

CHANNELLING THE ECSTASY OF HILDEGARD VON BINGEN: "O EUCHARI" REMIXED

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Abbess Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179) became an unexpected cult figure in the final decades of the twentieth century, when her life and work were used as the stimulus for numerous cultural products, from imagined autobiographies to film. Her adoption as a quasi- featured artist by creators of electronic dance music (EDM) was surprisingly commercially successful, chiming with Michael Embach's view that:

No other medieval figure has been as subject to transitions that have strayed so profoundly from an authentic impression, moving through myth and legend, and finally into pure fiction.¹

Hildegard's reception at this time rested on cultural understandings of her as a visionary, a nun whose spirituality had almost magical qualities. Her mysticism, her isolation as a well-documented female composer of the twelfth century, and her melodic style led to Hildegard's association with 'ecstasy' – both in the meanings found to be inherent to her music, and with the interpretation of her works in performance and re-composition. This chapter will examine the ways in which notions of female ecstasy also informed the use of Hildegard's music in ambient house and New Age tracks that sampled the song "O Euchari": The Beloved's "The Sun Rising" (1989), Orbital's "Belfast" (1991), and Richard Souther's "Vision (O Euchari in Leta Via)" (1994).

1 Michael Embach, "Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179): A History of Reception," *A Companion to Hildegard of Bingen: Companion to Hildegard of Bingen*, ed. Beverly Kienzle, George Ferzoco, and Debra Stoult (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 273–304.

Medievalism was threaded through diverse genres of the late 1980s and 1990s, from Viking imagery in heavy metal to the popularity of crossover groups such as the Mediaeval Baebes.² This appropriation of ancient culture also drove the reuse of Hildegard's music by those working in dance and ambient genres. The timbral qualities of the voice type fashionable in early music performances were appealing to electronic music composers, whose female-voice samples were similarly pure in tone, and to their listeners. Such presentations of women's vocality in popular and electronic genres were typically ethereal, wordless, and passive in the mix. However, the three examples discussed here were released during a time when a number of prominent women musicians actively challenged stereotypes. The analysis of three songs featuring the "O Euchari" sample will therefore consider the ways in which Hildegard's music is lent different levels of agency and meaning, depending on its manipulation by modern composers and arrangers. As representative of a 'female voice' – both literally and in terms of its performance of Hildegard's historical and creative voice – I am interested to consider the extent to which the Hildegard sample aligns with the presentation of other such voices. I will situate the "O Euchari" songs within the context of female-voice tracks of the 1980s and 1990s, and offer a comparison with the monastic chanting sampled by Enigma, demonstrating the contrasting ways in which signifiers of gender and spirituality functioned in popular music. What can the use of Hildegard's song tell us about electronic music's relationship with music of the past? And, perhaps more controversially, what do such interrelationships reveal about problematic historical stereotypes of female creativity?

Rediscovering Hildegard for the New Age

Hildegard von Bingen was a Benedictine nun, eventually an abbess, whose

2 On medievalism in music and popular culture, see Simon Trafford and Aleks Pluskowski, "Antichrist Superstars: The Vikings in Hard Rock and Heavy Metal," *Mass Market Medieval: Essays on the Middle Ages in Popular Culture*, ed. David W. Marshall, (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland & Co), 57–73; Veronica Ortenberg, *In Search of the Holy Grail: The Quest for the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006).

diverse writings covered almost every available topic of her day, from the political to the spiritual and from aspects of natural philosophy to physiological studies of the human body.³ A figure of Catholic devotion for centuries, Hildegard's story provided ample evidence of her sanctity, but it took until 2012 for her official canonisation to occur. Hildegard's theology, her interest in the natural world, and her political involvement with religious and secular leaders across Europe has meant that her biography – unlike that of so many other remarkable women – was never entirely erased from historical accounts in her native Germany. She has been venerated in various ways since her death.⁴ In the English-speaking world, studies of Hildegard were encouraged by feminists' search for marginalised figures to add to the historical canon. Perhaps surprisingly to musicians familiar with her creative output, Hildegard's compositions did not play a prominent role in the early reception of her influence during the medieval and early modern periods, or even during the nineteenth century. They are far from insubstantial: 77 individual liturgical songs, plus a further collection of songs that form her morality play *Ordo virtutum*.

A catalyst for the wider interest in Hildegard's musical output was the release of *A Feather on the Breath of God* (1982), a full album of her devotional chants, performed in various vocal and instrumental combinations by Gothic Voices (directed by Christopher Page).⁵ A second influential 'classical' album of her music, *Canticles of Ecstasy: Hildegard von Bingen*, was released to critical

3 Of the considerable bibliography on Hildegard, Barbara Newman's edited collection of essays remains an excellent, interdisciplinary guide; *Voice of the Living Light: Hildegard of Bingen and her World* (London & Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). See also Beverly Kienzle, George Ferzoco, and Debra Stoudt eds., *A Companion to Hildegard of Bingen* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

4 Jennifer Bain, *Hildegard of Bingen and Musical Reception: The Modern Revival of a Medieval Composer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3.

5 *A Feather on the Breath of God: Sequences and Hymns by Abbess Hildegard of Bingen*, Gothic Voices with Emma Kirkby & Emily van Evera, dir. Christopher Page (Hyperion, CA66039 vinyl 1982; CD Hyperion, CDA66039, 1984). Recording Engineer: Tony Faulkner; Recording Producer: Martin Compton.

acclaim by Sequentia in 1994.⁶ Both recordings tapped into the idea that Hildegard's music was 'ecstatic', a word that was regularly used in connection with the style of her song and for marketing purposes.⁷ The term 'ecstasy' conjured Hildegard's reputation as the 'Sibyl of the Rhine'; it also resonated with aspects of popular culture of the 1980s and 1990s in which trance-like states, not least through the use of the drug MDMA ('ecstasy'), were part of the club scene, and thus served as a meeting point for medieval and modern cultural references. The presence of Hildegard's music in commercially released recordings has grown far beyond the 30 or so releases assessed by Jennifer Bain in her 2008 study of Hildegard's musical 'ecstasy'. Hildegard's songs have formed part of compilations as well as – unusually for a composer of plainchant – many albums entirely dedicated to her music. Even more remarkably, Hildegard's devotional music has reached diverse audiences through its performance and reworking by musicians ranging from enclosed Benedictine nuns to classically-trained professional early musicians, and from performers steeped in world, folk, and New Age traditions to those in electronic dance music.

The recordings by Gothic Voices and Sequentia tapped into a particular trend in the 1980s and 1990s, as popular demand for examples of historical, female-centred spirituality played a role in the New Age movement. New Age's spiritual themes were diffuse, drawing liberally on diverse religious and quasi-spiritual traditions. Particularly attractive to its audience were ritualistic and shamanic practices, since they offered an apparent connection to ancient wisdom, often in unfamiliar linguistic traditions (Latin song, Buddhist chanting, Native American incantation) whose texts were used for sonic meditation more than semantic meaning. Music was an integral part

6 *Canticles of Ecstasy: Hildegard von Bingen*, Sequentia (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 05472 77320 2, 1994).

7 Jennifer Bain, "Hooked on Ecstasy: Performance 'Practice' and the Reception of the Music of Hildegard of Bingen," *The Sounds and Sights of Performance in Medieval and Renaissance Music: Essays in Honour of Timothy J. McGee*, ed. Brian Power and Maureen Epp (Farnham, Ashgate: 2009), 253–74.

of New Age, and commercial recordings brought otherwise niche musical traditions to large Western audiences. Both New Age and rave cultures made use of chant, tapping into perceptions of spiritual song as healing, communal, and liberating.⁸ In the 1960s, texts like Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* had enjoyed cult status within the counterculture as a result of its timeless, non-denominational appeal; in the 1990s, Gibran's writings were joined by such publications as *Hildegard in a Nutshell*, *The Wisdom of Hildegard von Bingen*, and the scholarly and accessible *Hildegard von Bingen: The Woman of her Age*, each offering a female-centred perspective to a New Age readership.⁹ As part of these developments, Hildegard gained the uncommon distinction of being one of the few medieval composers whose reputation had crossed from the ivory towers of academia into public awareness.¹⁰

Hildegard's chants were not the only medieval songs to be remixed in the 1980s and 1990s. When EDM, ambient house, New Age, and rave culture appropriated the sound world of pre-modern spirituality into new electronic contexts, they frequently drew on monastic chant, which was also experiencing crossover success at this time, whether remixed or sung unaccompanied as a relaxation aid.¹¹ One of the most popular bands of the period, German group Enigma, achieved commercial success with tracks sampling male-community Gregorian chant ("Sadness (Part I)", from *MCMXC a.D.*, 1990, which sold 5,000,000 copies), and male-voice Native American chanting

8 For a wider survey of electronic music cultures around 1990, see Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013).

9 Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923); Robert van de Weyer, *Hildegard in a Nutshell* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997); Fiona Bowie, *The Wisdom of Hildegard von Bingen* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Fiona Maddocks, *Hildegard von Bingen: The Woman of her Age* (London: Review, 2001).

10 Bain, "Hooked on Ecstasy," 253.

11 A history of the marketing of medieval music as part of New Age would go beyond the central purpose of this chapter; a discussion of the mass marketing of Hildegard and chant recordings can be found in Jennifer Bain, "Hildegard on 34th Street: Chant in the Market Place," *ECHO: A Music-Centred Journal* 6, no. 1 (2004) online at <http://www.echo.ucla.edu/Volume6-issue1/bain/bain1.html>.

(“Return to Innocence”, *The Cross of Changes*, 1994).¹² However, the sampling of Hildegard’s song had more to do with the typical ways that the female voice had traditionally been presented in electronic musical media as it did with its historical, liturgical roots. The reason for the particular appeal of Hildegard’s ‘female voice’ therefore demands some careful scrutiny, as it arguably had much to do with the marketing and reception of the Gothic Voices recording from which Emily van Evera’s performance of “O Eucharisti” was sampled.

The award-winning *A Feather on the Breath of God* received substantial attention from outside the traditional early music world. Three factors made Hildegard an obvious choice for those seeking a sample of early chant (initially without permission or credit): her chaste, idealised femininity, her mysticism, and the heightened public awareness of her song. What better to feature on an album of New Age or electronic music than the ‘voice’ of a nun who experienced mystical visions, wrote spiritual/sensual poetry, and who was already at the top of the classical charts? But there was a further factor at play: namely the underlying resonance between Hildegard’s chants and the conceptual basis for ambient music more broadly, as neatly articulated by Brian Eno in his album notes for *Music for Airports*. Of the modern genre, Eno wrote that “Ambient Music must be able to accommodate many levels of listening attention without enforcing one in particular; it must be as ignorable as it is interesting”.¹³ Essentially, then, it was music in which the listener was paramount, but who was also expected to seek sounds that could be engaged with, or not, in equal measure. In Page’s notes to *A Feather on the Breath of God*, the director included the following guidance on the ideal manner for plainchant performance:

12 The Gregorian chant samples on hit singles “Sadness” and “Mea Culpa” were taken, without permission, from the album *Paschale Mysterium*, performed by Capella Antiqua München (dir. Konrad Ruhland, Sony Classical, B00XZRPKOG, 1977).

13 Brian Eno, ‘Ambient Music’, liner notes from the initial American release of *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (PVC 7908 (AMB 001), 1978), accessed February 13, 2018, http://music.hyperreal.org/artists/brian_eno/MFA-txt.html

Ideally, [medieval] singers were to allow their activity to absorb the whole spirit and body, inducing a state of meditative calm and so intensifying the quality of devotional life. Distractions [...] were therefore to be avoided. Discretion was the basis of the ideal: voices betraying a poised, attentive spirit dwelling upon the inner meaning of the text, sensitive to musical nuances but never seduced by them.¹⁴

The relationship between the two ostensibly different musical genres is one of common levels of perception within the frame of musical time: rather than anything standing out, distracting the listener's attention, both Gothic Voices' performance of plainchant and Eno's ambient music emphasise meditative practice. Page's words share an affinity with Eno's definition. The listener could, perhaps even should, be only minimally aware or casually stimulated by the sounds of devotional chant. Even the medieval singer performed mainly as a functional aid to calmness of thought, perhaps mindful of St Augustine's advice that one should enjoy the prayerful message of song but fall short of allowing it to incite the body to dancing or other sinful pleasures. It is a trope of medieval religious writing that song might have such effects, and that women were both more susceptible to them and more naturally inclined to seduce others with their siren-like voices.¹⁵ Arguably, then, both the Gothic Voices' recording of Hildegard's music and the electronically manipulated versions of her song held in common their wrestling with the presence of the potentially distracting, even unruly, female voice in the mix. A final irony remains in that the ability of ambient music to make women's voices even more ignorable than usual, in fact facilitated widespread awareness and opportunities to hear Hildegard's song.

The three main areas on which the present discussion will focus all relate to just one of Hildegard's songs, "O Euchari" (Fig. 1). The song – whose four

14 Page, liner notes to *A Feather on the Breath of God*, 5.

15 See Bruce Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

double versicles last over five minutes in performance – is a poem in honour of the missionary, St Eucharius, a figure of veneration for the community of Trier (where he served as Bishop) and elsewhere. In Hildegard’s chant, the opening melody soars upwards in a manner found elsewhere in her output, from the opening note to an octave above by way of the fifth, emphasising those intervals.¹⁶ The rising opening gesture of “O Euchari” is aurally striking, and helps to situate the remaining, more step-wise melody within the Phrygian frame that is gradually established, and is confirmed by the F natural towards the end of the first phrase. The lyric’s distinctive “O” opening recalls the “O” antiphons, medieval devotional chants performed at Vespers in the final part of Advent, each praising attributes of Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary (“O Sapientia”, “O Clavis David”, etc.). The text is a joyous praise of Eucharius, and this aspect of celebration is well matched by moments of melisma (more than one note per syllable), which function to emphasise closing syllables of lines and verses in particular.



Fig. 1: Hildegard von Bingen, “O Euchari”

The tracks that sample Hildegard’s music all sit within the broad genre of electronic music, but they function quite differently in the particular ways that Hildegard’s music is used and transformed, and what cultural meanings are signified. Although there were various recording styles already available to electronic music composers – including performances of Hildegard’s

16 On the stylistic features of Hildegard’s music that have been marked out as personally distinctive, and the problems with this perception, see Jennifer Bain, “Hildegard, Hermannus, and Late Chant Style,” *Journal of Music Theory* 52, no. 1 (2008), 123–49. Bain demonstrates that the gesture as found at the beginning of “O Euchari” is not peculiar to Hildegard’s music, but instead is typical of eleventh- and twelfth-century chant composition lying outside of Gregorian repertory; Bain, “Hildegard, Hermannus”; 124, 146.

songs by nuns, monks, classical singers and diverse instrumentalists – they all selected the Gothic Voices track as the basis for new work. Therefore, I will take Bain’s claim that “the style of musical presentation itself [...] can shape the image of who Hildegard was for anyone listening”, and use it to test what that might mean when all three share the same initial performance material.¹⁷ I am chiefly interested in three areas: the use of Hildegard’s song to create a sense of timelessness; the use of “O Euchari” in relation to the idea of ‘ecstasy’, also fundamental to ambient, house, New Age and rave cultures; and finally in the importance of female-centred spirituality to the three remixes.

Susana Loza has identified various ways in which human voices are manipulated by technology in electronic dance music, and of the five categories she describes, four are particularly relevant to the ways in which the “O Euchari” sample is used in remixes and are worth summarising here.¹⁸ First, although all three employ material that has been excised from the original track, The Beloved’s mix can be seen to employ a basic ‘cut-up’ (Loza’s first technique), in which the sample can be heard as more nonsensical than in its original context; this is enhanced by their use of the sample as a ‘diva loop’ (technique five), in which “the female voice is electronically eroticised and/or the exaggerated peak of one natural(ised) and ultrafeminised orgasmic cry”, “sonically spliced and mechanically (re)produced until it surpasses the borders of believability”.¹⁹ In both the Beloved and Orbital’s mixes, Loza’s second technique, the ‘Moebius loop’, produces “a haunting echo that multiplies until it collapses upon itself in a series of surreal and interconnected ellipses”;²⁰ this effect is also part of the outro material to “Vision” by Richard Souther. Her third technique, which is the use of vocoder, is not part of these remixes,

17 Bain, *Hildegard of Bingen*, 7.

18 Susana Loza, “Sampling (hetero)sexuality: Diva-ness and Discipline in Electronic Dance Music,” *Popular Music* 20, no. 3 (2001), 349–57.

19 Loza, “Sampling (hetero)sexuality,” 349–50.

20 Loza, “Sampling (hetero)sexuality,” 350.

and that in itself reminds us of the central importance of the qualities of the singer's original vocal in creating meaning in subsequent arrangements. Orbital play with the speed of the sample more than the other two artists.

Timelessness and medievalism: Orbital, "Belfast" (1991)

Eight minutes long in its commercial release, Orbital's track "Belfast" places the chosen sample of Hildegard / van Evera in two main sections (Fig. 2).²¹ There are only a handful of main elements to the piece: a high-pitched, oscillating melodic motif; a high-pitched percussive element that provides a surface rhythm; a mid-range harmonic wash evoking vocal timbres; low-pitched material that serves as a harmonic underpinning; and the sample itself. In the middle of the track, a version of the high-pitched, oscillating material is developed as a continuous keyboard melody, before a break and re-building of the track, accompanied by a more active bass riff and the re-entry of the sample within the full texture at a slightly reduced tempo.



Fig. 2 Placement of Hildegard samples within the track

A theme of being outside conventional time is common to several Orbital releases, and this is sometimes emphasised through the handling of sampled material. The opening track of the group's first album (untitled, but known as *The Green Album*), "The Moebius", drew sampled speech from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: "There is the theory of the Moebius: a twist in the fabric of space where time becomes a loop, from which there is no escape [...]"

21 Although live remixes are typical of club-scene experiences of this track, the success of the commercial release makes it an appropriate reference point; "Belfast" was released on Orbital, *Orbital* (FFRR, 1991).

When we reach that point, whatever happened *will* happen again”.²² Thus Orbital’s tracks play with trance-inducing verbal and sonic repetition and also with speed, especially after the main break, and the use of a sample of looped Hildegard in “Belfast” ties in well with their aesthetic more generally. However, although the Hildegard / van Evera sample is looped, this is not to the extent that the vocal “collapses upon itself” as might be identified by Loza in similar examples. Instead, the sample is reproduced only once each time it appears, with the listener hearing it four times in total.

“Belfast” is informed by an overarching medievalism, achieved not only through the introduction of Hildegard’s sequence, but also through further stylistic features. The track opens with material redolent of medieval drones through the use of pitch and timbre, and by open, perfect intervals (Fig. 3); this material provides a contrast with the high pitch of other material, including synthesised sound and van Evera’s own voice. A drone on open harmonies is a simple device, but it is a clear early music signifier that conflicts with the synthesised sounds that subsequently enter the track on higher pitch material.

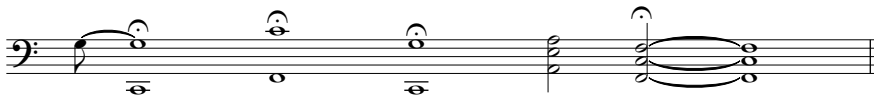


Figure 3: Orbital, “Belfast”: opening drones

In both sections featuring Hildegard’s music, the medieval song is very low in the mix, giving a sense of historical distance – we hear echoes of her voice as if across time. The sample is heard at the same pitch as in Gothic Voices’ original release, but the tempo of the sample is gradually adjusted to match speed changes that take place from the midpoint. The pitch of the sample is slightly dissonant with the harmonic setting established in the track, but there are moments of resolution at the ends of the sample phrases where

²² The same sample is used on “Time Becomes”, the opening track on Orbital’s second album (1993), also untitled but known as *The Brown Album* on account of its colour.

the drones close on E. Textually, there is some effort to retain a semantically meaningful section of Latin (“O Euchari, in leta via ambulasti ubi cum filio Deo mansisti, illum tangendo”; O Eucharius, you walked in the path of joy when you tarried with the Son of God, touching him), and this clarity is aided by the limited number of loops. The quiet dynamic of the sample within the mix makes the poetry less audible. However, the musical line and shape would have been immediately familiar to either fans of Hildegard or, more widely, to those who had heard The Beloved’s “The Sun Rising”, released only a year before and still played regularly at similar club venues.

The use of a sample so well known to the audience from The Beloved’s reworking appears to tap into a form of cultural nostalgia. But for what period does this track create nostalgic yearning? On the one hand, the use of pre-existent song and signifiers of early music in the new material provokes nostalgia for the sort of idealised medieval past beloved by writers, painters, architects, and musicians since the nineteenth century. Theirs was a romanticised past, a pre-industrial world in which sexually innocent damsels were won through the chivalric acts of manly knights. On the other hand, it was equally, if perhaps not more so, a sort of nostalgia for the very recent past of a young audience who held “The Sun Rising” in shared cultural memory.²³ Finally, we might consider that the imagined experience of rave culture, and of the drug use, all-night dancing, and associated euphoria of that scene, was evoked even for members of Orbital’s audience who had not participated directly in those events, but who understood the musical references to it across both tracks and their various remixes.²⁴ Music as used in clubbing spaces of

23 On the use of sampling in dance music, and its connection to nostalgia, see Morey in Chapter 8, “Ambient House: ‘Little Fluffy Clouds’ and the Sampler as Time Machine”, as well as Justin Morey, “A Study of Sampling Practice in British Dance Music, 1987–2012” (PhD diss., Leeds Beckett University, 2017).

24 On club cultures of the 1990s, see Ben Malbon, *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality* (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), where ecstatic experiences are discussed on pp. 105–34. Malbon associates ecstatic experiences directly with drug-taking, but my use of the term is broader, drawing particularly on the sort of mystical and contemporary discourse associated with Hildegard and her music, following Bain, “Hooked on Ecstasy”.

the 1990s held some of its social function with monastic chant, since sound and (in the modern context) dancing served to bind individuals into more collective emotional and ritual experiences, often by blurring musical time through repetition.²⁵ In this way, timelessness, euphoria, and nostalgia were effectively created for listeners through Orbital's deliberate manipulation of references to time.

Musical ecstasy and female sexual purity: The Beloved, "The Sun Rising"

The Beloved's remix of "O Euchari" is arguably most typical of the more problematic ways in which women's voices have been represented within electronic dance music, exemplifying Loza's descriptions of the dehumanisation of voices through multiple loops, creating amplified peaks that we might read here as 'ecstatic'. The 'ecstatic' female voice has a long and frequently thorny relationship with electronic music genres, in which the ubiquity of women's passive, manipulated voices can be contrasted with the relative historical absence of women from the recording studio.²⁶ The binary gender split in studio-based music is typically understood as a divide between 'male/techno/wizardry' and male authors' creative manipulation of a 'diva loop'.²⁷ The gendered discourse surrounding technology has changed little since the early 1980s when it attracted criticism for the relative power imbalance that saw women as users rather than makers of music technologies. As Rebekah Farrugia has articulated, the consensus among feminist scholars across disciplines is that "technology is not inherently masculine, but has been labeled as such as a result of socially constructed narratives, rhetorical

25 Malbon, *Clubbing*, 103.

26 See discussions in Hannah Bosma, *The Electronic Cry: Voice and Gender in Electroacoustic Music* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2013).

27 Barbara Bradby and Dave Laing, "Introduction to 'Gender and Sexuality' Special Issue," *Popular Music* 20, no. 3 (2001): 296.

devices and material practices”.²⁸ The tracks discussed here employ rhetorical devices that highlight different aspects of gender, as well as other markers of identity such as age and ethnicity.

Typically, in electronic (and many other) music genres, the female voice comes to signify the passive object of desire; a siren-like presence from the mix. As Dominic Pettman has remarked, the female voice in acousmatic music has an intimate quality: “a voice with no visible source”, he writes, “is all the more enchanting and all-enveloping”.²⁹ In many electronic works, the female voice not only remains passive, it lacks any agency other than apparently expressing sensual pleasure, itself a stereotype in the cultural understanding of women’s vocality more broadly. When we hear van Evera in the mix, then, she sounds her own desirability. A further layer is the presentation by van Evera of Hildegard’s musical and creative body, the voice of a nun; although Hildegard lived to an advanced age, her vow of chastity ensured that she maintained a body free from sexual activity, and from the subsequent markers of women’s aging bodies such as childbirth. This archetype of sexual unavailability has made nuns the focus of much insinuation, humour, suspicion and even desire for hundreds of years across diverse media. One might conclude that far from being passive, Hildegard’s vows signify her body as virginal, imaginatively untouched by a lover, and thus more sexually heightened for the listener than a non-religious voice might suggest. Hildegard’s melody may itself even be considered as siren-like, a form in which verbal articulation is less important than its pleasurable sound of “O”. In doing so, it would offer an example of what Adriana Caverero has described as a key role for women’s voices in music:

In her erotic function as seductress, as an object of masculine desire, the woman appears first of all as a body and as an inarticulate voice.

²⁸ Rebekah Farrugia, *Beyond the Dance Floor: Female DJs, Technology and Electronic Dance Music Culture* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2012), 20.

²⁹ Dominic Pettman, *Sonic Intimacy: Voice, Species, Technics (Or, how to Listen to the World)* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2017), 18.

She must be beautiful, but she must not speak. What she can do, however, is emit pleasing sounds, asemantic vocalizations, moans of pleasure.³⁰

Discussions of the common aesthetic preference for sopranos in electronic music typically emphasise the cultural understanding of ‘purity’ of this voice type – a term attributed to both adult sopranos and to the voices of children.³¹ The appeal of ‘pure’ voices was a feature not only in electronic works of the mid-to-late twentieth century, but also to the parallel early music revival in which Emma Kirkby, for example, was marketed as possessing the voice of an angel: pure, sweet, youthful and by implication virginal.³² When we hear Hildegard’s music presented as a ‘diva loop’ in these ambient house tracks, the very fact that it is performed using a soprano gives the illusion that we are hearing a voice recorded not ten but 840 years ago: as if we are hearing the voice of Hildegard herself. One well-known story recounts that Hildegard was once seen singing “O virga ac diadema” as she walked round her abbey, a recollection that has remained a stubborn part of her reception, even though it is likely fictive. Although we know nothing of the precise performance situation of Hildegard’s music – which may well have been performed communally, by groups of men or women, or as a solo song, in or outside the liturgy, with or without instruments – the use of just one, unaccompanied female voice evokes Hildegard herself.

30 Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); quoted in, Pettman, *Sonic Intimacy*, 30.

31 One thinks not only of women, but of the presence of boys’ voices in canonic electronic works such as in Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955–56, featuring the voice of 12-year-old Josef Protschka), or Jonathan Harvey’s *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco* (1980, featuring the composer’s choirboy son). The preference for boys’ voices to denote innocence has a long history across diverse media, not least in the music of Benjamin Britten, but lies beyond the scope of the present discussion.

32 See Melanie L. Marshall, “*Voce Bianca*: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality,” *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 19 (2015): 36–44.

How do such cultural resonances function in a track like The Beloved's "The Sun Rising", given that in this example we can hear only a tiny fragment (just two words) of Hildegard's music?³³ The song is placed within a detailed musical texture, creating antiphonal contrast in the chorus with the low-pitched, controlled vocal delivery of Jon Marsh (Fig. 4). Hildegard's leaping melodic line – often characterised as a distinctive feature of her compositional style – is made even more striking by the tightness of the loop in terms of its duration, its relentless repetition, the manipulation of the speed of the original, and by the transposition of the sample up a tone. The effect is not so much meditative as urgent; Hildegard / van Evera's voice is trapped in the track in which it is repeated unchanged in quick succession. Marsh's own repeated material is authoritative, and suggests that the sample itself illustrates the rising sun. His rational, masculine presence is set against an 'ecstatic' but contained feminine vocal.

33 "The Sun Rising" (1989), was released on The Beloved, *Happiness* (East West Records (UK) and Atlantic Records (US), 1988). It also featured on their remix album, *Blissed Out* (East West, 1991).

[Intro; instrumental]

Verse 1

Movement outside,
Silence inside
Restless lovers spread your wings
As the day begins

[Chorus 1]

O Eucharisti (repeats)
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising
It's shining
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising

[Verse 2]

Learn to love your secret life,
Still calm and gentle life
your resolution comes too fast
Now the night is past

[Chorus 2]

O Eucharisti (repeats)
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising
It's shining
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising

[instrumental]

[Verse 3]

Smiling, gliding,
Breathless you're riding
Love is just a state of mind
That we leave behind

[Chorus 3]

O Eucharisti (repeats)
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising
Oh it's shining
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising

[Instrumental]

[Outro]

Let yourself go
O Eucharisti (repeats)
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising
It's shining
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising
It's shining
It's just the sun rising
It's just the sun rising
It's shining
It's just the sun rising
sun rising
life, love... (repeats to fade)

Fig. 4: Lyrics of The Beloved: "The Sun Rising" (Jon Marsh, Ludovic Navarre, Steve Waddington)

The reduced sample of “O Euchari” used in “The Sun Rising” encourages an analysis that considers the employment of this very short musical extract to build a larger, meditative canvas based on the musical ecstasy so often perceived within the melodic gesture in the notes of the song’s opening phrase. The word ‘ecstasy’ has long been frequently associated with Hildegard’s music, so tied up is her musical output with our idea of her as a visionary, even though Hildegard’s visions “never occurred in ecstasy [trance], but rather while she was awake”.³⁴ The most obvious example is the naming of Sequentia’s recording, *Canticles of Ecstasy*, but it was also an important part of the way in which Gothic Voices’ musical director, Christopher Page, framed Hildegard’s musical style:

One of the problems with her is that she is always in ecstasy, as someone once said of her, ‘anything will set her off’ [...]. The amount of variety she can display in her musical compositions, ranging from very simple and short pieces – where more or less every syllable has a note – to these vast sequences, which are among the most luxuriant compositions of the Middle Ages – the range she shows is really terrific.³⁵

In a later interview, though still wedded to her music as ecstatic, Page was less convinced by the variety of Hildegard’s style, going as far as to suggest a *lack* of authenticity in the particular part of her creative expression associated with mysticism:

I’d say if there is a problem with Hildegard today, with all fairness to my many colleagues who have recorded Hildegard, they all sound alike. And that’s in part because a lot of Hildegard sounds alike.

34 Bain, “Hooked on Ecstasy”, 255.

35 Christopher Page in conversation on BBC Radio 3, *Spirit of the Age* programme (further details unavailable).

She's a powerfully voiced but not a flexible or versatile artist. And her mode of enhanced ecstasy can become wearing, even sometimes unconvincing, after a while, as if you wonder whether she really feels as much as her language is laying claim to.³⁶

It is difficult to read this change of heart for those wedded to the image of Hildegard promoted in the later twentieth century, that of a fiercely political, even feminist, individual whose music was understood to match her other written expressions. And if "a lot of Hildegard sounds alike", then with what – or with whom – are we assessing this individuality? Again, we find an example of the stereotypical presentation of women's creative voices, which lurch between presenting composers as *too* individual and wayward, or as simply derivative or unexceptional.³⁷

Hildegard as New Age icon of female spirituality: *Vision*

In some New Age releases, notably the music of Richard Souther, the original performances by van Evera are used more specifically to represent Hildegard's personal spirituality. Indeed, Souther's work presents Hildegard as co-author, aligning his creative product with the sorts of understandings of Hildegard's religious life that formed part of her popular reception at that time. This is most fully realised in *Vision: The Music of Hildegard von Bingen* (1994), an album that named the medieval author but initially failed to credit the performer. A follow-up album, *Illumination* (1997), tapped into the same market and was advertised as Souther "in collaboration" with the abbess.

36 Page, interviewed by Bernard D. Sherman, "Mistaking the Tail for the Comet: An Interview with Christopher Page on Hildegard of Bingen." The interview was initially undertaken for the article "The Hottest 900-year-old On the Charts," *The Los Angeles Times* (Sunday, August 9, 1998). Both articles are available at <http://www.bsherman.net/hildegard.html>.

37 On the problematic reception of women's creative voices in the twentieth century, see Lisa Colton, "The Female Exotic: Tradition, Innovation and Authenticity in the Reception of Music by Judith Weir," *Recycling and Innovation in Contemporary Music: Contemporary Music Review* 29, no. 3 (2010): 277–89.

Souther's practice of acknowledging Hildegard as co-author, rather than simply a featured artist or nameless 'diva loop', recognised her input in a manner that locates his album within the reclaiming of historical women musicians in feminist musicology of the 1980s and 1990s.³⁸ Under an extension of this model, composers and arrangers like Souther might equally name the performers and recording technicians with whom electronic music composers work. A collaborative understanding of a creative product does more to balance the presence of diverse minds in its final realisation in sound, not least for songs that include sampled material, pre-existent medieval song, and skilled production teams. Since the nineteenth century, however, the composers (here, Souther, Orbital, and The Beloved) have been credited exclusively or disproportionately with the final piece of music as their 'work'. Hannah Bosma has argued that "the different status of composer and performer is not so much related to technology as to socio-cultural structures and ideology".³⁹ Her claim is exemplified by the lack of any credit being offered initially to van Evera, as was typical of sampling practices of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ Indeed, Nicholas Cook has articulated the injustice of crediting practices that exclude performers, without whom composers' works would not enter or be maintained in the repertory at all.⁴¹

Aspects of production and creative choices combine to connect Hildegard's spirituality to the modern audience in Souther's arrangement; more than Orbital or The Beloved's releases, this version is more like a remix of the twelfth-century song. The title track of *Vision* – "Vision (O Euchari in Leta Via)" – takes substantial parts of the Gothic Voices recording and transforms it structurally into a more conventional dance music / pop format, in which

38 See, for example, Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950* (London, Macmillan, 1986).

39 Bosma, *The Electronic Cry*, 173.

40 Morey, "A Study of Sampling Practice."

41 Nicholas Cook, "Analysing Performance and Performing Analysis," *Rethinking Musicology*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 245.

the opening phrases are redeployed as a chorus or refrain.⁴² Reverberation and other forms of processing are used to emulate the acoustic of a large abbey church. The sound world is initially characterised by van Evera's plaintive, unaccompanied voice, before the introduction of the sort of instrumental textures that were broadly described as 'ethnic' at that time – marimba, bells, percussion, pan pipes, maracas, flutes – as well as an increasing presence of synthesised sound and eventually a wash of choral textures as a backing. This is Hildegard for New Age spiritual meditation, but in many ways it takes the creative voice of the medieval composer more seriously than the others, albeit with Souther's rearrangement of her melody.

The significance of Latin lyric

For many, perhaps even most, modern listeners, the semantic meaning of the Latin poetry in "O Euchari" would have been beyond their comprehension. One might therefore hear the song as part of the commonplace sound of sampled, wordless female voice in electro-acoustic music, or of live female voice with electronics. Bosma has, for example, argued that the proliferation of such scorings – not least in contrast with the relatively smaller number of works for low-voice male singers and electronics – is a cultural trope signalling the disempowerment of women and the feminine in electronic music.⁴³ Considered in isolation, the opening syllable "O" is the sort of female orgasmic cry that was ubiquitous in dance and soul genres, and which featured iconically, albeit incongruously, in Bodyform sanitary towel commercials in the 1990s in order to signal female empowerment.⁴⁴ The vocalized "O"

42 "Vision (O Euchari in Leta Via)", released on *Vision: The Music of Hildegard von Bingen*, Emily van Evera and Sister Germaine Fritz, arr. Richard Souther (Angel, S21-18449, 1994).

43 Hannah Bosma, "Voice or Ear? The Female Voice and the Listener's Position in Paul Lansky's *As it Grew Dark*," in *Sonic Mediations: Body, Sound, Technology*, ed. Carolyn Birdsall and Anthony Enns (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 109.

44 The musical semiotics of this advert, which elided orgasmic cries with the 'ecstatic yell' of the vocal to create a sense of female empowerment, are analysed in detail by Philip Tagg, in "What a Scream" (Video recorded 31 December, 2008), accessed at <https://vimeo.com/284173398>.

that opens Hildegard's song can only be created by an open (here female) mouth, a traditional focus of the male gaze, inviting us to hear the nun's voice as more sexually aware than her chaste vocation might otherwise permit. Arguably, though, the use of Latin-texted, rather than textless, song in the remainder of the samples carries its own cultural associations, even though most of the listening audience would not have been expected to understand the devotional theology of her poetry.

What aspects of religious context survive the reworking of Hildegard's song, and is the sample suggestive of individual or collective prayer? The presence of Latin in remixes of the abridged lyric evokes the devotional origin of the song. Additionally, the originally joyous message of the text is heightened by its expressive rising melody, in ways that chime with the broadly 'spiritual' aspects of much electronic dance music. On repetition within "The Sun Rising", the sonic properties of Hildegard's phrase reduce cumulatively to their component vowels (heard as O-EE-OO-CAH-REE); since only these opening syllables are used, the language is only vaguely suggestive of Latin. In "Vision", and to some extent in "Belfast", the words retain their status as religious lyric; the use of Latin devotional poetry serves to indicate, but not overstate, the (Catholic) religiosity of the sample. It is Souther's arrangement that uses the most extensive poetic text, and although there have been significant cuts to Hildegard's song, much of its evocative nature is preserved in what remains (Fig. 5). In this way, the agency of the sampled voice is greater the longer the textual segment used, since it becomes more obviously poetic and liturgical.

Lyrics, noting edits made to the poetic text

[Solo voice, refrain]

O Euchari

in leta via ambulasti

(Instruments enter: marimba etc)

[Verse 1]

O Euchari

in leta via ambulasti

ubi cum filio Deo mansisti

illum tangendo

et miracula eius que fecit vivendo.

[omitted: tue um perfecte amasti]

[Verse 2]

Cum sodales tui exterriti erant

pro eo quod homines erant

nec possibilitatem habebant

bona perfecte intueri.

[omitted: next 18 lines of poetry]

[Bridge]

Sed et ubi tua doctrina

Ecclesia effecta est rationalis,

ita quod supra montes clamavit

ut colles et ligna se declinarent

ac mamillas illius sugerent.

[Refrain]

O Euchari

in leta via ambulasti (plus *ab* backing)

O Euchari

in leta via ambulasti

O Euchari

in leta via ambulasti

O Euchari

in leta via ambulasti

Translation

O Eucharius, you trod in the path of
joyousness

O Eucharius,
You trod in the path of joyousness when
you tarried with the Son of God,
touching him,
and seeing the miracles that He wrought.

[you loved him perfectly]

When your fellow travellers^{1*} were terrified
because they were men
and had no chance
to see Divine God perfectly.

And in your preaching
Ecclesia^{2**} is filled with understanding
so that she has proclaimed in the high
places
that the hills and trees should bend
and be suckled by her breasts.

O Eucharius, you trod in the path of
joyousness.

* Valerius and Maternus, the missionary companions of Eucharius.

** The Church (feminine gender).

I would argue that the choice of female solo voice in the “O Eucharist” songs seems less overtly sacred than the samples found in Enigma’s reworkings of *Capella Antiqua München*, a male choir. This is for two reasons: first, the (incorrectly) imagined religious song of the Middle Ages is primarily one of male communities at prayer rather than women, who are assumed to have been silent, passive, or musically limited. This misconception has been fuelled by a dominance of male chant over enclosed women’s musical voices in diverse media presentations, as well as in the misrepresentation of women musicians in scholarship. Second, Enigma chose to set more liturgically evocative phrases of music (“Kyrie eleison”, “Hallelujah”), in which the words were recognisable to modern audiences through their commonplace use in popular media or current language. In “Mea Culpa”, the Latin lyric provided a more familiar linguistic phrase than the surrounding French lyrics to English-speaking audiences.⁴⁵ The most extensive liturgical sample in Enigma’s output was the antiphon “Procedamus in pace. V. Cum angelis” (“Let us proceed in peace”), which appeared in edited but undisguised form as the backbone to “Sadness (Part I)”. The video that accompanied this release set a male dreamer within a vision of a medieval monastery, in which a solitary monk paces the ruins in personal reflection. In “Sadness (Part I)”, the religious context of a male community of voices is emphasised by use of the extensive sample of the antiphon, which is harmonized and given rhythmic shape by the mix, and by the contrast of this aural image with interjections from the female vocalist, speaking in French.⁴⁶

In an interview for Radio 3, Page reflected on the performance context of songs like “O Eucharist”:

45 Kirsten Yri reads the use of French language vocals, without provision of translations in line notes, as part of the groups’ concept of ‘enigma’; “Medieval Uncloistered: Uses of Medieval Music in Late Twentieth Century Culture” (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Stony Brook University, 2004), 129.

46 Yri offers a detailed discussion of the album, and emphasizes the peaceful, spiritual and nostalgic aspects of “Sadness” in “Medieval Uncloistered”, 128–48.

We don't know that Hildegard's music would ever have been performed chorally, or indeed ever really be performed by anybody except perhaps Hildegard herself as a prayerful exercise. Now I don't wish to suggest that the many records that have been made are in any way – including my own – misconceived, but I think I now feel that there's probably no real reason, and perhaps no real justification, in modern performance, for going beyond that simple fact that we know: one voice, deeply intense, as a form of personal prayer.⁴⁷

In spite of his own recordings of Hildegard's music, which included both male and female ensemble singing, Page asserts the primacy of her music as a repertory for her own solo voice. In this way, as listeners, we are prepared by scholarship, our cultural reference points, and the sound world of the three remixes to interpret the female vocal as a deeply personal song, the subjective voice of Hildegard singing directly, actively, to the male object of her song, Eucharius. It is not as distant as Enigma's chant selections from conventional, heterosexual love song.

Hildegard within popular and early music female voices

It is relatively easy to point out cases of female vocalists and creative artists of the 1980s and 1990s who, far from being marginalised, achieved a prominent position in popular culture. Laurie Anderson's "O Superman", for example, was not only at number 2 in the UK singles chart in 1981, it was subsequently the source of musicological work by eminent feminist Susan McClary.⁴⁸ Kate Bush's experiments with technology such as the Yamaha CS80 and the Fairlight CMI underpinned her critical output in the 1980s

47 Christopher Page in conversation, BBC Radio 3, late 1990s (transcribed by the author, further details unavailable).

48 Susan McClary, "This Is Not a Story My People Tell: Musical Time and Space According to Laurie Anderson," *Discourse* 12, no. 1 (1989), 104–28; the article later formed part of Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 132–47.

in songs that framed her distinctive vocal timbre.⁴⁹ In house music, artists such as Neneh Cherry and Alison Limerick wrote and performed tracks that explored a broad spectrum of female subjectivity, not one only focused on a woman as object of male, heterosexual desire. In dance-based genres such as techno, the success of many songs hinged on the effective vocal hooks of artists from Lady Miss Kier in “Groove is in the Heart” (1990) to Anita Doth’s powerful contributions to 2 Unlimited’s hit “No Limit” (1993). On the other hand, such cases were still relatively isolated, and were produced in industry spaces dominated by men. These women achieved at least part of their success through marketing strategies (such as the archetypal “diva”) focused on performance and image that at least stray into more questionable areas of what empowerment might have meant within the last two decades of the century. There is no doubt that otherwise ground-breaking, award-winning acts like rappers Salt-N-Pepa attracted criticism from men and women who saw their prominence as strong female artists as undermined by their sex-dominated marketing. How do the “O Euchari” tracks analysed fit into this cultural context for popular music featuring women’s voices?

In the remixes that have featured Hildegard’s song, the use of a female vocal is not as reliant on markers of the diva as in some other electronic musical cultures, not least because of its lack of an actual female performer on stage. However, to assume that the voice is any less connected with sexuality, or is somehow semantically neutral, would be entirely misinformed. Van Evera’s voice derives from a group steeped in the *a cappella* early music debate of the later twentieth century.⁵⁰ The early music movement of this time was also one that favoured voices exploring a particular sound, in which women’s high voices (often framed as substitutes for boy trebles or even castrati) were expected to be ‘pure’, without sonic markers of their adult bodies such as

49 Ron Moy, *Kate Bush and Hounds of Love* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

50 See especially Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music: Scholarship, Ideology, Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

obvious vibrato; as Marshall has demonstrated, this sound was also one that prioritised archetypes of whiteness within an industry that arguably presented a relatively whitewashed medieval past in its marketing.⁵¹

The “O Euchari” sample was therefore attractive because it conveyed traditional notions of white women’s youthfulness and chastity, not only via an absence of sexuality in a passive sense, but also in an emphasised non-presence of the corporeal. Historically, women’s sexual abstinence has been framed as highly contested, frequently under threat, and in some ways therefore the epitome of disempowerment; one need think only of the problematic marketing strategies of Charlotte Church or Britney Spears to see how burgeoning sexual maturity has been used to build media appeal. Even in medieval lyrics, such as the *chanson de nonne* genre, it is clear that the narrative positions expressed in songs written from the point of view of young novices were designed to give the impression that their subjects are willing to be corrupted, to seduce, or are more sinful than they ought to be.⁵² Hildegard’s historical body was chaste; modern presentation of Hildegard, however, often commented on her apparent sexual frustration, of her suspiciously heightened longing for male saints such as a Eucharius and Disibod, hinted at her strong (lesbian?) relationship with nun Richardis von Stade, and emphasised the erotic turn of several of her lyrics. Van Evera’s voice reflected the ideal of sung virginal purity, and the reworked Hildegard that resulted from remixes highlighted the nun’s soaring, sensual melodic line in a way that encouraged the listener to hear Hildegard’s personal desire escape both through song and through its repeated manipulation in the hands of male musicians. It is significant that live DJ performances turned The Beloved’s track into expansive mixes, in which “O Euchari’s” opening

51 Marshall, “*Voce bianca*”. On the ways in which even female performers exploring different timbres are characterized as ‘pure’, see Kirsten Yri, “Remaking the Past: Feminist Spirituality in Anonymous 4 and Sequentia’s *Vox Feminae*,” *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 12 (2008): 1–21.

52 Lisa Colton, “The Articulation of Virginitly in the Medieval *Chanson de nonne*,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 133, no. 2 (2008), 159–88.

phrase was heard dozens of times in succession, not least during all-night events where the track would be used to accompany the actual sunrise.⁵³ In these performances, Hildegard's voice is launched upwards, an orgasmic voice from the ancient past looped in its ultimate release into the dawn.

Conclusion

There seems little doubt that in sampling van Evera's performance of Hildegard's "O Euchari", electronic music composers were attracted by qualities that were, on the surface, in direct opposition to the canonic classical music of the average concert hall. Unlike the nineteenth-century symphonies by white men that dominated mainstream classical discourse, Hildegard's music held potentially different significations: a distant historical time, an intriguing spiritual context, and an ethereal sound world. On the other hand, signifiers of 'otherness' (against that paradigm) in the sample aligned it with the stereotypical ways in which women's voices have appeared in traditional musical discourse, as sexualised and open to manipulation by predominantly male authors. The Beloved's track is perhaps most representative of that portrayal, limiting Hildegard's utterances to the opening vowel sounds that offer little of their original semantic meaning, and repeating them extensively against the controlled male vocal. This is a portrayal that brings Hildegard's ecstatic voice into sharp relief.

While all three of the tracks discussed here explore Hildegard's music in the spirit of medievalism found across popular genres in the 1980s and 1990s more widely, their common sample has offered opportunities to interpret their different manipulations of sound and meaning. Such image management in production emphasised aspects of Hildegard's song relevant to the creative context of each remix. Some of these, notably the pure, virginal tone of soprano van Evera, connect strongly to both the early music movement of the same decades, and to the ubiquitous high, youthful, 'white' and often female voice

53 I am grateful to Rupert Till for sharing this contextual detail.

in mainstream electronic music. In spite of her ventriloquism through van Evera's vocal, songs featuring Hildegard lie at various distances from what Bosma would recognise as the powerless utterances of a disembodied female voice. Although in Souther's work, and to some extent Orbital's, Hildegard is the ultimate 'featured artist', all three "O Euchari" songs simultaneously replay problematic, nostalgic fantasies of women's musical bodies and voices.