

THE VOICE OF THE MIRROR: STRANGE
ADDRESS IN HILDEGARD OF BINGEN

Karmen MacKendrick

“YOU!” said the Caterpillar contemptuously. “Who are YOU?”

– Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*

One might argue about whether the texts of Hildegard of Bingen (newly canonized, as of this May 10, as St. Hildegard) are properly mystical—at least insofar as the mystical text does not evade propriety altogether. Certainly Hildegard is a visionary, which is at least a nearby category. Many of her works, including perhaps the two best-known of her nine books (the *Scivias* and the *Book of Divine Works*), detail sets of visions she experienced (and, in some cases, beautifully illustrated as well). These visions come to Hildegard integrated with what she regards as divinely-inspired interpretation, however, and so the texts go on to provide such extensive exegesis that we might wonder whether any mystery at all can remain. I think that it can; occasionally in these texts, and still more in some of the songs on which so much of her current fame rests, we do find ideas and language turning about on themselves in those unexpected ways that reveal mystery, not by stripping it of its concealment, but precisely by showing us that not all is showable, or that the best ways of showing are sometimes indirect and elliptical. This may be as good a working definition of a mystical text as we are likely to find. I would like to focus here on one particular song, an antiphon to the Father from Hildegard’s *Symphonia armonie celestium revelationum* (the *Symphony of the Harmony of Celestial Revelation*). I shall focus especially on the strangeness of address and indication that emerges within it. Hildegard’s sense of divine address, of the way that “we” use “you” in relation to God, is unusual even among mystics, and in it her

musicality extends even more deeply and surprisingly than we would have thought.

The majority of Hildegard's songs are antiphons, meant to be sung before and after psalms, both hailing and responding (another third are responsoria, and it is probably not irrelevant that her songs so often enter into relation) (Newman in Hildegard, 1998, 13; Butcher, 2007, 24-25). This particular antiphon, addressed in its first line to the Father, is the first piece in the incomplete Dendermonde version of the *Symphonia*, the sixth in the larger Riesenkodeks version. It is short enough to present here entirely:

O magne Pater, / in magna necessitate sumus. / Nunc igitur obsecramus, / obsecramus te / per Verbum tuum, / per quod nos constituisti plenos / quibus indigemus. / Nunc placeat tibi, Pater, / quia te decet, / ut aspicias in nos / per adiutorium tuum, / ut non deficiamus, / et ne nomen tuum in nobis obscuretur, / et per ipsum nomen tuum / dignare nos adiuuare. (Hildegard, 1998, 104)

Barbara Newman offers us both poetic and literal translations of the song. Her sense of poetry is elegant, but to work as closely as we can with Hildegard, we might best turn to the more literal version:

Great Father, / we are in great need! / Now then we beseech / we beseech you by your Word, / through which you created us full/ of the things we lack. / Now, Father, may it please you, / for it befits you, / to look upon us / and help us, / that we may not perish, / that your name be not darkened within us: / and by your own name, / graciously help us. (Hildegard, 1998, 105)

If we hadn't read Hildegard before, or if we weren't already inclined to be reading for mystery, we might be tempted to read this straightforwardly: we, a group of humans, ask another fairly anthropomorphic being (who can look, be pleased, assist, be addressed in parental terms, and so on) for assistance. But the more we look at this song, the stranger its request for assistance becomes, and the less tidy its divisions. Address and petition first become curiously blurred, the name fails to *be* named, and addressee and petitioner seem to turn about in a manner that renders the usual

directionality of the *you* (and, accordingly, of the *we*) impossible to identify—without, however, identifying the two terms with each other.

I have argued elsewhere that prayer amplifies the element of address that we find throughout language, making it central even when the language may appear to be more descriptive or imperative. Divine names, particularly in prayer, are unusually vocative; that is, they call or draw more strongly than they point or describe (MacKendrick, 2008, 2011). This in itself is enough to make the language of prayer, including that of hymns and prayerful songs, a little strange. The strangeness of address here, however, runs more deeply and a little differently, in ways I hope to clarify.

The song opens with two modes of greatness that mirror each other as both image and opposite—the greatness of the father, the great need of the petitioner. Hildegard is fond both of mirroring (that is, of the use of these sorts of structures in which one phrase or image reflects another) and of the metaphor of the mirror as a description of the way in which we are the image of the divine—”All celestial harmony,” she declares in her *Causes and Cures*, “is a mirror of divinity” (as epigraph, Hildegard 1998).¹ The symphonies of celestial harmony, then, are symphonies of the mirror of divinity. If the symphony provides something like an image, however indirectly, the songs must mirror the divine harmonies in their own. The symphony is not itself celestial harmony, but is rather the effort to come as near as we can to giving that harmony voice. Each song is a voice of the mirror. As this suggests, the reflection of the Father’s greatness in the petitioners’ need is neither singular nor simple; Hildegard’s language evokes less a single figure gazing at its reflection than the dizzying recursion of an image in facing mirrors. The poetic structure itself repeats and redoubles in the words that open lines: *magne* and *magna*, then repetitions of *obsecramus*, *per*, *ut*, and *et*.

For Hildegard, this multiple gaze peers out from the very moment of creation, as she shows in her exegesis of the prologue to the fourth gospel in her visionary *Book of Divine Works*. She writes of the opening phrase “In the beginning was the Word,” “I am the One by whom every reasonable being [i.e., every being that has

¹ The *Causes and Cures* is available in English translation by Priscilla Throop (Charlotte, VT: MedievalMS, 2008).

reason] draws breath.” As the close affiliation here of reason and breath makes clear, Hildegard is typically medieval in her sense of the closeness of spirit and flesh—a point not irrelevant, as we shall see, to her use of language in song. “The body is the garment of the soul,” she writes, “and it is the soul which gives life to the voice.” The two together sing praise (Hildegard, in 1987, letter to the Prelates of Mainz, 358). From this breath of reason comes a stranger fusion still: “And so to gaze at my countenance I have created mirrors in which I consider all the wonders of my originality, which will never cease. I have prepared for myself these mirror forms so that they may resonate in a song of praise” (Hildegard, 1987, Vision 4, 128). The mirrors in which God delights in gazing, the mirrors that are creation itself, also, in a curious synaesthesia, delight resonantly in songs of praise—and the divine gaze upon a creation made in order to reflect strangely mirrors the delighted song of creation reflecting upon the maker who gazes. Even recursion, then, is not complex enough for a mirror so deeply synaesthetic and so causally complicated.

In this divine gaze at the wonder of mirrors that sing, delight is not neatly distinguished from desire—nor are the two, as I shall argue in more detail below, sharply distinguished in the Antiphon. We are reminded in Hildegard’s exegesis—“I have prepared for myself these mirror forms so that they may resonate in a song of praise”—of the famous opening of Augustine’s *Confessions*, in which he declares to a God for whom he is still searching that “to praise you is the desire of man, a little piece of your creation. You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself” (Augustine, 1991, 1.1.1). This opening is full of desire, too, and of bafflement, as Augustine prays to find God without being sure how to look—and so, necessarily, without quite knowing where to address his prayer (see Mackey, 1997, especially 19). For neither Augustine nor Hildegard, however, is this praising function somehow a matter of reassuring an insecure God or stroking a divinely inflated ego. It is, rather, a resonant mirroring of a desire and a delight that amplify in complex ways: the desire and the delight of humanity amplify those of God and vice versa; desire amplifies delight, and vice versa again. As an invitation, resonance also demands silence: if I invite what resonates, I must give it the aural space, a perhaps contemplative place, in which to do so. The words of the song are those of desire requesting—*we beseech you*—but Word itself is given by and as the aim of the desire, by and as the

God sought (the exegeted prologue continues, “And the Word was with God, and the Word was God”). All words are called through the Word. Hildegard’s Father has made humanity through words, through the means of beseeching God: “I spoke within myself my small deed, which is humanity,” God declares in this same exegetical passage (Hildegard, 1987, Vision 4, 129). And God has made humanity so that they may make words: “Human beings were to announce all God’s wondrous works by means of their tongues that were endowed with reason” (Hildegard, 1987, Vision 4, 122). But, as we shall see, for Hildegard there is an important qualification both to the divine creative voice and to the praising human one—they do not simply speak, but sing, and that will matter.

Making through the means, if not of desire itself, then at least of desire’s expression, becomes stranger still as the song continues. Through the Word, we are *created . . . full of the things we lack*. And through words, we, in Hildegard’s company, create anew the fullness implicit in this lack, create the expression of the desire and beseeching, an expression that is the creation of beseeching and the sustaining of desire. Language desires, and, at least sometimes, desire languages, is pulled into words (not always, to be sure: it may be precisely what stops our speaking, too, creating both the rushing flow of words and the stuttering gap).² Full of the things we lack, we are not only full of lacking, or empty of fullness, but also possess that fullness of which, and by which, we are dispossessed, the fullness of delighted desire. The words by which we beseech are our words, too. We give back not simply *what* we were given (words in desirous song), but that *by which we are* given—words, through Word itself. We give our own givenness, because we are given in desire (the divine desire to delight in the song of its own countenance), full of the things that we lack, given by the fullness of the words by which that lack takes on a fullness of its own. Here too Augustine echoes in Hildegard’s thought. For him we may be given over, in memory or in the commitment of desire, to a God we nonetheless cannot fully find or grasp.

Even without its synaesthetic element, this is an entanglement too deep for simple reciprocity. That is, we cannot simply say,

² For a much longer and more involved meditation on this curious duality, see the chapter “Fold” in my *Word Made Skin: Figuring Language at the Surface of Flesh* (New York: Fordham, 2004).

“God makes us by verbal means, and we sing God a song back.” We do not reciprocate in the sense of an economic exchange but rather, like those singing mirrors, resonate, reverberate. There is a great deal of mutual implication already in these opening lines, especially when they are set in the greater context of Hildegard’s work: delight and desire, word and Word, praise and gaze, praise and petition, mirror and song, sight and audition.

Other puzzles remain in this strange little song. What, especially, are we asking (for)? Aside from repeated but interestingly open requests for help or aid, two requests are specified, though it is not clear how distinct they may be from one another: that we may continue to be, and that we may read internally the divine name: *that we may not perish, that your name be not darkened within us*. The name to which we call in prayerful song is the name within us, then—and as the metaphor of darkness (or obscurity) suggests, it is a name not just sounded, but written: read aloud, perhaps, since we need light (not-darkness) to call it. In its sounding and its inscription, we are both made and sustained, created and kept from perishing. If we are full of the things that we lack, and are so by virtue of the Word, so too we find *within* us the very word,³ the name, *out* to which we call, as if to draw ourselves to it even as we draw and desire what we do not have. Synaesthetically, the name is visible to the ear, is read aloud (and read musically: this is not just a poem, but a song) in the resonating chamber of our empty fullness. It is by that name that we are helped—helped, in part, to call it. We participate in our own sustaining.

We must be cautious, however, not to read these resonances and intersections as if they were identifications, even of a complex sort. It is here that Hildegard’s distinction from at least some lines of mystical thought, particularly the more Neoplatonic, becomes evident. Hildegard is no pantheist, not even an emanationist. For her, emphatically, God is not every thing, not even in the curious manner of someone like Meister Eckhart (for whom God is distinct from all things by being alone indistinct from all things), but is unique and singular—and forgetfulness of that fact is grounds for

³ As Nicola Masciandaro reminds me, Hildegard’s *aspicias in nos* may also be rendered *gaze into us*, by which the Word is invited to see into the heart. We might add that when the Word sees word within, the mirroring and echoing effect is further multiplied.

the strongest condemnation. In the same passage of analysis in which the creator God delights in the mirrors' song of praise, Hildegard writes in the voice of this unique God: "By my Word, which was and is without beginning in myself, I caused a mighty light to emerge." Here, again, we see the synaesthesia of the aural and visual. "And in this light are countless sparks, which are the angels. But when the angels came to awareness within their light, they forgot me and wanted to be as I am. Therefore, the vengeance of my punitive zeal rejected in thunderclaps those beings who had presumed to contradict me. For there is only one God, and no other can be God" (Hildegard, 1987, Vision 4, 128-29). The angels' rejection of divine uniqueness, their desire not for God but to be (as) God, stands as a warning to human arrogance (but also to a common mystical desire for theosis): no other can be God.

But to be unique and singular is not to be isolated or disconnected, and Hildegard's is a cosmology not only of image and repetition, but of dense interconnection. These are not altogether different claims: image and repetition are often for her the language of that connection, as they would have been for many of her contemporaries. "God, who created everything, has formed humanity according to the divine image and likeness, and marked in human beings both the higher and the lower creatures" (Hildegard, 1987, Vision 1, 11). These "marks" are signatures and similarities: body parts are paralleled with the creation account, the humors (black and yellow bile, phlegm, and blood) with the elements (earth, air, water and fire), the planetary bodies with the health of the human body, the forms of plants with their medicinal uses. Humans are no more disconnectable from other organisms than from God, from other heavenly bodies than from the earth.⁴ To pluck one string of the cosmos—the human body, the natural world, the art of music, the planets, the elements, the humors, the angels—is to set all of it vibrating.

Vibrating, it sings—and in this antiphonal song, the human soul sight reads that helping name. Not obscured, the name is nonetheless a mystery. The addressee goes unnamed in the song, unless we count such terms as "Word" or "Father" as naming. The name read is unnamed; the demand of the call is only to keep

⁴ Evidence for this sense of entanglement in Hildegard is too widespread in various works to be given a precise source; however, for her comments on cosmology in *Divine Works*, see especially Vision 2, Sections 32-46.

reading—that is, to keep calling out. As a mystery, the obscured undarkened name is a paradox. At its root, a mystery demands closed eyes (it is not to be seen by the uninitiated) or closed lips (it is not to be told to them, either)⁵—but for Hildegard the mysterious name is undarkened and sung out. This it can be, perhaps, only because it is and is not a mystery (it is both concealed and revealed), is and is not a name. It is *you*, addressed by *we*. So who are *you*?

The directionality here has become deeply odd, and that oddness is in some measure a deictic one. Among the many strange things that can happen to deixis in mysticism, including a dissolutional fusion of the *you* and *I*, Hildegard's is perhaps one of the most intriguing, grounded as it is in the connective point of language to music, and of both to the origin, the sustaining, and the celebration of creation.

At least outside of mystical texts and contexts, there is such a thing as fairly straightforward deixis. Deictic terms are those given some measure of their meaning by context; they point, but to know at what, we must know something of the context of the pointing. Because it functions in a particular setting, deixis is not quite ostension. A deictic term such "I" or "this" will pick out different objects when voiced by different users or within different contexts. Ostension is a different mode of pointing, which will, at least presumably, always find the same object or set of objects; it means only to define by pointing to, often by pointing not to a whole set but to an exemplar. Ostension is a common intuitive theory of language; to know what a word means, we find examples of those things named by that word, and we point to them (or to at least to one of them)—perhaps quite literally—and, having formed the proper association, we may be said to *know* what the word means. No doubt one reason that this seems at first pass so reasonable a linguistic theory is that it is in fact the way many of us first acquire nouns, with the aid of parental pointing and terms such as "doggie!" uttered in tones meant to encourage mimicry.

⁵ The *Online Etymology Dictionary* is typically helpful here, writing of "mystery": "from Anglo-Fr. *misterie (O.Fr. mistere), from L. mysterium, from Gk. mysterion (usually in pl. mysteria) 'secret rite or doctrine,' from mystes 'one who has been initiated,' from myein 'to close, shut,' perhaps referring to the lips (in secrecy) or to the eyes (only initiates were allowed to see the sacred rites)" (http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=mystery&allowed_in_frame=0).

Of course, such pointing is pretty limited, which is why this intuitive theory nonetheless is not a widely held theory of the way that languages work. It runs into particular drawbacks in the language of theology. In *The Teacher*, Augustine's son Adeodatus, as he tries to work out how words mean, suggests an ostensive theory of language, which Augustine fairly gently but thoroughly dismantles. The first problem comes in relation to verbs—how do I point at “running” without making the viewer think that “running” is the word for feet, or perhaps indicates the motion of striking the ground? But unsurprisingly, Augustine's deeper concern is more abstract. The poles of being itself—that is, nothing and the fullness of being that is God—cannot be pointed to (and this despite the fact that, engagingly enough, a little-used sense of “ostension” is the display of the sacramental host for adoration) (Augustine, 1995, 98, 102).

While it is alarmingly easy to have conversations with minimal meaning, it is hard to talk about nothing—our desire to reify is strong. Perhaps the primary effect of this fact is the amusement of logicians (“I'm sure nobody walks much faster than I do,” says the insulted messenger in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, to which the king replies, “He can't do that, or else he'd have been here first” (Carroll, 1999, 225)). Clearly, however, we cannot point at nothing and point at all. Rather more detrimental effects come from our desire to point to God—particularly the effects of theological certainty and unyielding dogmatism, the sense that we *know* just what we mean by the term and just what the term means for us. Though, as we've duly noted, ostension is not deixis, such pointing doesn't work in a context, either. There is, at least for Augustine or for Hildegard, no place from which we can legitimately say of God, “that's him,” “that's me,” or “here it is, this one.” Our pointing can be neither exemplary, the way it is ostensively, nor, it seems contextual. How, then, can we say of a mystic's God, or more properly *to* such a God, “you?”

Neither the prayerful *you* nor the divine *I* performs quite a normal deixis. With Hildegard, I shall dwell primarily on the *you*, but it is useful to see how strange the *I* is here as well. Of itself, famously, God in the Hebrew tradition taken up by Augustine and Hildegard's Christianity, asked for its name, declares instead, “*'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*,” generally rendered “I am that I am,” though more literally “I will be what I will be” (Exod. 3:14). The “I am”

as it begins could almost be a straightforward statement of presence, but then it explicitly turns back upon itself. In thus circling, it renders strange, as if it were so purely pointing (its name is nothing but its self) that we who are not it have no idea where to point if we want to speak of it. The “I” here seems to negate the very possibility of properly naming. A curious negation, as Nicola Masciandaro points out, is inherent to deixis—“What makes deixis work . . . is that it says by not saying, and more precisely, that it negates its own inability to signify by speaking language, that is, by referring to the actual event of our being in language, in the same manner that ‘I’ means ‘the one who is saying ‘I’” (Masciandaro, 2012, 4-5). This negation is not Aristotelian; it does not resolve into the elimination of one contrary—rather, it circles back. “The negativity of deixis,” Masciandaro writes, “thus resolves to a deeper auto-deixis, its pointing to itself” (2012, 5).

The name “I am” says only I, pointing to itself as if purely indicating, but the *I* says a mystery by circling back upon itself, names a mystery by offering only this circle instead of a name. The deictic indicative requires a certain immediacy, even a presence, but we see now that it is odd enough that even simple repetition can trouble the sense of the present: it is all very well for “I” to point at itself, but where do the rest of us point? Nor are matters much simplified if we turn to the future “I will be,” which not only mystifies us as to the whereabouts of the I, but even as to the when.⁶ There is nowhere to point, but we do not point at nothing. Hildegard’s *we* calls out to a divine *you*, not to nothing, and it calls out urgently: we are in great need. We ask help through the name that says only in a looping *I*, while we call to *you*.

The calling function is, again, sometimes a fairly clear one, but in prayerful language a bit more complicated.⁷ Unlike the “I” or the “he” or the “this,” the use of “you” makes it hard for any listener or reader to pull back, to feel him or herself to be wholly outside the deictic context. Perhaps this is why its use in writing is relatively restricted; beyond prayer or the deliberately addressed

⁶ cf. T.S. Eliot, “Burnt Norton”: “I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where./ And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.” In Eliot, 1943, II.68-69.

⁷ For more detail on these complications, see the chapter “Prayer” in my *Divine Enticement*, much inspired by Jean-Louis Chrétien’s *The Call and the Response*, 2004.

epistle, the second person appears infrequently in essay or literature, but often in poetry, which may well seek to connect with its readers rather more directly than narrative or drama might; and in pornography, which in its own rather different mode certainly seeks such a connection. The basic, doubly deictic question, “Is that you?” is so common that we tend not to hear its strangeness—the strangeness, in this instance, of the fact that an honest negative answer is impossible. “You” is simply the second person, the one (or, in English, more than one) beyond the first person, the condition of the possibility of conversation. If *I* ask, *you* can only answer in the affirmative.⁸

The effect of a *you* that somehow fails to call is thus both odd and poignant. A few examples may make this clearer. David Markson’s 1988 novel *Wittgenstein’s Mistress* gives us one such instance: the narrator, who is either the last animal on earth or quite mad, hears a voice calling with a double deixis—“*You?* Can that be you? . . . And here, of all places!” (Markson, 1988, 47)—but she finds no caller, only, in a moment that at once echoes and alters Hildegard’s, her own reflection in a window, or in a highly glossed canvas (Markson, 1988, 48). In a sense, of course, the *you* is present here, as the narrator herself, but she cannot occupy the second person position after all—there is only one person, and the addressor is absent, or only imagined. The auto-deictic *you* is far sadder than the auto-deictic *I*. Rainer-Maria Rilke offers us a different, more directly religious, failure in his poetic account of the Christic passion in “The Olive Garden”: “And why is it your will that I must say/ You are, when I myself no longer find You . . . I am alone with all of human grief, which through You I undertook to lighten, / You who are not” (1990, 39).⁹ Rilke comes close, in this *you*, to drawing together Augustine’s impossible ostensive

⁸ Of course we may answer in the negative, but when we do so, we are generally assuming that the question is actually mis-directed. That is, if someone asks me, “Is that you?” and I answer “No,” what I mean is approximately, “I think that you are looking for someone else,” even though the correct answer to “Is that you?” would have to be “Yes.” “You” picks out any addressee, but when it is used in a question, we may reasonably assume that a *particular* addressee is implicitly intended—the deixis is standing in for ostension.

⁹ “und warum willst Du, daß ich sagen muß/ Du seist, wenn ich Dich selber nicht mehr finde . . . Ich bin allein mit aller Menschen Gram,/ den ich durch Dich zu linern unternahm,/ der Du nicht bist” (Rilke, 1990, 40).

poles, nothing (no one) and God—but both only by addressing them in their failure. The addressor is narratively present here, but alone, or at least without the addressee: the poetic voice bitterly addresses a void, addresses the fact that address is impossible now. In a more complex failure, T.S. Eliot's grim rejoicing in "Little Gidding" includes the description of a self split in order to address: "I met one walking, loitering and hurried . . . Both intimate and unidentifiable. / So I assumed a double part, and cried / And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?' / Although we were not. I was still the same, / Knowing myself yet being someone other / And he a face still forming" (Eliot, 1943, II.86-102). One doubles to address what is nonetheless not oneself, calling out to the reflected face, but hearing it call out, too: *Could that be you?* This *you* does not address falsely (from or to one who is-not), as in both Markson and Rilke; nor does it perfectly point back on itself, though it comes closer to this latter. Rather, in the double part assumed by the *I* is the double cry of a mutual *you*, a cry that forms those addressing and addressed by it, neither quite the same nor fully formed yet in their distinction. It is this lingering indistinction that keeps this final *you* from being quite successful. This will come closer to Hildegard's strange address, in which the voice is redoubled, but she will insist nonetheless upon a clear priority and distinction between creator and creation—a priority and a distinction that do not preclude mutuality.

There *is* a second person in Hildegard's antiphon: the speaker is not the Father, nor the Word. And there is a speaker, or there are speakers (though the numbers become, as so often in mystical discourse, strangely shifting and paradoxical) a choral many *we* who address; there is an addressee of the *you*, a Father in whose existence the speaker (or singer) seems confident. But her—or, rather, given the *we*, our-spoken or sung words do seem to give back to the Father what the Father through the Word gave to us: the fullness of lacking; that is, desire. That curious creative combination of fullness of lack (desire is never only lacking) flows multidirectionally through the W/word—and not least through the strange word *you*. The address here lacks a name, but not desire: it is entirely beseeching, asking only to address, to call upon. But the address is also directed through the Word by which the one calling was created—called into being as desiring, and by the divine desire to see and to hear. The antiphon vibrates, *resonates*, at the frequency of *you*. It echoes a divine eagerness to resonate, for

which creation is made, and a human eagerness to resonate, as that for which we are made.

I have repeatedly used the idea of *resonance* here as a term particularly appropriate to the very musical cosmology and worldview of the writer of this small song. We don't often think about the resonance of language, but Jean-Luc Nancy, struggling to make sense of sense itself, writes, "Perhaps it is necessary that sense not be content to make sense . . . but that it want also to resound" (Nancy, 2008, 6). *Resonance*, re-sounding or sounding again, emphasizes the sense—the sensuality, even—of sound. Nancy writes of the act of listening to music, in which we attend to resonance explicitly (and to language, if at all, with as much attention to sensuousness as to meaning):

It returns to itself, it reminds itself of itself, and it feels itself as resonance itself: a relationship to self deprived, stripped of all egoism and all ipseity. Not "itself," or the other, or identity, or difference, but alteration and variation, the modulation of the present that changes it in expectation of its own eternity, always imminent and always deferred, since it is not in any time. Music is the art of making the outside of time return to every time, making return to every moment the beginning that listens to itself beginning and beginning again. In resonance the inexhaustible return of eternity is played—and listened to. (Nancy, 2007, 67)

With these thoughts we can really begin to see how central it is that Hildegard is a musician. Hildegard claimed that her songs were received in her visions, though it is not clear if by this she included their melodies or only their lyrics (Pfau, in Hildegard, 1998, 75). What is a little more clear is that this distinction is imperfect. We find in the antiphons an example of the "medieval conception of melody as a movement of the voice, as *cantus* declaiming language through melodic inflections" (Pfau, in Hildegard, 1998f, 75, citing Treitler, 145-46). Marianne Richert Pfau notes that "the words in music in Hildegard's compositions are mutually influential. The text determines many musical choices; the music may clarify textual syntax and large-scale form that in turn contribute to the meaning" (in Hildegard, 1998, 94). I have noted that for Hildegard the world is brought into being by

divine voice, and that creation is interconnected by resemblances that vibrate in a deeply musical interconnection. Her metaphors of the human-divine connection are often explicitly musical, as when she writes of the resonance of songs of praise.

Humanity is for her the image of God, a claim that oversimplifies the complex of images that Hildegard sees at every level of the cosmos. In a sense, the human voice is the image of the creative divine voice—but it is not a weakened copy. If anything, it is a weaker version of its own original perfection; for Hildegard, original sin is the loss of harmonious voice. In this notion, she both takes up and quite intriguingly nuances the Augustinian reading of original sin, through which the notion comes to be dogmatic or doctrinal for Christianity. For Augustine, the original disobedience is one that resonates, or multiplies in images of itself: Adam's¹⁰ disobedience of God echoes in the continued dissonance not only of human and divine will, but of human will with itself and with human flesh (see Augustine, 2003, especially 14.24). Hildegard, however, makes explicit, and makes more than metaphorical, the musicality of this image. In a letter to the prelates of Mainz, she uses this reading to make a subtle argument in favor of song—and against the injunction that forbade her house from musical celebration (her argument was evidently effective, as the injunction was subsequently lifted).

“Adam lost [the voice of the living Spirit] through his disobedience. Because he lost his innocence, his voice in no way harmonized with the voices of the angels who sing God's praise . . . a harmony he had possessed in Paradise.” The loss of Paradise is the loss of song. Conversely, when the prophets composed songs and accompanied them on musical instruments, they acted “[s]o that human beings would not live from the memory of exile, but with thoughts of heavenly bliss . . . and furthermore so that human beings would be enticed to praise God” (Hildegard, in 1987, 356). Music is the best form of praise because it acts as its own enticement, thereby enhancing itself, and because it echoes the

¹⁰ The emphasis on Adam, rather than Eve, in the reading of the Genesis story is not simple sexism, though it is not unreasonable to suspect that sexism is active as well. Among more theoretical grounds, however, is the fact that Augustine, in keeping with the medical knowledge of his time, understood human heritage to be entirely seminal (with the sperm as homunculus). If original sin is to be inherited, as he believed it was, it would have to come through the father.

perfect praise of the voice that harmonizes with the very angels. Indeed, Hildegard insists, “before the Fall [Adam’s] voice carried in itself, in full, harmonious sound the loveliness of every musical art” (Hildegard, in 1987, 357). Our music is imperfect, but it is as close to perfection as the praising voice can come—when we only speak, or are inharmonious, our praise is lessened. The Devil, Hildegard argues, so hates songs of praise that he sows discord—from that between humans and God in Eden all the way to that between Hildegard and the prelates—in order to silence them (Hildegard, in 1987, 358).

In this antiphon, we see a musical deixis, or a deixis that gives way to musicality. The *you* does not point, but resonates. We find neither identity nor difference, but “alteration and variation . . . modulation.” *You* resonates with the *we* as the plural of “a self deprived . . . of all egoism and all ipseity” (Nancy, 2007, 67), a self full of the things that it lacks, made a resonating chamber for the divine that does more than simply reflect. That singing, praying self resonates with its addressee; God reverberates with the creation that the resonant divine voice has called into being, and eternity returns to the measured time of the song. Reason breathes from the diaphragm, and the body gives voice to the soul.¹¹

It is creation that allows God to see God, creation that acts as a mirror—a mirror that shows (wonder) by singing (praise)—but in singing it does not simply show, but necessarily shares. Creation mirrors God in this synaesthetic image, an outpouring of divine joyful desire echoed back, as such desire so often is, in song. The knowledge or seeing thus given back to the creator is not an epistemological necessity (it does not seem that Hildegard’s God requires creation for self-knowing), but rather a gift that returns joy by holding that mirror up to it. Resonance is responsive, but it is not simply response, nor even a circle of response and call; in it, the singing vibration is shared. God says, and the world is—both because God’s speaking is creative power, and, less evidently, because all speaking does implicitly address: to speak, God speaks to, and the face formed in the mirror sings back in praise.

¹¹ Brendan Doyle notes the deep physicality of Hildegard’s music, and remarks, “this makes wonderful sense if we realize that she was a physical scientist as well as a musician.” Introduction to the Songs, in Hildegard, 1987, 364.

Hildegard's *we* call out from creation to the resonant joy and desire found only in the great need and the *you*.

Hildegard's musical deixis, then, functions quite unusually. It does not simply point, not even in a given context—and this though Hildegard, unlike many mystical theologians, does seem to have a clear sense of a God as distinct and singular, capable of firmly declaring its own singularity. Neither does the pair *we-you* simply collapse, as if to conflate the *we* and the *you*—not only would this be for her a sin worthy of severe condemnation, but it would silence the music itself, the rapid back and forth of vibration. Despite Hildegard's frequent use of mirror imagery in descriptions of creation, the song is no simple mirror either; the singing *we* are not a poor imitation of the divine voice that sang creation into being, but the closest that postlapsarian creation can approach to the perfect harmonies of Paradise. The antiphon does not quite serve as a responsory, even in the complexly looped manner of much prayerful call-and-response, in which an originary voice is hard to pinpoint, and every call seems already to be and to have been an answer. Nor does it, quite, loop in the manner of autodeixis, in which the context refracts the pointing back to the source of the term. Rather, altogether musically, deixis becomes reverberation, in which one vibration—the call of created desire, the creative divine voice—sets up another on the same frequency, so that we have the “same” sound, but more so, louder by addition, enriched by another voice, closer to Paradisical perfection. Humanity's very need, put into song, perfects divine delight. Hildegard's musicality informs her cosmology both intellectually and sensuously. Taking seriously the notion of a world called into being by voice, she likewise takes seriously the fullness of desire that calls back, the soul as a resonating chamber for the voice that reads aloud the unnamed name of the *you*, in an address and a reply that can only call to both gratifying completeness and endless need.

WORKS CITED

- Augustine of Hippo. 2003. *City of God*. Translated by Henry Bettenson. London: Penguin.
- _____. 1991. *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- _____. 1995. *The Teacher*. In *Against Academicians and The Teacher*. Translated by Peter King. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- Butcher, Carmen Acevedo. 2007. *Hildegard of Bingen: A Spiritual Reader*. Brewster, Mass: Paraclete Press.
- Carroll, Lewis. 1999. *Through the Looking Glass*. In Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition*, edited and annotated by Martin Gardner. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Chrétien, Jean-Louis. 2004. *The Call and the Response*. Translated by Anne A. Davenport. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Eliot, T.S. 1943. *Four Quartets*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Hildegard of Bingen. 1987. *The Book of Divine Works: Ten Visions of God's Deeds in the World and Humanity*. Edited by Matthew Fox. Translated by Robert Cunningham. Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company: 5-266.
- _____. 2008. *Causes and Cures*. Translated by Priscilla Throop. Charlotte, VT: MedievalMS, 2008.
- _____. 1987. Letter 41, to the Prelates of Mainz. Translated by Ronald Mille. In *The Book of Divine Works: Ten Visions of God's Deeds in the World and Humanity*. Edited by Matthew Fox. Santa Fe, NM: Bear and Company: 354-59.
- _____. 1990. *Scivias*. Translated by Columba Hart and Jane Bishop. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- _____. 1998. *Symphonia*. Critical edition with introduction, translations, and commentary by Barbara Newman. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- MacKendrick, Karmen. 2013. *Divine Enticement: Theological Seductions*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- _____. "When You Call My Name." *Glossator*, 5, 2011: 57-67.
- _____. *Word Made Skin*. 2008. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Mackey, Lewis. 1997. *Peregrinations of the Word*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Markson, David. 1988. *Wittgenstein's Mistress*. Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press.
- Masciandro, Nicola. 2012. "What is This that Stands before Me?: Metal as Deixis." In *Reflections in the Metal Void*. Edited by Niall Scott. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press: 3-17.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2008. *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*. Translated by Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith. New York: Fordham University Press.

- _____. *Listening*. 2007. Translated by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Online Etymology Dictionary. <http://www.etymonline.com/>
- Pfau, Marianne Richert. 1998. "Music and Text in Hildegard's Antiphons." In Hildegard of Bingen, *Symphonia*. Critical edition with introduction, translations, and commentary by Barbara Newman. Ithaca: Cornell University Press: 74-94.
- Rilke, Rainer-Maria. 1990. *New Poems (1907)*. Translated by Edward Snow. New York: North Point Press.
- Treitler, Leo. 1984. "Reading and Singing: On the Genesis of Occidental Music-Writing," in *Early Music History* 4: 135-208.

Karmen MacKendrick is a professor of philosophy at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, NY. She works primarily in philosophical theology and on bodies, language, and temporality. Her recent works include *Divine Enticement: Theological Seductions* (Fordham, 2013) and, with Virginia Burrus and Mark Jordan, *Seducing Augustine: Bodies, Desires, Confessions* (Fordham, 2010). She also studies flamenco, and often wishes that she had a decent singing voice.