17 September 1998, 81; and Peter Wilkinson with Matt Hendrickson, "Columbine, Humiliation, and Revenge: The Story of Reb and VoDka," *Rolling Stone*, 10 June 1999, 51.
87. U.S. Senate, Committee on Governmental Affairs, *Music Violence: How Does It Affect Our Children?* 105 Cong., 1st sess. (6 November 1997), 5.
88. See Jeffrey Arnett, "Heavy Metal Music and Reckless Behavior among Adolescents," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 20 (1991): 573–92. For a critical discussion of Marilyn Manson see Robert Wright, "'I'd Sell You Suicide': Pop Music and Moral Panic in the Age of Marilyn Manson," *Popular Music* 19 (2001): 365–85. Manson wrote an articulate response to his critics in "Columbine: Whose Fault Is It?" *Rolling Stone*, 10 June 1999, 23–24, 77. See also the fall 1999 issue of *Popular Music and Society*, which includes a special forum on the attack on popular music after the Columbine shootings.
89. Manson, "Columbine: Whose Fault Is It?" 23–24, 77.
90. These lyrics are taken from "The Beautiful People," cowritten with Twiggy Ramirez.
91. The video, directed by Sean Beavan and Joseph F. Cultice, was released by Nothing/Interscope Records in 1998.
92. Michel Foucault with B. Gallagher and A. Wilson, "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 165–70.
93. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 25.
94. U.S. Senate, *Music Violence*, 5.
95. *Ibid.*, 4. In 1997 Seagram's, originally a Canadian liquor company, owned Universal Music Group, which included Interscope Records, the owner and distributor of Nothing Records, Manson's label. Seagram's took over Polygram Records in 1999 and merged it with Universal Music Group, annihilating many smaller record companies such as A&M and Geffen.
96. *Ibid.*, 13.
97. I interpret the song as a critique of the mainstream idolizing of pop stars who ultimately reflect the morally corrupt disposition of their fans.
98. *Ibid.*, 7.
99. *Ibid.*, 34.
100. *Ibid.*, 40, 41.
101. Plato, *Laws*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders, in *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1997), 1389–90.
102. U.S. Senate, *Music Violence*, 3.
103. Steve Hochman, "The Third Face of Marilyn Manson," *Rolling Stone*, 17 August 2000, 44.