

## Sacred Feeling: A Dramaturgy of Medieval Religious Emotion

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### Introduction

Kathleen Woodward observes that in the last two decades of historical research, emotions have increased in prominence as a subject. She points out that, “like any other human experience, the emotions have a history and thus change in fascinating ways over time” (Woodward 2009, 61). Today, films, plays, television shows, and news broadcasts are largely invested in a dramaturgy of emotion that follows the conventions of mimetic realism, inviting audiences to engage with representations of emotion and respond in kind. When we call real-life displays of emotion “dramatic,” we rhetorically reinforce the implicit assumption that drama is the site for producing emotions.

However, as Anastasia Philippa Scrutton suggests, emotion bound to the self as a kind of mental and physical feeling is a modern invention. The wide range of internally sensed and externally expressed phenomena we understand today as emotions was largely foreign to the ways classical and medieval philosophy constituted emotion (Scrutton 2011, 13, 34). The pervasive influence of a Christian worldview on spiritual, intellectual, and everyday life in the Middle Ages thus warrants seeking a theory of medieval drama and emotion grounded in Christian theology of human emotions.

Clearly, dramatizations of Christianity’s salvation narrative, whether written for performance in churches, religious houses, or public spaces, offered people the opportunity for an embodied, affective response to the abstractions of theology. Drama did typological work that allowed people to participate emotionally in the religious tradition’s soteriological view of the world. Here, we ask how that engagement worked. How did emotional engagement with Christian salvation theory work in an example of a monastic, sung text today recognized as dramatic?

We seek this engagement through a close reading of a twelfth-century monastic music-drama, Hildegard von Bingen’s *Ordo Virtutum* (1151). The *Ordo Virtutum*’s characters are allegorical, rather than characters in a realistic depiction of biblical events as in dramas more typical of the fifteenth and later centuries. Its narrative follows the conventions of a poetic psychomachia and prefigures later medieval dramatic allegories such as the English *Everyman*.<sup>1</sup> A female soul, happy in her desire for God (*felix Anima*), joins with a chorus of Christian Virtues (Humility, the queen of the Virtues) (l.68), accompanied by Charity, Obedience, Hope, Innocence, Fear of God, Contempt of the World, Love of Heaven, Discipline, Modesty, Mercy, Discretion, Patience, and Victory in a fight against temptations of the world and flesh. Anima’s vulnerability to the world of flesh cues the entrance of

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the Devil, whose arguments for carnality further persuade Anima. Anima abandons the Virtues, who then confront the Devil in a chorus of individual voices that collectively describe a life lived in Christian virtue. Anima, penitent and contrite, re-joins the Virtues to battle against the Devil. The contest between the Virtues supporting Anima and the Devil brings the play to its narrative peak. The Virtues triumph and join in praising God alongside the Patriarchs, Prophets, and souls still imprisoned in human flesh whose sung exchange with Anima began the performance.

The *Ordo Virtutum's* earliest text is part of a collection of Hildegard's mystical writings and visions, *Scivias*, which situates the drama and music as much in the mystical tradition of internal experience as in the shared community of spectatorship.<sup>2</sup> It was likely performed in Hildegard's enclosed convent, and it is possible that the entire community participated in a devotional rather than performative act emphasizing internal experience. How might that community have responded emotionally to a performance of the *Ordo Virtutum*? What emotions were familiar and recognizable and how might participants have interpreted the emotions produced by the performance? The medieval era left no treatise on drama comparable to those found in other ancient cultures, such as Aristotle's *Poetics* (5<sup>th</sup> c. BCE, reinterpreted in the European Renaissance) or the Indian *Natyasastra* (c. 200 BCE–200 CE). Such a treatise might clarify for modern scholars how representing human emotion in drama elicited emotions from participants' minds and bodies, or how dramatically-induced emotions functioned in a religious context (Carroll 2015, 313–14).

Though it does not link emotion with drama, Augustine's schema of emotions derived from classical Western sources and integrated with Christian theology can serve as a foundation for imagining a dramaturgy of emotions appropriate to the *Ordo Virtutum*. The *Ordo Virtutum* articulates a sequence of emotional conditions governed by the theological premise of salvation. This dramaturgy need not be bound to familiar modern models of production, reception, and interpretation, but can be thought of as cultivating a shared emotional experience for participants. In the *Ordo Virtutum*, the shared experience is, ultimately, that of divine love.

Accordingly, "emotions" in this paper will refer to the movements of the soul as Augustine describes them in *City of God*: affective responses (such as joy, fear, and desire) to environmental stimuli which are not entirely voluntary, but which are nonetheless subject to the consent of the intellect. Augustine resists the idea that emotions ought to be or can be avoided, even by the most disciplined philosopher. Rather, he links emotions directly to the human will. A person undergoing an emotional response must therefore choose whether to act on the emotion (if it elevates the soul) or resist it (if it misleads or endangers the soul) (*City of God* 9.4). By the twelfth century, what we recognize today as Christian affective piety linked the emotions imitated in dramatizations of Christ's Passion with devotional practices through which people could meditate on, identify with, and share the suffering of Christ (Stevenson 2017, 119). In the *Ordo Virtutum* we see a dramaturgy that articulates specific types of emotions understood to be theologically appropriate for salvation, but which might easily have afflicted women who had left the world for a life of devotion. Its function as a dramatization, then, was to cultivate a person's felt engagement with and cognitive awareness of those emotions to help women calibrate their capacity for sincere contrition and genuine devotion to God.

## Context for Drama and Emotions: Early Medieval Christian Thought about Performing Emotion

Sarah Beckwith cautions in her study of the York pageant play cycle *Signifying God* that we inevitably find the emotional dramas of our modern selves mirrored in medieval Europe's public and liturgical plays, even when we try to recreate the conditions in which medieval minds and bodies experienced drama. Though there is no surviving treatise on medieval emotion and drama, medieval writers were certainly aware of the power, positive or negative, of emotional responses in religious life. Writers inclined toward the interiority of mystical experience recognized emotion as a conduit to the divine through prayer, worship, or contemplation, not necessarily in connection with drama (Largier 2008, 371–72). A notable exception that links emotion to a dramatic tableau is St. Francis of Assisi's living nativity at Greccio in 1223 (later than the *Ordo Virtutum*). This is a remarkable link in that, according to Bonaventure, the emotional power of the mimetic representation comes not from *identification* with Christ's suffering as a way to know God, but from *experiencing* the event of the Nativity, an experiential dimension we argue operates in the conclusion of the *Ordo Virtutum*. Bonaventure describes St. Francis's response to a realistic recreation of the Nativity scene, including a manger, torchlight, and music as emotional to the point of spiritual transformation or ecstasy: “[St. Francis's] heart overflowed with tender compassion; he was bathed in tears but overcome with joy” (Habig 1972, 710–11).

This view of drama as heightening emotion by making significant biblical events come to life has been an influential lens through which modern scholars have viewed the emotional content of medieval drama. Through this lens, musical, visual, and poetic genres in the eleventh and twelfth centuries have been interpreted as bringing human emotion to the fore as a mechanism for knowing God. This view is certainly supported by the theological interest in Christ's humanity during these centuries, which focused attention on affective responses to God through emulation of Christ (Dronke 1970; Dronke 2009). Theology emphasizing the humanity of Christ, most prominently St. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* (c. 1094–98) and the identification with God through Christ's life and suffering (*imitatio Christi*), supports this interpretive framework (Kobialka 1988). The emotional potential of dramas, music, rites, and ceremonies also famously raised suspicion in the Christian tradition, even as it served devotional goals.<sup>3</sup> These suspicions rest largely on the distinction between representation and life experience, as well as theatre's potential for conjuring false emotion.

By the twelfth century, then, the relationship between theatre, drama, and emotional affect extends from the devotional emotion of the *Nativity* tableaux and the affective piety of mimetic biblical plays to concerns that the emotional excess produced by drama detracts from a Christian's proper attention to God. Dramaturgically, we will see that the *Ordo Virtutum* offers yet another point on this spectrum by linking emotions people experience in everyday life with a theological value system, shaping and directing people's familiar feelings toward a sacred goal.

Theological writings on emotion between 350 and 1300 are not, as noted above, invested in theorizing people's affective response to drama or the production of emotion through drama.<sup>4</sup> Nor do theological writings provide a coherent theory of emotion. Indeed, as Peter King (2010) observes, mindful of the tendency to associate emotion with modern notions of self,

no single theory dominates the whole of the Middle Ages. Instead there are several competing accounts and differences of opinion—sometimes quite dramatic—within

each account. Yet there is consensus on the scope and nature of a theory of emotions, as well as on its place in affective psychology generally. For most medieval thinkers, emotions are at once cognitively penetrable and somatic, which is to say that emotions are influenced by and vary with changes in thought and belief, and that they are bound up, perhaps essentially with their physiological manifestations. (167)<sup>5</sup>

How might this “cognitively penetrable and somatic” understanding of emotions in the Middle Ages still offer a framework for thinking about how medieval drama engaged people in salvation-oriented emotions, and the role emotion played in orienting people to living and dying in this cultural environment? How did medieval plays through 1300 articulate a theology of emotions? We turn to our question of theologically appropriate emotions and how they play out in theory, then in performance practice.

### **Augustine and the Movement of Emotion**

Augustine’s Christian interpretation of classical thought shaped medieval theories of emotions in Europe through Aquinas.<sup>6</sup> Setting aside his antipathy to the emotional excess incited by Roman drama, which is discussed in *Confessions*, Augustine analyzes emotions in *City of God* in the context of Christian and pagan thinking. Scrutton summarizes Augustine’s schema of emotion in broad categories: *passiones*, which can be moderated by the mind (the involuntary, gross movements of body and soul), *affectus* and *affectiones* (volitional acts of will), and *motus animae* (movements of the soul) (Scrutton 2011, 36). Augustine allows emotion as embodied human experience governed by reason (*City of God* 9.5–6). He also allows that Christ, having a soul and a body, himself experienced true emotion in the Passion (*City of God* 14.9). Emotion, in Augustine’s somatic and cognitive sense, means movement (*motus*). This is not the movement of a self expressing feeling in form (pressing out emotion into speech, writing, dramatic presentation and so forth), but as a human will toward something. Ideally, that something is the good (*caritas*), and ultimately the movement goes to God. Thus, and against the Stoics, Augustine does not call for purging emotions because they are harmful to the human body and mind (*apatheia*). His adaptations of philosophical categories of emotion, understood as movement within a human body and mind, are useful tools for reading a music-text like the *Ordo Virtutum*. Broadly, in *Confessions* and *On the Trinity* as well as *City of God*, Augustine adapts the Stoics’ four basic categories of emotion: delight (*laetitia*), desire or appetite (*libido/cupiditas*), distress (*dolor*), and fear (*metus/timor*), and from the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition two categories that describe emotion as human engagement with the world: irascible (desires that resist; repulsion) and concupiscible (desires that attract; pleasure). (King 2010, 169, 171; Knuuttila 2004, 156; Wetzel 2008, 354–55).

Key to applying such a schema to the reflection encouraged by a moralistic, allegorical dramatization such as the *Ordo Virtutum* is the link Augustine makes between emotions and the uniquely human capacity for cognition. Augustine also acknowledges that the human body registers emotion and is the medium for how we recognize transient emotional states in other people (*City of God* 14.15). However, awareness of bodily sensations we recognize in ourselves as feelings and see in others by the performance of physical gestures (a face contorted in grief, a fist clenched in anger, a smile of pleasure or joy) require the cognitive capacity of will. By extension, engaging with a narrative drama as a shared affective experience with other people requires not only feeling and interpretation of

expressive gestures, but cognition, the movement of the mind. As Knuuttila (2004) notes, for Augustine,

occurrent emotions are usually accompanied by bodily changes in facial expression, complexion, gesture, and the system of humours. The emotions themselves are special states of the soul involving evaluative judgements, behavioural suggestions, which are voluntarily complied with or repelled, and pleasant or unpleasant feelings (158).

Despite his antipathy for Roman theatre, Augustine recognized the potential for people's bodies to convey emotion, imitation of which is the stock and trade of mimesis.

How, then, do emotions provide a way for people to calibrate their own devotion, and how does the allegorical struggle between virtue and vice for the human soul (*Anima*) in the *Ordo Virtutum* use that conscious calibration as a kind of dramaturgy? We have seen that for Augustine, emotions are a kind of willing (*voluntas*), a motion of the human mind and body toward God (*City of God* 14.6; King 2010, 170; Knuuttila 2004, 159; Wetzel 2008, 361). Emotions aligned with rightness thus align a Christian soul with the good, with God. Emotions that conform to right reasoning are thus morally good, whereas those that do not align with right reason are morally bad (Byers 2012, 133; Scrutton 2011, 39; *City of God* 14.9). For Augustine, as for the characters of the stalwart Virtues and the wayward *Anima* in the *Ordo Virtutum*, “emotions belong to the present condition of human beings, and can even be of some moral value,” and reason can quell perturbations of the soul (Knuuttila 2004, 157).

The aspect of Augustine's thinking on emotion most important for a dramaturgy of emotions in the *Ordo Virtutum* is love, the emotion in which the action of the drama concludes. Love encompasses all other movements of mind, body, and soul; love is recognized by its direction toward the good—more precisely, God—which is the entire narrative movement of the *Ordo Virtutum*. Augustine describes love as the fundamental emotional condition for the four categories of emotion in Stoic thought noted above (sorrow, fear, desire, and joy):

When a man's resolve is to love God, and to love his neighbor as himself, not according to man's standards but according to God's, he is undoubtedly said to be a man of good will, because of this love. This attitude is more commonly called “charity” (*caritas*) in holy Scripture, but it appears in the same sacred writings under the appellation “love” (*amor*). (*City of God* 14.7)

This love is not generic but distinctly Christian. Love in this passage refers to a set of values, and here we adopt the word *caritas* (Knuuttila 2004, 160). Further, this higher sense of love as in God and of God, infusing all other emotions, is itself given by God. Scrutton (2011) summarizes *caritas* in Augustine's thought as itself divinity. For a dramaturgy of emotion, love is literally lived in the present moment in the human experience of God:

The *caritas* Augustine propounds is sourced in the divine love, as is shown by the fact that Augustine radically equates God and love, and writes that in order that we may love God, we must allow God to live in us, and so “let him love himself through us, that is, let him move us, enkindle us, and arouse us to love him.” All human *caritas* is in fact God present in humans, the participation of the Christian in the life and love of God, and not a human phenomenon that is possible independently of God. . . .

God draws human beings into his own inter-trinitarian self-love, thus allowing us to share in the enjoyment of himself. . . . In this life, human love of fellow humans is in fact love of God, and is good (*caritas*) only when it is rooted in God (41).

The *Ordo Virtutum* shows us a dramaturgy that effectively generates this emotional-theological condition in which a person and God are intertwined through love. We might assume that the synthesis of music, speech, and physical movement in the *Ordo Virtutum* produces the gestures of emotion through mimesis, which are produced, received, and interpreted. However, as we shall see in the following analysis, Augustine's theology provides a map not only for identifying emotions produced by this particular dramatization but for the ultimate spiritual goal expected of medieval Christian devotees: participation in God's divine love. The schema of theologically oriented emotions discussed above explains very human, felt emotions at individual moments in the *Ordo Virtutum*. The representation of emotions within the narrative moves toward resolution into a sense of divine love (*caritas*).<sup>7</sup>

### **The Dramaturgy of Emotion in Hildegard of Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum***

The schematic organizations of emotion Augustine offers, while far from cohesive or consistent, theorize movement of the will (mind), body (physiological changes), and soul (union with God). Significant in these analyses of religious feeling is the connection between emotion and will. For Christian drama, this connection suggests that a person's engagement with the embodied, mimetic representation of Christian virtue is in part an act of will. In other words, the experience of transient emotional responses is itself an act of volition. We might think of a spectator's willingness, for example, to experience the complex registers of Mary's grief as expressed in the form of lamentation and visual imagery during a mimetic re-enactment of Christ enduring the cross in the fifteenth-century N-Town play (McBain 2016, 310–12).<sup>8</sup> In these mimetic situations, an audience responds with emotions appropriate to the event depicted theatrically. These are presented as, in Aristotelian terms, imitations of historical people's actions recreated in the present moment. Four centuries earlier, the allegorical *Ordo Virtutum* requires of its audience and performers a willingness to experience and move through their emotions, and to configure those emotions to the narrative drive of women's lived Christian lives. In both cases, we would argue that in Augustine's framework drama functioned to elicit from people *the will to love God*. In the framework of medieval theology, then, the devotional expectation is that the effect of drama creates the overarching affect of *caritas*, or feeling divine love.

How does the overall effect of participating in a drama engage the movement of a person's will toward the highest Christian virtue, Christian charity informed by love (*caritas*) dramaturgically (Lombardo 2010, 149)? If music, facial expression, gesture, words, and staging in dramatizations could elicit transient emotions within participants, how does the intended overall effect of dramatizing those emotions resolve into this feeling of *caritas*? How, dramaturgically, are the mundane, transient emotions of everyday life stilled, purged, balanced, or resolved in service of greater connection with the divine? The idea of love as that emotion through which people come to rest in an ultimate good suggests a dramaturgy that creates conditions for the experience of transient emotions to collapse into love with the close of the narrative. The *Ordo Virtutum's* narrative structure, language, music, and characterization show a similar movement from mundane human emotions to *caritas*.<sup>9</sup>

The *Ordo Virtutum*'s central theme is the opposition between a spiritual life of Christian virtue and life engaged with the material world and the human body. In the theological language of emotion, the narrative juxtaposes *caritas* (the morally good love in which a person's will, soul, and body align with God) and *cupiditas* (desire for worldly things and for happiness in the world) (Scrutton 2011, 39). In the *Ordo Virtutum*, the happiness of a virtuous life (marriage to Christ, *regali talamo*, l.76) is contrasted with an unhappy life of sin (carnal desires, *delectatio carnis*, l.53). The contrast between female virtue and worldly pleasure is embodied in rational arguments between the personified Virtues, Anima, and the figure of the Devil.

In Augustine's schema, the *passiones* oppose the *affectiones*. In the *Ordo Virtutum*, the male Devil is the only role spoken rather than sung and the only personification fully committed to Augustine's conception of bodily *passiones*: a disturbed body-soul, lacking a will toward the good (*City of God* 8.17). The Virtues all articulate the higher, rational *affectiones*, and Anima's will to overcome her baser desires ultimately shows her to be a truly rational soul and moves her to love only God. Dramaturgically, the *Ordo Virtutum* registers the effects of the arguments between *passiones* and *affectiones* through language, sound, and physical movement. Examples of each modality are described below.

The language of the *Ordo Virtutum*, as Audrey Ekdahl Davison points out, is "marked by movement and activity": in particular, movement toward and away (1993, 13). This pattern of language mirrors not only the movement of emotions, but also the movement toward (*concupiscible* emotions) and away (*irascible* emotions) from *cupiditas*. The woeful lament of a chorus of fallen Souls longing for redemption begins the drama, in stark contrast to Anima's joyful anticipation of transcending her earthly body. Anima signals her desire for this good in her sighs for the Virtues (*ad te suspiro*, l.19). The Virtues recognize Anima immediately as a soul whose highest wisdom knows God and, following Augustine, one whose love is rightly directed toward God (*multum amas*, l.21–22). Anima's will moves her to join the Virtues (*O libenter veniam ad vos*, l.23), though with a spiritual and physical love of the heart (*osculum cordis*) that will be revealed as a transient emotion (l.24). Anima's very human emotions move quickly from joy to sadness (*gravata*). Her lament, unlike the lament of Mary at the cross, mourns her grievous labour as she deals with the disturbance of *passiones*, her own sinful corporeality (*carnem pugnare*) (l.26–28). The display of Anima's distress (*dolor*) in tears (l.30) accompanies her sung lament, "o woe is me" (*O ve michi*. l.39), which initiates the emotional struggle that will be played out until its resolution in *caritas*.

Scrutton notes that for Augustine, "emotion itself is morally neutral, but how it is instantiated in the human being makes it good or bad" (2011, 43). In keeping with Augustine's general organization of emotions, Anima's will governs her emotional responses to her sense of her soul and the temptations put before her by the Devil. Anima reasons that God created the world; therefore, she does God no harm by enjoying its pleasures (l.46–48). Her very human emotions move from happy (*laetitia, felix* in the text) before l.23 to unhappy (*dolor, infelix*) by l.36 as she veers toward her libidinous desire for worldly things, *cupiditas*. Thus, her will is not aligned with a higher good and her involuntary passions not moderated by reason. The narrative will correct this moral condition with her experience of contrition, then the embrace of *caritas*. The two classical categories of emotion, concupiscible and irascible, are evident early in the narrative as well. Anima's own attraction to the physical world attracts the Devil to her. His desire to woo Anima articulates Augustine's sense of *passiones* precisely: uncontrolled, even demonic, emotion.

At this point in the movement of emotions that structures the narrative, Anima's misaligned will draws from the Virtues their lament of sorrow (*O plangens vox est hec maximi dolores*) (1.50) as they mourn for a soul whose longing for God has been disturbed, and who has physically fallen away from virtue. The Virtues, who proclaim themselves to be living on the high plane from which the Devil himself was cast out, each describe their own affinities for God (1.68–158), and Humility calls them all to rejoice (*gaudete, ergo, filie Syon!*) (1.158). The back-and-forth movement from joy to sorrow, *laetitia* to *dolor*, continues. Anima's physical departure (*plangamus et lugeamus*) (1.159) moves the Virtues *Gaudete, filie Syon* into a lament with which they greet her return as a penitent (*penitentis*) stinking of gangrenous wounds (1.161, 175; 170–73). A. E. Davidson notes that the melody here is based on the Phrygian (minor) mode and “with the lamenting words, is affectingly sorrowful” (1993, 15). Yet, theologically, the return of one fallen soul to virtue is cause for all heaven to rejoice (*Et omnis celestis militia gaudet super te*) (1.193), and the Virtues accept Anima's contrition with assurances of God's redemption after she has returned from a sojourn in the world (*veni, veni ad nos, et Deus suscipiet te*) (1.165).

Up to this point, the drama's affective potential is evident. Joy, sadness, love, fear, and contrition are explicit emotions expressed, and presumably felt, by characters and recognized by the devotees likely to participate in the *Ordo Virtutum*. The emotional narrative invites participants to move through these same emotions, as the dramatization mirrors how their own Christian souls struggle against the temptations of the world. The affective lament, familiar from the *Planctus Mariae* growing in popularity in the twelfth century, recurs throughout, as do songs of rejoicing, which reflect on the movement of the dramatic action (Anima's conflicted attractions).

Forgiveness reconciles the penitent Anima with the Virtues, and her transgression is re-interpreted as suffering: Humility sees in Anima the wounds of Christ's Passion (1.190). Anima and the Virtues do physical battle with the Devil, who is physically tied up and subdued. In addition to words that move the emotional register from anger at the Devil to joy, the aural aspect of the *Ordo Virtutum* is particularly notable here. The melody is written high in the female voice (C–A). The affect “is that of unrestrained joy, high and ‘lifted up’ in ecstatic exultation” (Davidson 1993, 19). At this point, the narrative moves toward its soteriological conclusion. The thematic emphasis shifts from human emotions to those of a soul whose will and body are, finally, properly aligned with God.

At this final moment of the drama, Anima's alignment of her will with Christian virtue, as well as the assurance of forgiveness and salvation, yield the love that Augustine and later Aquinas indicate is the quality common to all other Christian emotions: *caritas*. The dramatic effect here is less an affective quality of sympathetic emotion than it is descriptive of a theologically rational condition in which Anima is united with God after the trials that demanded emotional suffering and left her with scars (*multas cicatrices michi imponens*) (1.187). *Caritas* is the permanent condition of belonging with the divine, which transcends the emotional states the drama shows her going through (a reminder that for Augustine, a Christian soul undergoes emotion but does not generate emotion on its own). In this dramaturgy of emotions, *caritas* is presented differently than the transient love for God in which Anima began the play.

Dramaturgically, the Virtues' final chorus shifts participants from transient to transcendent love. The final chorus praises God, from whom a mountain of fiery love flows to all people who approach with humility (*ex te fluit fons in ignio amore*) (1.258). At this point, Hildegard's dramatization of how the condition of all-encompassing divine love feels in a Christian woman's body and mind is not conveyed mimetically but through dramatic structure. For the first time, Anima and the Virtues sing

together at l.252, the beginning of the epilogue. The text suggests a staging in which Anima would likely physically move to stand within the circle of Virtues, for the first time singing *with* them rather than singing *to* them. The final moment of the *Ordo Virtutum*, then, is an aural, visual, and physical unity of souls. Hildegard's dramaturgy brings Christ's suffering to the foreground. The communal song affirms that only a life lived with God through Christ is a true and fully alive existence.

At this point, all the souls still bound to sin at the beginning of the *Ordo Virtutum*, the redeemed and forgiven Anima, and the steadfast Virtues together sing an invocation to all present. This is a moment reminiscent in effect of the Eucharistic communion itself. Participants enacting the drama invite those participating by listening, watching, and feeling into the shared Christian community, a community of spectators schooled in the theological interpretation of everyday emotions. Those who have passed through the emotional journey of the drama are invited to join themselves to God by coming to God with humility, in imitation of Christ, and by the physical gesture of taking God's hand. The *Ordo Virtutum's* conclusion articulates dramatically the Augustinian "gladness associated with faith and love" (*City of God* 14.10; Knuuttila 2004, 161). We suggest that this has been achieved not only by allegorical representation (linguistic, visual, and musical), but also by a mimesis of emotions shared by participants throughout the *Ordo Virtutum*. This dramaturgy resolves the fluctuation of mundane, transient, everyday emotions into the transcendence of a Christian construction of divine love, *caritas*.

## Conclusion

Hildegard of Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* provides a remarkable example of an unusual dramaturgy that can be read as grounded in a theological theory of emotion. The *Ordo Virtutum* dramatizes a female soul's journey: her temptation away from a life of religious chastity and her return to a virtuous life through contrition, forgiveness, and finally life lived in full union with God, experienced emotionally as *caritas*. We have suggested that the representation of everyday, transient emotions in the persons of the Virtues and Anima, as well as the narrative movement toward the experience of God's love, correspond to the way emotions were thought to function in a Christian life as set out by Augustine (and reinforced in the thirteenth century by Thomas Aquinas). The conceptual correspondence between theology and an allegorical dramatization of sin and salvation offers a dramaturgy oriented around the movement of transient emotions and structured by the ultimate condition of *caritas*. A performance of this particular narrative—a rite conducted in an enclosed community of women—also suggests that the *Ordo Virtutum* provided a way for participants to cultivate the condition of *caritas* within the community. Perhaps the most curious aspect of this dramaturgy is how it engages emotions relevant to the women's lives, wrought by the expectations of a chaste life and the temptations of the outside world. Mimesis, familiar in later biblical cycles and evident in Mary's lament at the Cross, collapses in this correspondence between people's "real" emotions and those articulated in the *Ordo Virtutum's* allegory. The reading through Augustine shows how the emotions one might experience in one's daily life must be re-configured in a paradigm that can only resolve in union with God, and, more importantly, provides the context in which that transformation of a person's soul might happen.

## Notes

1. A shorter version of this analysis appears in the forthcoming essay, "Classification by Affect: Medieval Repertoires and Genres," in *A Cultural History of Theatre, Vol. 2*, edited by Jody Enders (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama).

2. For a brief analysis of the *Ordo Virtutum*, including sources and critical commentary, see Fassler 2011, 376–81.

3. Gerhoh of Reichersberg, for example, complains that overly expressive priests “turn the churches themselves, the houses of prayers, into theatres and fill them with feigned spectacles of plays” (see Tydeman 1978, 113–14; Young 1933, 527), and the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx specifically criticized singers who imitated “the agonies of the crying and the terror of those enduring eternal torment” with exaggerated gestures like those of actors in the ancient theatres and not appropriate for Christians: “the lips twist, the eyes roll, the shoulders heave, and at every note the fingers are flexed to match” (see McGee 1998, 23–24).

4. The Vedic treatise *Natyasastra* (c. 200 BCE–200 CE), as an example from a non-Western culture, theorizes the relationship between people’s felt responses to drama and religious feeling. The *Natyasastra* defines drama as a devotional practice and lays out how the performance of *natya* (drama) gives rise to eight specific, subjective states, called *bhavas*. These states (*bhavas*) correspond to specific human emotions: love, joy or mirth, wonder or astonishment, anger or fury, courage or heroism, sadness or grief, fear or terror, and disgust. *Natya* (drama) creates the *bhavas* by a synthesis of mimesis, architecture, music, dance, costumes and makeup, and narrative. In the aesthetic theory of the *Natyasastra*, drama created a communal sharing of *bhavas*, which served a spiritual purpose. The *Natyasastra* presents a theory of drama that engages emotion in the effort to draw closer to the divine. The goal of drama is not to purge or excite emotions but to balance them. This is a spiritual as well as aesthetic process, and emotions are integral. For details on this summary of the contents of the *Natyasastra*, see Rangacharya’s 1996 translation, especially pp. 53–77 on the *rasas* and *bhavas* and pp. 330–36 on internal and external qualities of characters.

5. For the physiology of emotions in observable bodily changes such as body heat and blood flow, attributions of temperament and states such as depression to the four humours (black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood), and transformations of spirit through bodily organs, see Knuuttila 2004, 212–18.

6. Like Augustine, for whom “a rightly directed will is love in a good sense and a perverted will is love in a bad sense,” Aquinas also posits emotion as movement toward or away from something, with love as motion in the direction of union with God. Writing at the end of the thirteenth century, Aquinas takes a more Aristotelian approach to the emotions but stays within the framework crafted by Augustine. Aquinas provides a schematic of emotions, *passiones animae*, as transient expressions of appetites and their attendant physiological responses (see Pfeiffer 2011, 37–44 for a summary of Aquinas and the *passiones animae*). Aquinas also brings emotion under the will, where it becomes an aspect of a virtuous Christian life. Emotion balanced by the will ensures the virtuous condition of right feeling and perception. For Aquinas, emotion must be activated in a soul and pass through the soul (or in the case of the *passiones*, affect the body). The soul is not the source of the emotion it receives or undergoes. The cause of love, following from Augustine, is also its object and observed in an inclination toward the good. For Aquinas, no other passion comes before love in the causal order, and love is the first act of human will and appetite (see Miner 2011, 126, 60). Good “is the *sola causa amoris*,” and the movement of love can only, by definition, move toward the good (see Miner 2011, 127). Aquinas further parses love into sensory love for worldly objects (*amor sensitivus*) and a more abstract intellectual love for concepts of the good (*amor intellectivus seu rationalis*), including God (see Scrutton 2011, 50).

Love is the first and encompassing concupiscible passion, and the most complex because it is both a desire (a passion or movement toward the good) and, more significantly for our purposes here, a condition. *Amor* for Aquinas “is an inclination or a kind of complacency, and as such, the principle of desire and pleasure and the rest of the passions” (Lombardo 2010, 59). Aquinas’ struggle to distinguish among registers and qualities of love as distinct from desire and pleasure does not yield as clean a sense as, for example, the Sanskrit *shanti* (peace) described in the Indian *Natyasastra* (see Rangacharya 1996). However, the movement toward God as the tendency of the soul carries through from Augustine (see Lombardo 2010, 55–62 and Knuuttila 2004, 249–51).

7. The first chapter of thirteenth-century mystic Mechthild von Magdeburg’s *Flowing Light of the Divinity* provides an interesting analogue to Hildegard’s emotional drama. It is comprised of an allegorical dialogue between Lady Love and the Queen (a human soul), who are engaged in a debate over the hardships of the

Christian life. The Queen's grievances (regarding the loss of her youth, friends, relatives, worldly riches, and so on) are evocative of the courtly lover's complaints against his beloved; each accusation, however, is countered by Lady Love, who reminds the soul that the rewards of the Christian life far exceed the sacrifices which accompany it:

"Lady Love, You have taken from me the world, worldly honor, and all worldly riches."

"Dear Queen, for that I will repay You with one hour with the Holy Spirit according to Your will on earth." . . .

"Lady Love, You have devoured my flesh and my blood."

"Dear Queen, by that You were cleansed and drawn into God." (*Flowing Light* I.I)

The dialogue thus progresses until the Queen finally ceases her complaint and embraces the rewards of her chosen life. While there is no evidence that this dialogue was ever set to music or performed, its focus on the nature of divine love (particularly in contrast with the worldly, courtly love suggested by the Queen's language) bears a striking similarity to Hildegard's dramatic exploration of *caritas*.

8. Dramatizations of the crucifixion were particularly emotionally, and theologically, charged. Variations of the *Planctus Mariae* were incorporated into dramatizations of Christ's passion (most notably in the Montecassino Passion Play in the twelfth century and the German Benediktbeurn Passion in the thirteenth), which enhanced the affective power of sacred grief (Sticca 1988, 119). See Davidson 2008.

9. For the standard translation and line numbers upon which citations here are based, see Dronke 2008.

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