‘Gentille, curteyse, fulle delectabile’: the courtly in Julian of Norwich’s mystical practice and theology

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Abstract

Julian of Norwich's style is notable for its serenity and lyricism. Particularly in the Long Text, the beauty of her prose is matched by the grace of the subjectivity Julian models in her relationship with God, a subjectivity that draws significantly on the honour-based courtly identity of late-medieval England's knightly class. Julian's imagery depicts God in the roles of courtly lord and warrior knight, and herself and her readers as feudal retainers, fellow knights and loyal servants. This courtly imagery contributes significantly to Julian's theology, particularly her discussion of human nature, with its two parts of 'substance' and 'sensuality', and her unique soteriology that sees sin as 'no shame but worship to man'. Julian's vivid invocation of her readers in courtly terms gives them a heuristic fantasy by means of which to experience themselves as worthy and beloved.

Yet more significant is the courtly imagery's role in Julian's mystical practice. Mysticism as a theoretical concept must be applied with care to medieval texts; a suitable approach, drawn from the work of Michel de Certeau, defines a mystical encounter as a meeting with an Other who exceeds all human symbolic systems, an encounter that is like being hailed by an utterance beyond words. The mystical utterance cannot be captured or recreated; rather, the practices by means of which the mystic responds to it must be explored. Julian's visions hail her from outside familiar devotional frameworks; their mosaic-like style locates meaning in the interstices between the showings rather than in explicit statement. Her texts recreate this hailing, developing a range of mechanisms that draw attention to the limitations of the discourses, registers and traditions they use, and challenge readers to pass beyond the texts and open themselves to their own encounters with transcendent meaning. The 'knowledge' that results from the mystical encounter is a continual unsettling of symbolic systems, and mystical subjectivity therefore predicated on desire. In Julian's texts, courtesy as a rhetoric of behaviour becomes an image that expresses the combined intimacy and distance the mystic experiences with the divine. The courtly subjectivity Julian models for her readers offers them a style in which to live out mystical desire.

Dedication

To my parents, for their continued love and support

To Dominic
'if not for you'

AMDG

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Introduction

Julian of Norwich's book, in its second, longer version, calls itself 'a revelation of love' (Preamble.1.1),[1] and I begin with the proposition that this heading must be taken seriously. 'Revelation', a relatively new word in the 1380s, refers to an instance of divine communication such as a vision or prophecy,[2] and Julian's two versions of her book are indeed accounts of a visionary experience she had during a severe illness in early May 1383,[3] when she was 30 years old. However, this initial series of 16 consecutive visions and the two other brief 'showings' Julian mentions receiving over the next 20 years are only the visible instantiations of the deeper, more essential 'revelation', which is her encounter with the divine. Julian, as an individual woman in her particular historical context, is swept into the experience that *here*, *now*, God is speaking *to her*. The core of the experience is its allocutionary function,[4] which fundamentally reorientates Julian's world by becoming the grounding fact of her subjectivity. Forever after, she is one who has been hailed by God. The first aim of my thesis is to establish a theoretical base from which to explore and do justice to Julian's claim, that her writings are the fruits of revelation. For this purpose, I use the terminology of mysticism, seeking to develop a definition of and approach to mysticism appropriate for medieval texts like Julian's.

The work of Michel de Certeau opens a way for such an approach.[5] He proposes thinking about the mystical encounter as a meeting with an Other who exceeds all human symbolic

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[1] All references to the text come from *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: 'A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman' and 'A Revelation of Love'*, eds Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006). Citations to the Short Text are given in the form: section number in uppercase Roman numerals, line numbers in Arabic numerals; citations to the Long Text are given as: showing number in lowercase Roman numerals, chapter number in Arabic numerals, and (where appropriate) line number/s in Arabic numerals. Chapters 1-3 of the Long Text form a preamble to the first revelation. Where a passage appears in both the Short and Long Texts, the Short Text version is quoted, with Long Text readings indicated within parentheses {}. Where appropriate, differences between the Sloane and Paris versions of the Long Text are footnoted.

[2] *The Middle English Dictionary*, University of Michigan. Digital Library Production Service, accessed 23 June 2013, http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/; hereafter *MED*. See 'revelacioun' (n.) sense 1.

[3] Either 8 or 13 May; manuscripts differ.

[4] The function of a speech act that addresses a 'Thou'; see Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 90.

[5] His most extensive treatment of mysticism is found in *The Mystic Fable Volume One: the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 198-199. *Mystic Fable* is the first volume of what was intended to be a history of western mysticism, but was truncated by de Certeau's untimely death.

systems. In a real sense, therefore, the showings Julian records are most accurately understood as signposts pointing towards an actual meeting that cannot be recorded, a divine utterance that escapes being captured in language. The only certain thing is the coordinates of the encounter, the 'here' and 'now' of the experience that changes the mystic forever. It is significant that Julian has her visions when she is sick and in pain: her body's suffering marks it as the site of the encounter, in that she is *present* in the insistent consciousness of each moment of pain. At the same time, an embodied sensation like pain cannot be expressed in words, and so is a fitting image for the mystical utterance. Pain is an 'illegible writing' which can inscribe on the body the presentness of the Other.[6] This is why a widely used image for a mystical encounter is being *wounded* by the divine. As Julian's account proceeds, however, her suffering body gradually disappears from view. It is replaced by the body of the text, which has to find ways of inscribing the mystical utterance, which utterance exceeds the literal 'showings'. Julian's books record her decades-long process of prayerful meditation on the visions as equally part of the 'revelation' itself, in the sense of her ongoing working-out of what the unutterable encounter means in her life. The body of the text becomes the place where readers read the traces left by the encounter, not just in Julian's brief visionary experience, but in her thought and spiritual practice for the rest of her life.

Because of the ineffable nature of the mystical utterance, it cannot be conveyed directly. Rather, the text has to inscribe opportunities for readers to pass beyond the text or through it, to be wounded themselves, to have their own encounters. Julian herself in her historical individuality disappears from the narrative – her name, her story before and after the showings, her death, are not recounted in detail – as her 'revelation' moves outwards into other lives. Her writings have proved enduringly popular, in a variety of adaptations; I first encountered Julian when I was 13, in a collection of 'daily readings', translated sections from her texts.[7] The explicitly devotional aim of this version underlines the inclusive, pastoral character of Julian's style, by which I mean that she aims to create a performative subjectivity or language of interiority for her readers in their relationship with God. The second aim of this thesis is to explore this feature of Julian's style with a specific interest in the mystical: I investigate how Julian develops a unique mystical

[6] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 198-199.
[7] In the translated selections in *Enfolded in Love: Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich*, ed. Members of the Julian Shrine (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980, rpt 1993).

discourse, in the sense of a language that does not attempt the impossibility of uttering the divine but rather works to locate the site of her own encounter with God, and opens a space where her readers can find their own meetings with him.

Julian wrote two versions of her text. The earlier version, referred to as the Short Text, is one sixth of the length of the later or Long Text, and much simpler in thought and style. In both texts, however, a range of imagery is evident which is associated with courtly status, by which I mean associated with the culture of the knightly class, the secular elite of late medieval English society. This imagery ranges from the Short Text's mentions of God's 'curtaysy' (e.g. XVI.16) and its final image of Christ as 'wyrshipfulle, hiest lorde . . . cledde solemplye in wyrshippes' (XXII.5-6) enthroned in the soul, to the Long's more fully developed imagery centring on the tableau in chapter 51 of the Lord and Servant. Anyone reading Julian for the first time cannot fail to be struck by her insistence on the courtesy of God, and her text's invitation to the reader to adopt an answering stance that is 'gentille, curteyse, fulle delectabile' (xvi.74.38). The semantic field of courtly imagery is woven through Julian's thought and texts as a necessary element of her rhetoric and purposes, including her mystical practice. As I will trace in more detail later in my argument, Julian's courtesy imagery has been studied in terms of its accuracy to contemporary feudal culture, its resonances in courtly literature, and its theological argument,[8] but more work is needed on its contribution to her text's mystical discourse and the performative language of interiority she creates for her readers. The final aim of my thesis, therefore, is to trace the role of Julian's courtly imagery in her mystical discourse and the textual practices it organizes.

The terms *mysticism*, *mystic* and *mystical* have to be used with caution when discussing a medieval text. They ultimately stem from the ancient Greek term μυω, 'to conceal,' which in the Hellenic world referred to secret religious rituals, and only in the seventeenth century did 'mystic' began to acquire the meaning we now associate with it: denoting

[8] For the historical context, see the work of Alexandra Barratt, 'Julian of Norwich and the Holy Spirit, "Our Good Lord",' *Mystics Quarterly* 28 (2002), and its companion piece 'Lordship, Service and Worship in Julian of Norwich,' in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England, Exeter Symposium VII: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. E.A. Jones, 177-188 (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer: 2004). Jay Ruud notes allusions to romance literature, in '"I Wolde for Thy Loue Dye": Julian, Romance Discourse, and the Masculine,' in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire, 183-205 (New York and London: Garland, 1998). Theological studies include Marilyn McCord Adams, 'Courtesy, Human and Divine,' *Sewanee Theological Review* 47, no. 2 (2004), and 'Sin as Uncleanness,' *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991); and Mary Olson, 'God's Inappropriate Grace: Images of Courtesy in Julian or Norwich's *Showings*,' *Mystics Quarterly* 20 (1994).

direct experience of the divine.[9] 'Mystik' in Middle English basically meant 'figurative',[10] and was often used to describe the deepest, anagogical interpretation of Scripture, and hidden presences such as that of Jesus in the Eucharist.[11] Julian herself uses the related word 'misty' to mean difficult to interpret (xiv.51.60).[12] Like her fellow fourteenth-century 'lovers of God', Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton, Julian calls herself a 'contemplative',[13] meaning one devoted to a life of contemplative prayer. The term 'contemplative' had connotations of eremitic solitude, austerity and stillness in contrast with the active life of the ordinary faithful, of Mary in contrast with Martha, rather than implying a distinct kind of subjective experience. Nicholas Watson thus warns that studying medieval authors like Julian as 'mystics' can lead to an anachronistic attempt to read Middle English texts for signs of the particular phenomenological quality we have come to consider as defining a 'mystical experience', and to judge these texts according to categories and expectations incommensurable with their true aims, techniques and presuppositions.[14] Instead, as accurate as possible an understanding of the texts' historical particularity has to be developed, for example a detailed picture of relevant contemplative traditions, originally associated with the monastery, and certain of their elements such as complex schema of the soul's ascent to union with God by means of intellect and feeling (*intellectus* and *affectus*). Many features of medieval spirituality will be found to instantiate a wide range of devotional and literary cultural practice, rather than some kind of a-historical 'mystical experience'.

However, Watson does enter a caveat: the term *mysticism* is still needed, perhaps, because sometimes contemplative experiences, or certain aspects of them, are not amenable to being treated solely as cultural practice. The category of *the mystical* reminds the scholar that studying medieval contemplative texts accurately and sympathetically can require

[9] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, especially 101-114.
[10] *MED*, 'mistik' (adj.), meaning open to symbolic or spiritual interpretation; mystical; figurative. The word in this sense is first recorded *c*.1380-1390.
[11] Jerome Gellman, 'Mysticism', *The Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed 23 March 2012, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/.
[12] This is *MED*, 'misti' (adj.) sense 1, which is related to sense 2, meaning figurative; open to symbolic or spiritual interpretation.
[13] At least in the Short Text, where she speaks of 'ilke man and woman . . . that desires to lyeve contemplatifelye' (IV.37-38).
[14] Nicholas Watson, 'Introduction,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Samuel Fanous, 1-28 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 6; 'The Middle English Mystics', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace, 539-565 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 544.

allowing for the possibility that, 'despite the looming presence in all contemplative discourse of the world, the visionary ascent to God might in part be means to understanding the transcendent in its own, sacred terms'.[15] Barbara Newman agrees, reminding us that in the medieval period various types of theological discourse and practice can be distinguished according to their characteristic methods and goals. Mystical theology, aiming to teach or describe contemplative prayer, 'to midwife the soul's direct encounter with God and celebrate that event when it occurs', is distinct from monastic, scholastic and pastoral theology, although all these types can occur mingled in various texts.[16]

The study of late-medieval contemplative and devotional texts, with Julian's among them, has benefitted greatly from cautions such as Watson's. These texts have been placed within a much larger, Europe-wide development, the rise of the vernaculars, and studied as works of vernacular theology,[17] that is, any kind of vernacular writing, play or sermon that communicates theological information to an audience.[18] Julian lived in the period

[15] Watson, 'Introduction,' 23.

[16] Monastic theology, by means of personal and communal prayer and *lectio*, aims to explore the 'infinite richness' of the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit. Scholastic theology trusts to reason, particularly in the form of dialectic, to discover truths which revelation then confirms or upholds. Pastoral theology focuses on formulating doctrine for teaching purposes and providing guidance for clergy in their work of educating the laity; *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2003), 295.

[17] The term was first used by A.I. Doyle, in his 'A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th, and Early 16th Centuries with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy therein,' 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cambridge University, Downing College, 1953), vol.1, 5-7. McGinn develops the concept further in 'Introduction: Meister Eckhart and the Beguines in the Context of Vernacular Theology,' in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechtild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite de Porete*, ed. Bernard McGinn, 1-14 (New York: Continuum, 1994), 4-12; and *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women of the New Mysticism (1200-1350)* (New York: Crossroads, 1998), 19-24. For a list of Watson's important works, see the following note. A recent overview is Vincent Gillespie, 'Vernacular Theology,' in *Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm, 401-420 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). McGinn and Watson both stress the redistribution of knowledge made possible by the rise of vernacular religious writings, and the democratization and innovation developing out of broader participation in what Katherine Zieman calls 'the intellectualizing activity of theology'; 'The Perils of Canor: Mystical Authority, Alliteration, and Extragrammatical Meaning in Rolle, the *Cloud* Author and Hilton,' *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 22 (2008): 133. An increasingly nuanced history of vernacular theology in England is thus emerging; see the collection of short articles in *English Language Notes*, 44 (2006): 77-126.

[18] Watson's influential argument for Middle English vernacular theology is developed in a series of articles: see 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409,' *Speculum* 70 no. 4 (1995): 822-864; 'Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God,' *New Medieval Literatures*, eds Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland and David Lawton, 85-124 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); 'The Gawain Poet as a Vernacular Theologian,' in *A Companion to the Gawain Poet*, ed. Derek

when late-medieval England was engaged in what Watson calls the 'huge cultural experiment' of translating 'Latin and Anglo-Norman texts, images and conceptual structures – the apparatus of *textual authority*' – into English.[19] Questions such as the suitability of English as a vehicle for complex thought, the degree of authority that should be granted to English writings, and the opportunities and dangers offered by the broadened writer- and readership that English made possible – including lay persons and women – were all hotly debated, in discussion and practice. Julian and her fellow spiritual writers are thus part of a much broader cultural and intellectual movement responding to the idea of the vernacular and attempting to create a vernacular readership.[20] The field of Julian studies has benefitted richly from investigations of her debt to affective piety,[21] and to specifically female discourses and cultural practices,[22] of the effects of late-medieval philosophical developments,[23] and the political milieu.[24]

Brewer and Jonathan Gibson, 293-314 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997); 'Visions of Inclusion: Universal Salvation and Vernacular Theology in Pre-Reformation England,' *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997): 145-188; 'Middle English Mystics' (1999); and his reply to the forum of short papers debating vernacular theology in 'Cultural Changes,' *English Language Notes* 44 no. 1 (2006): 127-137.

[19] Watson, 'Middle English Mystics', 544.

[20] Parliament and the courts completed their transition from French to English in the second half of the fourteenth century. On the 'idea of the vernacular', see the collection of essays under that name: *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor and Ruth Evans (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). For the rise of vernacular Passion meditations, seen particularly in the Rhineland, the Low Countries, and England as 'part of a literary project whose aim was to supply vernacular spiritual and religious writings of all kinds for an enlarged reading public that included a significant number of pious laity', see Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennyslvania Press, 1996), 67. However, as Vincent Gillespie notes, the 'boldness' of Watson's arguments has, 'perhaps inevitably, led to some overstatement and tabloidization in writings of other scholars building on his observations', ('Vernacular Theology,' 406) despite Watson own warning against 'a crude narrative of oppositionality, with the vernacular in the role of the plucky underdog'; 'Censorship and Cultural Change,' 131. Linda Georgianna agrees, warning that 'the term "vernacular theology" is useful only so long as it opens up new areas for discussion. We must not reduce it to a coded term for various binaries – English versus Latin, or theology versus moral instruction, or the like'; 'Vernacular Theologies,' *English Language Notes* 44 no. 1 (2006): 91.

[21] See for example, Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's* Showings*: From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[22] For example, Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004).

[23] Such as Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

[24] For example, David Aers and Lynn Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996).

Other aspects of the late-medieval *translatio studii*, beyond the transfer of intellectual concepts and frameworks, have been relatively neglected, but this is changing. Katherine Zieman proposes understanding the cultural changes of this period not as 'vernacular incursions into Latinate domains, but rather in terms of the disarticulation of the conceptual and institutional structures that unified Latinate authority'.[25] Other facets of Latinate authority, such as the sacralised language of Church ritual, and the subject positions offered by prayers, could be exported into the vernacular and experimented with, in addition to conceptual theological content.[26] Zieman calls these textual and linguistic practices 'extragrammatical literacies'.[27] Watson himself has studied the dispersal of one such extragrammatical literacy, 'the practice of *otium*, or private leisure', out of the monasteries into the lay community alongside the spread of monastic texts translated into the vernacular.[28]

Along a parallel line of investigation, Newman suggests another useful category alongside vernacular theology, which she calls *imaginative* theology, which 'thinks with' images, 'rather than propositions or scriptural texts or rarefied inner experiences – although none of these need be excluded'.[29] Here Newman points to the example of Julian, whose staging of her exegetical labour blurs the distinction between those parts of her revelation received as epiphany, for example the Lord and Servant tableau, and those contributed by her creative interpretation, such as Jesus our mother (which Julian derives from monastic sources[30]). Both these images serve 'not only to *express* a religious meaning or truth already possessed, but also to *discover* meaning'.[31] Imaginative theology includes many texts not traditionally thought of as theological but which nonetheless engage 'deeply and seriously' with theological issues in either Latin or a vernacular.[32]

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[25] 'Perils of *Canor*,' 136. Zieman argues this position fully in *Singing the New Song: Literacy and Liturgy in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 114-118.
[26] 'Perils of *Canor*,' 144-145; 'Playing *Doctor*: St Birgitta, Ritual Reading, and Ecclesiastical Authority,' in *Voices in Dialogue: New Problems in Reading Women's Cultural History*, ed. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 307-334 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 309-313, 319-327.
[27] Zieman, 'Perils of Canor,' 137, 140.
[28] Watson, 'Introduction', 13-23.
[29] *God and the Goddesses*, 298.
[30] See the list provided by Ritamary Bradley, 'Patristic Background of the Motherhood Similitude in Julian of Norwich,' *Christian Scholar's Review* 8 (1978): 101-113.
[31] Newman, *God and the Godesses*, 298.
[32] Newman would list *Piers Plowman* and Dante's *Commedia* (both of which Watson also calls 'vernacular theology', as mentioned above), alongside Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* and

My study, beginning from the assumption that the mystical aims of Julian's text must be taken seriously if the full mastery of her style is to be appreciated, draws on this rich field of scholarly discussion. Julian's particular difficulties as a late medieval woman writing theology in the vernacular have to be considered, as do the resources available to her in the contemplative tradition she inherited. Yet as I will argue, Julian also draws on more secular discourses and texts, particularly courtly literature, and 'thinks with' the images they give to her. Her Long Text is not only a text of systematic theology or pastoral advice, although these elements are strong within it; as Kate Crassons says, Julian sees theology as something to be performed,[33] and she intends to draw her readers to their own encounter with the divine.

Investigating the use to which Julian puts the various theological and literary discourses and practices available to her requires some consideration of what her access to these would be, so to this question I now turn.

Julian's education

Whether or not Julian was a nun before her enclosure, and when this enclosure took place, cannot be known with certainty.[34] The evidence of surviving wills, listing bequests specifically to Julian as anchorite, show she was enclosed by 1393/1394 and still living in her anchorhold in 1416. Margery Kempe came to visit her around 1413, when Julian was 70.

Grosseteste's *Le Château d'Amour* as imaginative theology, but not *The Cloud of Unknowing*; *ibid*. She suggests that imaginative theology was particularly powerful in the late medieval period because its 'unofficial, "fabulous" character' made it more tolerable to ecclesiastical censors. So for example Grosseteste in his *Chateau d'Amour* uses the allegory of the Four Daughters of God to discuss the 'genuine conundrum' that humankind's fall poses for God; the literary form means he could 'think theological thoughts of a kind the scholastic framework rendered unthinkable', as too direct and possibly blasphemous. Similarly, Dante dares to show a canonized pope in hell, and describe with first-person immediacy a vision of heaven, yet no reader appears to have found this heretical, or disrespectful in any way to the claims of 'genuine' visionaries. Problems arose when practitioners of imaginative theology made too much of their claims, like Marguerite Porete, or had the temerity to preach, as Margery Kempe was accused of doing; *ibid*., 45-47.

[33] Theology is 'not just as a conceptual issue but as an embodied practice constituted by the ideals, conflicts, and tensions that define a community'; 'Performance Anxiety and Watson's Vernacular Theology,' *English Language Notes* 44 no.1 (2006): 94, 100.

[34] Edmund Colledge and James Walsh argue that Julian entered a convent as a teenager and that she was only enclosed after the final supplementary showing of 1393 and (they presume) the completion of the Long Text; see the introduction to their edition, *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, eds Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, 2 vols (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), volume 1, 43. Watson and Jenkins agree Julian was a nun, on the basis of Short Text VIII.53-54; Long Text vi.14.1-2 where Christ thanks Julian 'of thy service and of thy travaile and namly in thy youth'; see the introduction to their edition, 4. In contrast, Benedicta Ward argues that Julian was a laywoman, perhaps married and a mother; 'Julian the Solitary,' in *Julian Reconsidered*, ed. Kenneth Leech and Benedicta Ward, 11-35 (Oxford: SLG Press, 1988).

Little can thus definitely be said about her education, particularly her access to theological texts in Latin.[35] From the evidence of her own writings, Julian certainly seems to have received a thorough early education, probably at the Benedictine Convent at Carrow,[36] close to the church of St Julian's, Conesford, where she would live as an anchorite. Her editors Edmund Colledge and James Walsh argue that Julian could read Latin, and that she purposefully emulates the rhetorical style of learned late medieval tradition, English examples of which she could also have found in works like *A Talking of the Love of God* or Chaucer's translation of Boethius, or from listening to the sermons of skilled preachers.[37] However, as Brian Stock shows with his model of textual communities, illiterate or at least non-Latinate late-medieval audiences could yet participate richly in literate culture by hearing it read aloud.[38] Such listeners were certainly not passive consumers, but rather 'sophisticated and active listeners'.[39] Julian's erudition does not necessarily imply she was a nun; as Felicity Riddy argues, a similar and distinctly female community existed among nuns and devout laywomen.[40] Margery Kempe demonstrates how a determined laywoman could gain access in this way to a wide range of spiritual material, including 'Boneventur', Hilton, Bridget of Sweden and Rolle.[41]

What can be said with certainty is that, living in Norwich, Julian as either a nun or a laywoman would have been exposed to an extraordinarily rich spiritual culture. Norwich was an important regional centre, one of the half-dozen most important cities in late medieval England. It was an episcopal city, and also had a Benedictine monastery, four friaries, three colleges of secular priests, a nearby nunnery, and more parish churches than any other town in England except London and possibly Lincoln. In the second quarter of the fourteenth century, Benedict XII made the Franciscan priory at Norwich 'one of the

[35] As Colledge and Walsh put it, it 'is very evident that she was a learned woman, but we do not know how or from whom she acquired her learning'; introduction to their edition, 41.
[36] Girls from the city may have been sent to board and be educated at the Carrow nunnery; Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 27.
[37] Colledge and Walsh, introduction to their edition, 47-48.
[38] *Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 5th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 23.
[39] Wogan-Browne *et al.* (eds), *Idea of the Vernacular*, 114.
[40] '"Women Talking About the Things of God": A Late Medieval Subculture,' in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Felicity Riddy, 104-127 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
[41] *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt, Longman Annotated Texts Edition (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 280, ll.4819-4820.

Order's seven English *studia generalia*'.[42] The Cathedral priory had one of the finest libraries in England (including after 1407 the 228 books bequeathed by Cardinal Adam Easton, once a monk at the priory, which were brought from Rome in six barrels). At the dissolution, the library had around 1350 volumes. The friaries also probably had good libraries.[43] Norwich also had a lively culture of lay movements so characteristic of the late medieval period, with many examples in Julian's lifetime of hermits, anchorites, craft guilds and pious fraternities, devotion to saints and pilgrimages.[44] The city was wealthy and closely linked geographically and through trade with the Low Countries and the Rhineland; it therefore was exposed to the rich religious developments of these areas.[45]

Julian's world

A related question, considering Julian's life story and education, is her background and class, which is relevant to this study's interest in her courtly imagery. Julian's illness is dated to May 1373, when she was 30 and a half years old, so she must have been born in 1342-1343. As a young child, she would have lived through the Black Death of 1348-1350, and as an adult the Great Western Schism of 1378, the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, and the deposing and subsequent murder of an anointed king in 1399. Societal structures were also changing; over the course of the fourteenth century, the barony's economic and political power diminished as the agricultural sector lost ground to trade and urban growth, the crown increasingly usurped jurisdiction from the baronial courts and repeated plagues and famines swept the land.[46] The second half of the fourteenth century was also a time of religious fluidity, in the climate of increased lay involvement in their faith that followed Pecham's proclamation *Ignorantia Sacerdotum* of 1281, which mandated lay confession and instruction in the vernacular in addition to homilies and sermons.[47] However, rising uneasiness about Lollardry led in the early fifteenth century to Arundel's *Constitutions*,[48] forbidding any unauthorised translation of spiritual material. This promulgation soon

[42] Colledge and Walsh, introduction to their edition, 40.
[43] Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, 35.
[44] Norwich also boasts the only examples in England of communities resembling beguinages, although the earliest of these (1427-1444) post-dates Julian.
[45] Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich,* xvi-xviii, 18.
[46] Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1986), 9.
[47] Charles Lock, '*The Cloud of Unknowing*: Apophatic Discourse and Vernacular Anxieties', in *Text and Voice: the Rhetoric of Authority in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marianne Børch, 207-233 (Odense: UP of Southern Denmark, 2004).
[48] This document was first drafted in 1407 but issued by Arundel in 1409, eight years after the Act of Parliament *De heretico comburendo*; Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change,' 825.

fostered a culture of repression and control, which greatly hampered not only vernacular theology but also vernacular hermeneutics and writing in general.[49]

As will be argued in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis, Julian's ease with the language of courtly culture suggests that she comes from the knightly class herself,[50] which would also be consistent with her degree of learning. Norman Tanner shows that the Norwich parents who in their wills mention children of theirs who are priests or religious came 'predominantly from the upper ranks of urban society'. This suggests that in Norwich 'the older and more institutional forms of religious life still had considerable appeal' for these young people and their families.[51] As mentioned above, Julian may not have been a nun before her enclosure, but as the audience for whom the *Ancrene Wisse* was written demonstrates, the anchoritic vocation was also favoured by knightly women. Julian seems to have had wide religious and social connections, including with the aristocracy; in addition to bequests from a merchant and two priests, she was given 20 shillings in 1416 in the will of Isabel Ufford, a nun at Campsey in Suffolk and the daughter of the Earl of Warwick.[52] Statements about Julian's class background must, of course, remain speculation, and certainly, as will be discussed, her attitude towards chivalry's ideology of violence and authority is not uncritical. Yet the *habitus* of courtliness is integral to Julian's mystical discourse and practice, as the second half of this thesis will show.

Julian's texts

Julian's original showing of May 1373 was supplemented by two additional revelations, the insight that love is God's meaning in 1388, and the injunction to pay further attention to the tableau of the Lord and Servant in 1393. The two texts were written some time between 1373, when Julian's illness occurred, and her death approximately 40 years later, after 1416. Some scholars, like Marion Glasscoe, argue that more accurate dating is impossible.[53] In contrast, Edmund Colledge and James Walsh date the Short Text to soon after the 1373

[49] Alastair Minnis, 'Absent Glosses: A Crisis of Vernacular Hermeneutics in Late-Medieval England' in *Text and Voice: the Rhetoric of Authority in the Middle Ages*, ed. Marianne Børch, 138-167 (Odense: UP of Southern Denmark, 2004).
[50] As Barratt suggests, 'Lordship, Service and Worship', 187-188. See p.75 of this thesis.
[51] Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich*, 26.
[52] Watson and Jenkins introduction to their edition, 5.
[53] See the introduction to *Julian of Norwich: A Revelation of Love*, ed. Marion Glasscoe, 2nd rev. edn (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), viii.

visions and the Long to some time after the secondary showing of 1388,[54] while Nicholas Watson argues for dates towards the end of these ranges, sometime in the 1380s for the Short Text and the early fifteenth century for the Long.[55] Gillespie agrees, suggesting that 'the Short Text is a *probatio* text, produced in connection with the enquiries surrounding her entry into the enclosed life of an anchoress'; it consequently may date from much later than 1373, even after 1388 when the second vision occurred. It already shows signs of rewriting, with the discussion of sin and the 'false peroration' (section 23) followed by more positive passages.[56] This later dating is appealing because, as will become apparent in the thesis's discussion, Julian's theology in its ideas of our exemplary nature kept in God reflects thirteenth-century Continental developments visible in the writings of women mystics like Mechtild of Hackeborn and Marguerite Porete. Works by and about Continental women visionaries like Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Mechtild of Hackeborn, and the writings of male mystics such as Suso and Ruysbroec, were arriving in England in the 1390s, and being translated into English.[57] If Julian was still writing in 1410 or 1415, this allows for (although it does not prove) the possibility that she was aware of this tradition.[58]

The Short Text remains in only one mid-fifteenth-century manuscript, British Library MS Additional 37790 (A). The Long Text is extant in two full-length versions, first Paris, Bibliothèque National MS Fonds Anglais 40 (P), dating from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, and second London, British Library MSS Sloane 2499 and 3705, similar copies dating from the early and late seventeenth century respectively of a common original (the older MS 2499 is usually cited; S). A and S share a similar dialect, located in or near Norwich, while P stems from a fairly systematic translation into fifteenth-century East Midlands Standard English.[59] Excerpts of the Long Text were also copied into the fifteenth-century compilation Westminster Cathedral Treasury MS 4 around 1500.[60] Glasscoe uses S as her base text, arguing that its language is closer to

[54] Introduction to their edition, 19, 24–25;
[55] 'The Composition of Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*', *Speculum*, 68 (1993): 637-683.
[56] Vincent Gillespie, '"[S]he Do the Police in Different Voices": Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody in Julian of Norwich,' in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy, 192-207 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 196-197.
[57] 'Composition,' 653.
[58] See Watson's suggestion of this point, *ibid.*, 682.
[59] Watson and Jenkins introduction, 36.
[60] For a full description of the manuscripts, see College and Walsh's introduction, 1-18. Marleen Cré has also made indepth studies of several; see *Vernacular Mysticism in the Charterhouse: A Study of*

Julian's own,[61] while Colledge and Walsh, and Watson and Jenkins favour P as a better reflection of 'the rhetorical and logical structures of Julian's prose'.[62] Watson and Jenkins' synthetic edition uses the longer P as base text, arguing that S has been abbreviated and its material consequently sometimes confused, but import from A and S readings that 'restore some of the vocabulary and other linguistic features of Julian's original dialect'.[63] This edition of the Long Text is chosen for this project because, combining P's fuller and more 'intellectually and rhetorically rigorous readings' with some of the unique dialectical features of A and S which are lost in P's translation, it offers the richest ground for exploring Julian's style as she recreates and interprets her mystical encounter.

The structure of this thesis

The focus of this thesis is Julian's textual practice, and therefore I do not attempt an exhaustive account of her philosophy or theology, although many complex philosophical and theological concepts will be encountered and discussed as Julian's ways of talking are traced. The first two chapters of the thesis concentrate on mystical discourse and practice. The divine other encountered by the mystic is beyond human systems of meaning. Yet these systems are the only register in which the encounter is visible, in the traces it leaves which take the form of practices – ways of speaking and acting – that gesture towards the encounter, and open a space for it, without being able to capture it. These practices are functions of the encounter's apophatic nature, and its overwhelming importance. Rather than trying to describe the experience, they work to transform the person into a mystical subject, one open to the import of the encounter. Since the only fact that is securely known about the encounter is that one has been hailed, this subjectivity is radically orientated to an Other whose presence is so overwhelming as to appear as an absence, in the sense that it fractures all established knowledge and language systems. At the centre of the mystical subjectivity is a radically undetermined desire for this absent Other. The practices the mystic develops, his or her ways of speaking and acting, are styles of managing this desire, and conveying it to others. In the first chapter of this thesis,

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London, British Library, MS Additional 37790 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), and '"This Blessed Beholding": Reading the Fragments from Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love* in London, Westminster Cathedral Treasury, MS 4,' in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy, 116-126 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008).

[61] Introduction to her edition, ix.

[62] Introduction to their edition, 27.

[63] *Ibid*., 40.

therefore, I discuss a practice-centred approach to mysticism, and locate it within the specifics of Julian's historical context.

The second chapter then explores how Julian develops a mystical practice of her own, forging an apophatic mystical discourse out of the positive theological and devotional traditions available to her, and negotiates her right, as a mystic, to speak of God. Her texts hail their readers as sharers in Julian's duty of opening themselves to hear God's voice. Julian models this hailing after her own experience. Her visions are unusually fragmented, compared to those of contemporary female visionaries,[64] and as I will trace they resist all Julian's attempts to process them according to traditional models of contemplative and devotional spirituality. In this way, she is forced to abandon her hermeneutic preconceptions and attend to the visions on their own terms. In writing the Long Text, Julian turns this experience into a characteristic style, which hails her readers to a similar humility. Her writing is mosaic-like, juxtaposing various contemporary terminologies, imageries, and discourses drawn from the scholarly, religious and secular spheres, so that the reader is forced to locate the text's meaning in the interstices between these various components. In this way Julian uses and celebrates human language and knowledge systems, but manages to suggest that the fullness of revelation exceeds them. She establishes mystical knowing as an ever-unfolding process, and mystical subjectivity as intersubjective, orientated towards and dependent on the divine Other.

The second portion of the thesis, made up of three chapters, explores the role of courtly imagery in the language of self Julian that develops for living out this subjectivity, and then offers to her readers. In Chapter 3 I focus on the courtly imagery threading through her texts, situating it in the society and culture of late medieval England and exploring the depiction of God as warrior knight, lover and feudal lord. Julian's imagery is an idealized but recognizable version of the culture of the contemporary knightly class. She celebrates the public and aesthetic qualities of chivalry, such as its glorification of prowess, honour, loyalty and largesse, and uses them to evoke a sense of God as able and determined to 'keep' us, as a feudal lord 'keeps' or maintains his dependents. The importance of this imagery is that it choreographs humankind's relationship with God, in that each of the roles Julian applies to God implies a corresponding subject position for her readers: fellow knight, beloved lady, feudal retainer. Employing the Augustinian concept of *fruitio*,

[64] These examples are from the Continent; see my discussion on p.49.

properly orientated delight in a thing for its own sake, Julian repeatedly exclaims over the delight God takes in his relationship with us, and which we are to find in our answering interaction with him. She makes the delight a knight takes in his victory, or a lady in her knight's service, or a retainer in his lord's honour, as metaphors for this joy. Who made up Julian's intended audience is a matter of conjecture, but, as I will discuss, her ease with the terminology of knightly culture suggests that both Julian and her readers came from this social stratum, or were familiar with its culture. Julian recruits this familiarity by translating the public honour-based courtly identity into the spiritual realm to craft a subjectivity that her readers would find satisfying on the level of habitual practice as well as imagination.

Chapter 4 then turns its attention to two particular instantiations of the courtly imagery applied to humankind. Julian's understanding of God as eternally loving and without wrath prompts her to explore the nature of humankind, made in God's image. This exploration simultaneously has to do justice to the soul's role as site of the mystical encounter. Consequently, the texts evoke the soul as a multi-layered space, as Julian superimposes her own theory of our two-part nature, made up of exemplary substance and frail sensuality, onto the received Augustinian model of the soul as trinitarian *imago Dei*. Over these philosophical discourses are layered images of the soul as courtly city and as womb, in which Christ is eternally enclosed. The result is another mosaic effect, in which Julian does not prescribe a model of the soul but rather invites performative engagement with the various terminologies and images her text offers. What readers are urged to do is accept as a founding truth of their subjectivities the fact of what Julian calls our substance, our eternally 'godly' will kept safe in God forever. For Julian as for her readers, the major obstacle to this acceptance is the experience of sin. As part of its argument for our perfection, therefore, the text evolves a highly unusual soteriology, using the ritual impulses of courtly honour identity to argue that sin is not shame but 'worship' to us (XVII.15; xiii.38.1). Building on the imagery of Christ as a warrior knight, Julian constructs sin as a momentary fracturing of the public surface of a knight's honour-based identity, which when healed through repentence and grace leaves a 'token', a scar that proves the warrior's willingness to risk shame and ability to overcome failure. As Sarah Beckwith reminds us, however, symbols like that of the knight are 'able to give body to divergent notions, claims and practices'; they 'encourage the creative attribution of multiple meanings to themselves that lead them to become the subject of political and social

contestation'.[65] This is true of Julian's image of the courtly knight and lord, particularly when the society of late-fourteenth-century England was adapting to the effects of decades of war, several plagues, and episodes of violent unrest like the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Therefore, Julian's negotiation of some of the problems associated with chivalric ideology, such as its celebration of violence and its elitism, is traced also.

In the final chapter, I bring the two portions of the thesis together, exploring the contribution made by the courtly imagery to Julian's mystical discourse and practice. I examine how the twin images of courtesy and homeliness, associated with the domains of public courtly life and intimate, maternal domesticity respectively, become a performative language in which Julian's Long Text models the core of the mystical encounter, the moment of closeness with God that contemplative theory calls union. This meeting is beyond expression, yet like pain or pleasure, it locates the self instantaneously in an overwhelming presentness of *here, now*. In the behavioural vocabulary of courtesy, which choreographs the space between two people in their mutual interaction, Julian finds a style of relating to God that accepts both his presence and his absence. She also draws attention to the decorum that underlies courteous behaviour, which consists in behaving in a way proper to one's station and role. Julian's courtly imagery gains most of its power from the way she foregrounds the aesthetic grace and moral properness of the ethic of courtesy, which she presents as a source of delight and satisfaction. The 'behoveliness' of courtesy becomes an expression of the deeper order underlying God's creation, the logic of properness set in place by his divine intention. In inviting her readers to take delight in their courtly interaction with God, and in the truth of our substance kept always safe in him, Julian invites them to a proper delight in God's will. The beauty of courtesy also has a final mystical function, however. I noted towards the beginning of this introduction how pain can act like an 'illegible writing' that inscribes the mystical utterance on the body. Pleasure can achieve the same effect: a person may not be able to say why something beautiful gives him or her pleasure, yet the experience makes that person instantaneously present to that moment of beauty, whose meaning is the openness it invites. In guiding her readers to take pleasure in the beauty of her text and of their courtly interaction with God *simply as beauty*, not for the intellectual or moral meaning they contain, Julian invites her readers into openness to the transcendence that language cannot speak.

[65] *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture, and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3-4.

The journey to this end must begin with an approach to mysticism. In the chapter which follows I aim to sketch out a model that can, to use Watson's phrase, understand the transcendent 'in its own, sacred terms' and yet do justice to Julian's practice in the complex specificities of her historical moment.

Chapter 1 An approach to mysticism: utterance and practice

All creatures want to utter God in all their works; they all come close as they can in uttering him, and yet they cannot utter him. Whether they like it or not, they all want to utter God, and yet he remains unuttered.
Meister Eckhart[1]

Throughout its history, contemplative practice in the west has had a core quality, a meeting with the divine outside the realm of everyday meaning. With Friedrich von Hügel I would argue that this sense of the mystical is an element of all religions, though only one part or element;[2] in fact, it is what makes them religions rather than philosophies. When the practices and beliefs making up this element 'reach a level of fully explicit formulation and paramount importance for certain adherents of the religion', this is as Bernard McGinn says 'mysticism proper', which appears in the various religions at various periods and places.[3] However, even when the mystic impulse is so intertwined with the social, ritual and systematic theological discourses and practices of a religious tradition that it is hardly separable at all – as is the case with the medieval contemplative spirituality – the impulse is still there.

To try to understand this element, a model of the mystical is required that avoids an anachronistic focus on the mystical "experience", while also taking seriously the claims of the sacred as transcendent, which is no easy task, considering the immeasurable 'metaphysical size gap' between us and God.[4] One way of giving the size gap its due is to think of *mystical practice*, that is, the 'styles' of speaking and behaving that gesture towards and make a space in which the transcendent can be encountered, rather than trying to encompass or contain it. This chapter will discuss these styles, which are the ripples created within our human symbolic systems by a meeting with the divine. But first, so that the advantages of this practice approach can be fully understood, other approaches to the study of mysticism need to be surveyed.

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[1] *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 204.
[2] *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and her Friends*, 2 vols (London: James Clarke and J.M. Dent, 1961 [1908]), especially chapter 2.
[3] *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century*, Vol. 1 of The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xvi.
[4] As Marilyn McCord Adams calls it, although her punctuation is 'size-gap'; 'Courtesy, Human and Divine,' 148.

The study of mysticism

As discussed in the Introduction chapter, studies of mysticism have tended to focus on the so-called 'mystical experience'. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition of mystical scholarship, this concentration is arguably due in large measure to the approach used by William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902)[5] as one of the earliest and most influential philosophical studies of mysticism in the Western tradition, gives great attention to conversion experiences. A sample modern definition of a mystical experience that reflects the presuppositions of this approach to mysticism reads: 'a (purportedly) super sense-perceptual or sub sense-perceptual experience granting acquaintance of realities or states of affairs that are of a kind not accessible by way of sense perception, somatosensory modalities, or standard introspection'.[6] The basic assumption on which this definition builds is that mystical experience is analogous with ordinary sense perception, that is, an experience *by* a self-conscious subject *of* something with the kind of content that can be grasped in language and verified.

Scholars starting from this assumption then investigate the stages of mystical experience, its metaphors, and the cognitive faculties and epistemological mechanisms involved. Discussions have focused particularly on whether or not mystical experience has perceptual content (kataphatic or positive experience) or is entirely phenomenologically empty (apophatic or negative mystical experience);[7] in what sense 'acquaintance' with the divine yields knowledge;[8] whether this knowledge is primarily intellectual or affective;[9] and the degree to which a direct, pure mystical "experience", a common core found across

[5] *The Varieties of Religious Experience: a Study in Human Nature* (London: Collins, 1960[1902]).
[6] Gellman, 'Mysticism'. For similar definitions, see for example Louis Roy, *Transcendent Experience: Phenomenology and Critique* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) xi; also Roy, *Mystical Consciousness: Western Perspectives and Dialogue with Japanese Thinkers* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003) xxi, 38.
[7] Von Hügel, in his *Mystical Element of Religion*, argues that apophatic mysticism is a Neoplatonic distortion of true mysticism. In contrast, Jacques Maritain argues that a negative form of knowing, which he calls 'uncircumscriptive knowledge', is the highest form of mystical knowing of God; see *Distinguish to Unite, or The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Scribner, 1959) 220-244.
[8] William James began this debate, arguing that mystical experiences are in themselves noetic; see *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 371.
[9] Joseph Maréchal, because his exploration of mysticism posits an *a priori* epistemological contact between the human and the divine, concentrates on intellectual intuition as the mode of mystical knowing; see *Studies in the Psychology of the Mystics*, trans. Algar Thorold, (Albany: Magi Books, 1964) 121, 131, 134. Maritain (see note 10) argues that mystical knowing is in the end connaturality in love; *Degrees of Knowledge*, 242.

cultures and periods, can be detected beneath subsequent interpretation, theological or otherwise.[10]

As Nicholas Watson points out,[11] these approaches seek to separate out a dehistoricized, universal experience as the core and defining feature of mysticism, and so risk white-washing all the other aspects of each individual mystical text, aspects which reveal so much about the people and society who produced them. Yet in insisting on the uniqueness of mysticism, such models do hold a germ of truth. As theological discourse, a mystical text is not trying to do the same work as a text of systematic or 'positive' theology, irrespective of whether or not both kinds of writing are talking about the same divine reality. Whereas systematic theology aims to make valid metaphysical statements about God in predicative and (ideally) constative language, a mystical text tells the story of an encounter in dialogue with the divine, the absolute Other. Julian's texts are often classed as visionary literature, but the complex visual-conceptual-imaginative experience she describes is important because it is a meeting between 'a pore creature' and the uncreated God. Another way of thinking about mysticism, then, is not to focus on how knowledge crosses the 'metaphysical size-gap' between us and God, but to explore the dynamics of the meeting itself.

The mystical encounter: hearing the mystical utterance

Since all human language and symbolic systems, including religious institutions and even scriptures, are finite, the divine by definition is something 'set outside the realm of knowledge';[12] thus an encounter with God is not like an encounter with an ordinary object, about which we can make truth statements, but rather a foray into the darkness beyond knowledge systems and constative language.[13] Mystical experience happens in and constitutes a different epistemological space, a space 'outside' and 'parallel' to ordinary

[10] Examples include W.T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1960); various essays by Ninian Smart, e.g. 'Mystical Experience', *Sophia* 1 (1962): 19-26 and 'Understanding Religious Experience', in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz, 10-21 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); William J. Wainwright, *Mysticism: A Study of its Nature, Cognitive Value and Moral Implications* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981); and the volume edited by Steven Katz, *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), including Katz's own essay, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', 22-74. Of these works, all take the common core position but Katz's, which argues that mystical experience is irreducibly contextual in nature.

[11] See above p.4.

[12] De Certeau, *Heterologies*, 89.

[13] See also Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 8.

symbolic systems.[14] This is why the mystical encounter, as a meeting with the Other, has the peculiar characteristic of being 'pregnant with infinite meaning, but without specific meaning'.[15] The degree of epistemological confusion into which this experience can plunge one is reflected in the length of time – more than twenty years – that Julian took to interpret parts of the showings given to her. Yet the experience cannot be ignored, because it is characterised most essentially by an overwhelming sense of reality; as Franz Rosenzweig puts it, 'the only immediate content of revelation . . . is revelation itself,[16] and this gives to the transient encounter a paradoxical permanence. Samuel Terrien aptly evokes the character of the trace left by the meeting when he describes the mystical encounter as 'a surging which soon vanishes and leaves in its disappearance an absence that has been overcome'.[17]

The mystical encounter is thus caught in the tension between presence and absence, closer in nature to an utterance than a text, since a spoken word requires a present speaker yet disappears as soon as it is uttered. For this reason John of the Cross calls the Holy Spirit 'he who speaks'.[18] Michel de Certeau therefore proposes modelling the mystical encounter as founded on an allocutionary speech act, that is, a speech made *to* another. In its most essential form, such a speech act is 'an approach, like a call, the shouting out of a first name, responding at a distance in the street to the passing silhouette of the beloved'.[19] The content of the speech does not matter; the mystic is invoked as one *who hears*, one *who is hailed*. Any act of prayer or worship involves what Katherine Zieman describes as 'the enactment of the self in a dialectical confrontation with the divine'.[20] Such a self was taken for granted in late-medieval English culture, which had many resources for interpellating[21]

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[14] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable,* 1-2.
[15] Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 30.
[16] Franz Rosenzweig, *Briefe* (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), 535; English translation in F. Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning: Modern Jewish Philosophy and Religion*, ed. N.N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1955), 118; quoted from Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 30.
[17] Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 476; quoted in Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross, 'The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich,' in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England V*, ed. Marion Glasscoe, 53-78 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), 54.
[18] '*el que habla*'; quoted in De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 158.
[19] *Ibid.*, 160.
[20] 'Perils of Canor,' 158-159.
[21] The term is originally from Louis Althusser, who says 'all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects'; see 'Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),' in *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. Ben Brewster, 121-173 (London: New Left Books, 1971), 162.

the individual in these terms; explicit theological teachings about sin and virtue, for example, placed a person's sense of moral agency and responsibility, while liturgical and devotional practices like Corpus Christi processions and affective gospel meditations framed particular emotional and somatic experiences as significant or legitimate. The speech act that founds the mystical encounter can take the form of such established interpellative mechanisms; alternately, when contemporary spiritual discourses are perceived as habitual and well-worn, the hailing may take the form of a decisive rupture with tradition. Whatever its form, the speech act – it could be a word, a gesture, a ritual – is radically content-less. What is essential is that the mystic is engaged at the level of illocution, in other words that the encounter is placed within the realm of the mystic's will or desire, prior to any language or symbolic meaning. The hailing makes the mystic encounter possible, by crossing the border between the symbolic system and the infinite Other; de Certeau describes it as a '*shifter* cutting through the hierarchical order, authoriz[ing] in advance the transgression that will bring contraries together' and opening a space where the encounter can happen.[22]

Julian's account gives a highly dramatic, visual depiction of this space, in the tunnel of light that she sees focusing on the crucifix, with 'all dyrke aboute . . . as if it hadde bene mekille occupiede with fendes' (II.31-32; Preamble.iii.24-27). This encounter is prior to – or beyond – the kind of objectifying epistemology assumed by theoretical and systematic language, in which being is reified into knowledge, and the individual fixed as the knowing subject. Negative theologians tend to use the paradox of *unknowing* to try to express the "knowledge" the mystical subject gains in such an encounter: in the words of the pseudo-Dionysius, the 'most divine *knowledge* of God is that which *knows* through *unknowing*', or as his medieval interpreter Thomas Gallus puts it, the soul in union with God '*cognizes* God above every existing *intellection* and *cognition*'.[23] This unknowing requires a stripping of self, in the sense of a "subject" knowing an "object", so that the self can be given back as a relationship: I am one who speaks to the Other, hears the Other's utterance. To use a

[22] *Mystic Fable*, 34-36.
[23] Dionysius as cited in Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas Carlson (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), 150; Thomas Gallus, '*cognoscit eum super omnem existentem intellectum et cognitionem*'; *Thomas Gallus: Commentaires du Cantique des Cantiques*, ed. Jeanne Barbet (Paris: Vrin, 1967), second commentary, chapter 1, section O, 141. Translation Boyd Taylor Coolman, 'Medieval Affective Dionysian Tradition,' *Modern Theology* 24 no. 4 (2008): 624.

phrase from Mary-Jane Rubenstein, beyond 'the failure of epistemology, then, emerges relationality'.[24]

The kind of subjectivity created by the mystical encounter is not the same as the contemplative self modelled by the Socratic command, 'Know thyself', which separates the self from itself by making being and consciousness a problematic to be investigated. For the mystic, this problematic is rephrased in illocutionary terms. The question the meditative self asks is no longer, 'What does it mean to say, I am conscious?' or 'What are the faculties by which I know the world and myself?', but rather, 'What am I, as one who is hailed?' The mystic self is a site of dialogue. Examining the soul in these terms means making room for the infinite other, and finding at the core of the self 'the infinite dimension of an inner foreignness'.[25] The initial dialogue with the divine Other takes place beyond language, and so the soul, in the sense of the site of the encounter, must be modelled as 'an answer in search of what it is an answer to . . . a speaking that does not know what it echoes'.[26] The mystic will experience this problematic, and have to work it through using the discourses of self available in his or her context, and forge from them, or despite them, a place from which to speak.

The mystical subject is thus a site of radical openness and never-satisfied receptivity to the Other. Both the relational quality of the encounter and the subject's condition of desire found expression in the late medieval tradition in the imagery of erotic love; Rolle in his *Incendium*, for example, names love for God as the only love that should be excessive, because God is always absent:

> No creature treuly may lufe [God] to mykill. In all oþer þinges all þat is to mykill turnes to vice: bot vertew of lufe, þe more it passys more glorius it sal be. Þe lufar treuly longis if he by hym ha not þe liknes þat he lufis. Þerfor it is sayd: *Nunciate dilecto quia amorem langueo*, þat is to say: "schew to my lufe for lufe I long," [Song of Songs 5:8] Als who say: [for] þat I lufe I se it not, for lufe also in body I wax slaw.[27]

The mystic's desire always reaches out for God, but since he transcends us so utterly, this is equally a reaching-out for everything and for nothing; it is radically undetermined.

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[24] Mary-Jane Rubenstein, 'Unknow Thyself: Apophaticism, Deconstruction, and Theology after Ontotheology,' *Modern Theology* 19, no. 3 (2003): 404.
[25] To borrow phrases de Certeau uses in discussing Teresa of Avila's image of the castle of the soul; *Mystic Fable*, 195-196.
[26] *Ibid.*, 188.
[27] *The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life or The Rule of Living*, trans. Richard Misyn, ed. Ralph Harvey, EETS o.s. 106 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1896), 40.

Karma Lochrie vividly describes the state Rolle calls 'languishing' as both 'an excess and an emptying at the same time – a fullness produced by a lack and producing a loss'.[28] So if the mystical encounter begins with God's hailing, the mystic's answer is a performative act of absolute willing, a resolve here and now to stake one's entire being on God, without knowing anything further. De Certeau suggests the term *volo* for this act, from the Latin for 'I will' or 'I want to'. The *volo* is an illocutionary act of complete willing, like the Virgin's reply to the angel at the Annunciation, signifying her utter openness to God.[29] Encountering the divine from a position of incommensurable inferiority, the mystic cannot demand anything; all he or she can do is demonstrate complete trust. Like the divine hailing, therefore, the mystic's *volo* delimits the position of the mystic subject, this time as one 'fit to "hear" that discourse'.[30]

De Certeau develops his model of the *volo* from early modern examples, when, as I will discuss in more detail in this chapter's final section, philosophical and cultural developments had made problematic the question of how communication with the divine is possible. These shifts include the relocation of theology in the thirteenth century from the monasteries to the universities,[31] and corresponding changes in its nature; shifts in hermeneutic theory and practice fostered by the universities;[32] and most importantly the development of nominalist understandings of language and its relation with thought and reality.[33] The overall effect of these developments, which was to cast doubt on the foundation of human language in God's divine utterance, causes the *volo* to become more

[28] Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 73.
[29] Luke 1:38.
[30] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 166-167.
[31] On this shift see Marion Glasscoe, *English Medieval Mystics: Games of Faith* (London: Longman, 1993), 37. Theology had been a loosely-organised, experience-based tradition among monks or bishops, who had pastoral or spiritual ends in view and thought of their work primarily as commentary on the most important of all texts, the *sacra pagina* of Scripture; now it became an academic discipline studied by professional intellectuals, using the dialectical methods fostered by the rediscovery of Aristotle. Theology became a full-fledged *science*, 'proceeding according to the inherent logic of its subject matter and the demands of pedagogical clarity'; Philipp W. Rosemann, 'Philosophy and Theology in the Universities,' in *A Companion to the Medieval World*, ed. Carol Lansing and Edward D. English, 543-560 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 549-550.
[32] See Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 39.
[33] Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 7. Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 45-49. For a lucid summary of the nominalist tradition, see Louis K. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 37-41.

visible, since the mystic's faith in his or her encounter is then the only foundation of the mystical utterance's authority. This model of the *volo*'s functioning has to be applied with caution to medieval examples, however, since the *volo* is not so clearly distinguishable when a culture has a language and framework within which the actuality of communicating with God is simply assumed, and authoritative channels and forms that such communication is supposed to follow. The contemplative tradition of late medieval Europe had all of these. Yet the *volo* does appear in more subtle effects. The tradition of discretion of spirits, for example, reveals an underlying anxiety over the question of how one is to be sure that God's is the only voice heard, since due to the nature of the utterance no outside verification of the *volo* is possible. The *Cloud*-author thus warns that the voices of flesh, world and devil can lead the mystic astray.[34] Another sign of the *volo*'s centrality to mystical practice is its tendency to separate out from the general community of believers the few, those who 'have ears to hear' as Christ would say.[35] An early modern example is John of the Cross's address to 'souls already engaged in the path of virtue',[36] but something similar underlies Walter Hilton's insistence that though a 'clerk' can arrive at knowledge of God 'be clergie oonli thorugh myght of his naked resoun', his knowing remains 'blyndli and savourli', whereas true confirmation and sanctification lies with the contemplative, whose understanding brims with reverence, burning love and great delight.[37] Julian possibly also distinguishes a mystical elite, in her Short Version at least, when she talks to God's 'true lovers', a point to which I will return in Chapter 2. These manifestations of the *volo* reveal mystics meeting the transcendent on its own sacred terms, to use Watson's phrase. The *volo* is thus a useful theoretical tool for distinguishing mystical practices in the sense outlined in this chapter from the other layers of devotional and contemplative practice with which they are intertwined in Julian's period.

The all-or-nothing character of the mystical *volo* means that the mystic, having heard the utterance, then desires – is compelled – to speak it on to others. But what definite content and form this message is to take, considering the location of the mystical encounter

[34] 'A Tretis of Discrecyon of Spirites', in *Deonise Hid Diuinite, and Other Treatises of Contemplative Prayer Related to The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson, EETS os 231 (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 81.
[35] E.g. Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9.
[36] *Ascent of Mt Carmel*, quoted in de Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 166.
[37] *Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), book II ch.32 lines 2165-2170, hereafter cited as *Scale* book.chapter.lines; see also II.29.1921-1922.

outside of the realm of knowledge, symbolic systems and constative language, is a problem.

Mystical discourse and the mystical text

The obstinate realness of mystical experience gives it an outward trajectory, in the sense that rather than revealing an "object" as its "cause", it radiates into the life of the person and his or her community. As the Monk of Farne says, 'A heart on fire cannot but utter burning words, and a heart wounded by love must needs wound others with its words'.[38] The mystical utterance is also addressed to those who would learn from or emulate the mystic. While in itself indeterminate in terms of any conceptual content, the encounter is appropriated by us 'in the form of a determinate structure of meaning',[39] while at the same time it appropriates us. The variety of hermeneutical acts in which the encounter is mediated is infinite, but the meeting always occurs within the dynamics and possibilities of the particular mystic's *habitus*.[40] The particular 'determinate' form can be the predicative statements of positive theology, but also and more powerfully other less explicit expressions, from metaphor and art work to ritual, self-presentation and the body itself; in other words, the mystic utterance can take place at any of the levels of reiterative and citational discourse practice at which human meaning exists.[41] The body, which de Certeau models as the site of intersection where the mystical *experience* (in the sense of the event of hailing), the *world* of social relationships and practices in which the mystic

[38] *The Monk of Farne: The Meditations of a Fourteenth Century Monk*, ed. Hugh Farmer, trans. a Benedictine of Stanbrook (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), 110.

[39] George Pattinson, 'What to Say: Reflections on Mysticism after Modernity,' in *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology: Reason, Meaning and Experience*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer and Martin Warner, 191-206 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 198.

[40] The *habitus* is a set of 'durable and transposable dispositions' (Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72) that mediates between 'objective' structures of social relations and the individual's 'subjective' behaviour. These dispositions are provided by determining structures like family, class and education, and give the individual the practical skills and attitudes within which 'improvisation' is possible, within a given field. The *habitus* is simultaneously remade by these improvisations on an ongoing basis. See *'Habitus'* in *Dictionary of the Social Sciences in Politics and Social Sciences*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Oxford University Press, 2002), accessed 6 July 2013, www.oxfordreference.com. Only in the modern world has the quest for the divine been able to take place outside of a prescribed tradition. And even then, modern 'mystics' tend to draw on a range of traditions – such as various native cultures, New Age discourses, celebrity religions such as Scientology – rather than none at all. By declaring the major religious traditions defunct, such mysticism is still in involved in a dialectic with them; see Bernard McGinn, 'Foreword', in Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim, vii-xix (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), xiv.

[41] For this model of the practice of discourse, see Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-14.

lives, and the *symbolic discourses* available to him or her, all meet,[42] has a particular capacity for receiving the traces of the mystical utterance, since embodied meaning, as Pierre Bourdieu says, is 'beyond the grasp of consciousness', and so beyond the reach of 'voluntary, deliberate transformation' and explicit statement.[43] Though interpretations of and terminology about corporeality have changed over the course of time, the body itself has evolved very little in the span of recorded history. Experiences written onto the body in the language of its experiences – being born, dying, eating, defecating, desiring, as well as specifically gendered phenomena like gestation, giving birth and breast-feeding – can be powerfully universal in their reach.[44] By finding expression in symbolic structures as deep-laid as these, mystical meaning succeeds in retaining its mystery while also producing an unparalleled sense of rightness and truthfullness.

The meaning encountered and the symbolic forms available co-exist in a dynamic relationship. As Mark S. Burrows puts it, the 'margin of the inarticulate' is not 'the *limit* but . . . the *lure* of language', always calling us to say more while impressing upon us our 'defenselessness in the face of mystery'.[45] What de Certeau calls the 'immense "remainder" constituted by the part of human experience that has not been tamed and symbolized by language'[46] always beckons from just beyond what has been articulated symbolically. The ever-present invitation to experiment and create, to push our means of expression ever further, occurs at all levels of symbolic expression. This movement can be traced in the life and work of individual mystics, such as Julian, and also diachronically across a historical period or cultural tradition. The various schools and approaches to mysticism, which define themselves for example as apophatic over and against kataphatic, represent attempts to essentialize particular aspects of the range of acts and modes of performed witness that human culture has developed. Thus both directly through the mystics' performances, textual and otherwise, and indirectly through their contributions to the

[42] *Mystic Fable*, 109.
[43] This quote comes from Bourdieu's discussion of the 'bodily hexis', by which he means the deportment or style in which actors carry themselves: 'Bodily hexis is political mythology realised, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*'; *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 93-94.
[44] See Liz Herbert McAvoy's argument of a similar point about the body in *Authority and the Female Body*, 14-15.
[45] 'Raiding the Inarticulate: Mysticism, Poetics, and the Unlanguageable,' *Spiritus* 4, no. 2 (2004): 181.
[46] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 61.

habitus of their society, mystical experiences reach beyond the mystics to those who never themselves attain a direct meeting with God.[47]

In Julian's case, her mystical encounter is left to us in the form of a written text. The nature of the mystical text must be carefully explicated, however. The practice-centred model of the mystical encounter is not the 'common core' understanding, discussed above, although it may sound similar. The encounter is not a separate, "pure" or "contentless" experience beyond language systems which is then *expressed in* language. The unknowing that surpasses knowledge is not a psychological experience that cannot be put into words, but a grasping that God is beyond words.[48] The encounter will always remain inexpressible, as Meister Eckhart stresses: 'What is the last end? It is the hidden darkness of the eternal divinity, and it is unknown, and it was never known, and it will never be known'.[49] The status of the mystical *text*, which in the case of a medieval mystic like Julian is the only definite trace we have left of her encounter, is equally difficult to ground. As de Certeau reminds us, mystical texts, like mystical encounters, are without a stable referent in the sense of an "experience" or a fundamental "reality" of which they tell. The Other is not 'an outside of the text', an object that can be distinguished from 'the movement by which it . . . is sketched'.[50] The text is what remains after the recognition and almost simultaneous loss of the infinite meaning of the mystical encounter, like the stones Jacob left near Yabboq after wrestling through the night with the angel.[51] This is true for all mystical accounts, in their rich variety of forms including first-person account, biography, exegesis of scripture, collection of aphorisms, theoretical treatise, poem, prayer, practical guide book of contemplative life, or metaphysical speculation.[52]

Reading a mystical text is thus like eavesdropping on a conversation always just out of earshot – the *true* mystic dialogue taking place beyond language. The mystical utterance is

[47] Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 5.
[48] Grace M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 105.
[49] 'Sermon 22' in *Essential Sermons*, 196.
[50] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 14-15.
[51] *Ibid*., 48, 114.
[52] For brief surveys of the various types of mystical text, see Stephen T. Katz, 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning', in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Stephen T. Katz, 3-42 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 5; and William P. Alston, 'Literal and Nonliteral in Reports of Mystical Experience,' in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Stephen T. Katz, 80-102 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 87.

the oral text that the written text always fails to capture.[53] The written text can gesture towards the mystical encounter, awake the desire for such a meeting in the reader, but cannot approximate or substitute for it. Disappointment is the reader's necessary experience, and faith his or her only modality of reception. A *volo* is therefore required of the reader of a mystical text as much as of a mystic, because it is the condition of the text's functioning; the contract between the speaker (or text) and the listener (or reader) is to be seduced by the Other, accepting that when talking of God, all language is fallacious.[54] This contract is what mystical discourse has to establish, if it is to midwife the reader's own mystical encounter. The particular ways of talking and acting that make up mystical practice will thus aim to achieve this contract; a few indicative examples will suggest some of the ways in which they do so.

Mystical ways of talking

The first way of talking is avoidance of the positive, predicative discourse available to systematic theology. By-passing positive language is not as simple as saying "God is not *x*", because this is to presume knowledge of what God is. One route out of this difficulty involves language practices traditionally called apophatic, such as denials or distinctions, which admit that words are inadequate. The most extreme form of such practice is, in the Christian tradition, the ancient tropes of silence and madness, which confound human meaning by ultimately honouring no contract, not even language itself.[55] A complementary tactic to such apophatic under-saying is kataphatic over-saying, by means of hyperbole, paradox, excess and improper use of language; as the *Cloud*-author puts it, in the cloud of unknowing we find not only 'þe schortyng of wordes, bot as it were a madnes and a parfite vnreasonabilitee of all þat we seyn'.[56] A common practice of impropriety is to ignore the distinction between literal and figurative language,[57] as Rolle does for example in his categories of *fervor*, *dulcor* and *canor*. These are not descriptions of metaphysical "stages" or "concepts" of mystical practice, but rather the text itself practising the straying of words across semantic hierarchies in their attempt to speak the unsayable. The literal-figural breakdown also often takes the form of uncomfortably vivid use of erotic imagery

[53] See de Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 193; Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 69.
[54] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 176.
[55] *Ibid*., 39.
[56] *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, lines 13-15.
[57] Rick McDonald notes this same feature of mystical language, calling it using the language of the body, in Rolle and Kempe; 'The Perils of Language in the Mysticism of Late Medieval England,' *Mystics Quarterly* 34 no. 3/4 (2008): 58-62.

for mystical experience, imagery which blurs the line between physical and spiritual realms of knowledge and signification.[58] Kataphatic writing can also employ excess, for example Rolle's over-determination of the Holy Name which, he says, exceeds 'everything that we say or write'.[59] In his '*Cantus amoris*' from *Ego dormio*[60] Rolle tries to capture in poetry the effect of the overwhelming rush of meaning evoked by the Name. Another example of such purposeful deployment of rhetorical virtuosity, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 5, is Hieronymous Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (1503-1504), in which the exuberant proliferation of signifiers fails to convey a corresponding richness of meaning but instead highlights the surface and materiality of the sign and makes it more opaque. These and other techniques of over-saying produce, in the words of Michael Sells, 'a language of double propositions, each correcting the previous proposition', with meaning only found 'in the fleeting tension' between them.[61] Julian uses similar techniques to hail her audience as the site of meaning, a point to which I shall return later.[62]

A second characteristic of mystical discourse must accompany such apophatic manoeuvres, if they are not simply to reduce to nonsense: since the meaning of the utterance cannot be directly produced, its temporal, immediate quality as event can be celebrated instead. The fact that God speaks to the mystic is highlighted by throwing into stark relief the elements of this communication: the *I* (the mystic) and the *you* (God) having the conversation, and the allocutionary abilities of language. De Certeau calls this '*a dramatics of allocution*', that is, a way of writing that foregrounds the pragmatic and subjective elements of language, and draws attention to its contingent and fabricated nature.[63] Ways have to be found when using established religious and devotional language of making it sound fresh to each reader, like a voice addressed *to me*. Julian as mystic has to hail the reader as she has herself been hailed. One resource in the late-medieval period was the monastic tradition of rhetorical, functionalist hermeneutics: interpretation in this model is ultimately 'the manifestation and restoration of a meaning addressed to me in the

[58] See Denis Renevey, *Language, Self, and Love: Hermeneutics in the Writing of Richard Rolle and the Commentaries on the Song of Songs* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), for a discussion of the evolution of this erotic discourse in the tradition of biblical commentary on the *Song of Songs*.
[59] *English Writings of Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole*, ed. Hope Emily Allen (Brunswick Road: Alan Sutton, 1988 [1931]), 108.
[60] *Ibid*., 70-72.
[61] "The Pseudo-Woman and the Meister: 'Unsaying' and Essentialism" in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. Bernard McGinn, 114-146 (New York: Continuum, 1994), 115.
[62] See Chapter 2, the section titled 'The Long Text: inscribing opportunities for hailing'.
[63] *Mystic Fable*, 162, his emphasis.

manner of a message, a proclamation, or . . . a kerygma'.[64] Vernacular writers like Rolle and Julian thus work to draw on monastic reading practices like *lectio divina*, the slow, ruminative reading and prayerful digestion of scripture so as to inscribe it onto the reader's heart and lips,[65] and *lectio spiritualis*, focused attention to emotional experience during reading, prayer and other devotions.[66] These practices have to be strategically invoked, however, to free them from authoritative discourses like the biblical commentary tradition, with which they are deeply associated, so that they hail the reader as the site of interpretation, as the hearer of the mystical utterance, rather than as a conduit of established, authoritative readings which make positivist claims to truth. The place and authority of personal experience, and of *sapientia*, the affective knowledge gained through it, was debated in Julian's period (in literature, as in spirituality), so that calling on one's own spiritual experience or inviting readers to embrace theirs was also necessarily to engage with this debate. Thus, for example, Rolle's claims to authority for his feelings of passionate love for God simultaneously draw support from established literary and spiritual traditions (particularly Cistercian and Victorine), and diverge from them, due to Rolle's idiosyncratic descriptions and interpretations of his affective experience.[67] Another dramatic technique, Julian's version of which will be explored, is to stage the moment of insight for the audience, rather than stating this moment's outcome in its final, explicit form; the present moment of reading becomes the site of the encounter, and the audience has to arrive at the insight for themselves. Julian makes extensive use of such staging, both in the more literal sense of setting up her death-bed scene in great detail and in recounting her showings as sights, feelings, momentary thoughts and more considered meditation all together as unfolding moment by moment.

Every historical moment has its particular symbolic economy, and when particular discourses and registers are constructed as the province of explicit doctrine, mystical discourse will often eschew any straightforward use of such language, and instead explore its margins in an effort to avoid predicative statement. Studying a mystic text is thus

[64] Paul Ricoeur, In Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 39.
[65] See Romans 10 v.8.
[66] Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. Catherine Misrahi, 3rd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 89-91, 95; Brian Stock, *After Augustine: the Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) 106-170.
[67] Nicholas Watson, *Richard Rolle and the Invention of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 24-27.

always an exercise in context, since it is in the spaces and tensions between contemporary discourses that the mystical utterance is to be heard. In de Certeau's words, the mystical text can only be truly studied as 'the infinitude of a local singularity'.[68] Here lies both the promise and the danger of an approach to mysticism that focuses on the practices, the ways of talking, of mystical discourse. It is all too easy to fall into over-broad readings of what is 'central' and what 'marginal'. De Certeau himself tends towards this error when he says that in the symbolic economy of the late medieval and early modern periods, everything set beyond the bounds of the field of meaning claimed by (masculine) reason and writing – such as 'the child, the woman, the illiterate, madness, angels', the body, the spoken word, fable and song – was displaced towards 'the mystical'.[69] If, as he suggests, mystical practices are always to be discerned in the dynamics of institutional over against lay, Latin against vernacular, male against female, written against oral, *intellectus* against *affectus*, the potential for overstatement or tabloidization[70] is clear.

Similarly, though mystical utterance is always in a sense at odds with institutional religion, because this religion has had to tie down in explicit statement the revelation of what exceeds all such statement, the relationship between the mystical and the institutional is not necessarily controversial. On one level, what Watson says is true: 'unmediated contact with the divine must affect all areas of a mystic's life, for such contact both annihilates the pretensions of everything less than the divine and confers a special status on whoever has experienced it. The mystic's inherited view of his or her relationship with the ecclesiastical establishment is hence threatened'.[71] Yet a great deal will depend on the place and authority granted to the mystical utterance and the mystic, relative to the religious culture's traditions, documents, languages and roles. Twelfth-century contemplative theory coming from the Cistercian and Victorine monastic centres, as I will discuss in more detail in the next section, tended to accord central importance to the encounter with the divine beyond all language and rational comprehension. Yet as this culture filtered out into the lay world in the thirteenth century,[72] questions of authority became trickier. As

[68] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 9.
[69] *Ibid.* 13. The parallel position today would be 'if the down-and-outs of our society, the fixed-income elderly or alien workers, were the eponymous heroes of knowledge'; *Heterologies*, 86.
[70] To use a term Vincent Gillespie applies to over-broad arguments about vernacular theology; see footnote 15 of the Introduction chapter.
[71] *Invention of Authority*, 3.
[72] See Bernard McGinn's discussion of this development, which he calls the growth of a 'new mysticism', in *Flowering of Mysticism*, 12-26.

mentioned above, even Rolle as a university-trained, Latinate man had to argue for the legitimacy of his experiences, because his chosen eremitic lifestyle did not fit properly into any available vocational category, while female authors like Julian and Margery Kempe experimented with a range of authorizing tactics, such as evoking older traditions that allow women the roles of inspired sybil or wise old woman.[73] The role of the mystical impulse was further complicated in Julian's day by a profound shift happening in the philosophical world view on which contemplative theory was built, due to the later thirteenth-century development of nominalist theories of language and ontology. The major discourses surrounding spiritual experience in Julian's day must be briefly surveyed.

Julian's moment

The contemplative tradition conceived of the fulfilment of holiness as ascent beyond all sensual and rational faculties to union with the divine. Affective piety or spirituality, the most wide-spread spiritual culture in Julian's day, gained its name from its championing of *affectus (*or 'feeling' in Middle English) as the faculty through which we reach this union. As Bernard of Clairvaux famously taught, we begin by celebrating Christ's humanity and cultivating a private, loving relationship with him, characterized by compassion for his suffering, sorrow at our guilt in causing this suffering, and passionate longing to be close to him. Our love for the human Christ displaces other sensual loves: 'Your affection for your Lord Jesus should be both tender and intimate, to oppose the sweet enticements of sensual life. Sweetness conquers sweetness as one nail drives out another'.[74] Initiated into love of God by attraction to his humanity, we advance to knowing and loving him spiritually, in his divinity, which alone is full contemplation.[75] It is love, according to high monastic cognitive theory, that achieves the final perfection of contemplation; Thomas Gallus, for example, separates *intellectus* and *affectus* at the final point of union with the Word where the *scintilla synderesis* (spark of the soul), which he also calls the *apex*

[73] Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, 188-192, 216-222.
[74] Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*, in *Bernardus Claraeuallensis,* Library of Latin Texts Series A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), accessed 6 July 2013, www.brepolis.net, sermon 20 paragraph 4, line 30: '*Sit suavis et dulcis affectui tuo Dominus Iesus, contra male utique dulces vitae carnalis illecebras, et vincat dulcedo dulcedinem, quemadmodum clavum clavus expellit*'; translated in *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux, Volume 2: Song of Songs I*, trans. Kilian Walsh, O.C.S.O. (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 150.
[75] Sermon 20, paragraph 6, line 21; *Ibid*., 154.

affectionis (high point of affection), achieves the bride's embrace of the divine Spouse and, as mentioned above, cognizes God above cognition.[76]

Yet affective cognitive theory does not cast aside reason and *scientia*, rational knowledge achieved through study. The Cistercian tradition maintained that both this *scientia* and *sapientia*, experiential wisdom written in the heart by the finger of God, are necessary for contemplation up until the final moments. In its lower stages, the ascent to God involves all the faculties of the soul, in their various capacities.[77] Cognitive theorists William of St Thierry and Bonaventure stress that any act of knowing at all is only possible because of the perfect joining of divine spirit and material flesh in Christ's Incarnation without which, in terms of the philosophical law that disproportionate things cannot act on each other, spiritual intellect would never be able to make contact with material things to know them. Thus 'every act of knowing is a mini-journey from Christ's humanity to his divinity'.[78] The highest state of rapture or *excessus* in which the created soul is granted intimacy with the divine Creator is thus in some sense at least on a continuum with the lowliest knowledge of the material world.

In this fully developed form, affective cognitive theory did not long retain the interest of philosophers after its early thirteenth-century heyday,[79] yet it illustrates a central characteristic of the medieval world view: an intrinsically ordered ontology which sees creation as uttered into being by God. Contemplative tradition did not see the mystical impulse as separate from more explicit and systematic religious thought or practice because the cosmos was understood as God's utterance. To explain this more clearly, medieval language theory must be briefly set out. This theory, still largely Augustinian, held as fundamental that words are anchored in being by the meaning-guaranteeing intention of God the divine speaker, which underlies all of reality. Augustine saw words as the paradigm for all signs, and signs as the basic mechanism of 'cognition of being',

[76] See footnote 22 above.
[77] See e.g. McGinn, 'Love, Knowledge, and the *Unio Mystica* in the Western Christian Tradition,' in *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn, 59-86 (New York: Continuum, 1996), 85; Watson, 'Introduction,' 14-17. A full length study of the role of cognition in contemplative theory is Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); see p.6 for a list of late medieval sources that explicitly state the interdependence of intellect and love.
[78] Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 76.
[79] By Julian's day, interest in theories of cognition had faded in philosophical circles; see *ibid*., 207.

through which we come to know truth.[80] In his Neoplatonic model, the Trinity's dynamic existence is an eternal, perfect act of self-knowing; the Father contains within himself all knowledge, the eternal forms of all things, and 'as though uttering Himself, beg[ets] the Word, equal in all things to Himself',[81] with the Holy Spirit the bond between the knowledge and the utterance that expresses it. The Son then contains within himself the forms of all things, and as perfect image of his father, the Word made flesh, utters them into reality as the created world. The founding postulate of the medieval world, then, is the certainty that language is rooted in being, that God's language is the cosmos.[82] All of creation, including the natural world, is inherently symbolic of God; it is 'the book in which the creative Trinity shines, is thought, and read'.[83] In effect, metaphysics (the study of beings) becomes semantics (the study of signs).[84]

In themselves, Augustine holds, words are nothing more than passing sounds; they only become meaningful when they bring to mind the realities they signify. As units in the pool of language, words must be combined in the act of utterance, and it is this mental act which gives shape to the meaning uttered.[85] The intention behind an utterance can therefore either be in accord with truth, and lead to God, or be fooled by weakness and evil, and lead only to lies. For Augustine, however, language is saved by the Incarnation,[86] the entrance into the human realm of the divine Word that needs no interpretation. This is firstly and most significantly because the mental operation of the speaker, the *intention* that gives language its structure, is modelled on the pattern of God speaking the Word through which the universe was created (John 1:1-2), the 'universe-language' uttered by the 'creator-speaker'.[87] The power of the Incarnation and Resurrection still operates through

[80] Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 4.
[81] '*proinde tamquam se ipsum dicens pater genuit uerbum sibi aequale per omnia*', *De Trinitate* in *Augustinus Hipponensis*, Library of Latin Texts Series A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), accessed 6 July 2013, www.brepolis.net, book 15 chapter 14 line 7. Trans. Matthews, *On the Trinity*, 195.
[82] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 7.
[83] Bonaventure, '*creatura mundi est quasi quidam liber in quo relucet repraesentatur et legitur trinitas fabricatrix*'; *Breviloquium*, vol. 2, Le Monde Créature de Dieu, ed. Trophime Mouiren (Paris: Éd. Franciscaines, 1967), chapter 12. Trans. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 35.
[84] Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 4; Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 31-35.
[85] This semantic theory's privileging of action is also expressed in the primacy given up until the fifteenth century in linguistics to the verb, which was held to govern the nominal expressions in the sentences; de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 124-125.
[86] *De Trinitate*, book 4 chapter 18, line 24. See the discussion Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 68.
[87] This is in contrast to another understanding, held by the Stoics for example, that language represents a discourse already inherent in the physical and corporeal world, which is seen as having a discursive structure; de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, 124-125.

and transforms all of reality, including ordinary modes of human cognition. Secondly, language is saved because, through grace, Christ is our Interior Teacher who guides us through non-discursive modes of communication.[88] We *do* have access to truth. God as the (Neoplatonic) source of all is the guarantee and necessary condition of all knowledge, both of Himself and of the world. In this Augustinian view, therefore, words can even function as incomplete but accurate signifiers of God, and language takes its destined place as a way for human beings to approach and understand divine truth.[89] In the words of Louis Dupré, the 'epistemic *a priori*' that the cosmos is God's language 'imposed no categorical structure upon the real, but a perspective for reading what was directly, but never simply or exhaustively, given'.[90]

Such an understanding of language and its rootedness in being will decisively shape the forms the mystical impulse will take and, as suggested above, the role and distinctness of the *volo*. Movement towards an encounter with the divine beyond all human meaning is written into the contemplative agenda of holiness. So Latin gospel meditations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as Bonaventure's *Lignum vitae*[91] and the pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes vitae Christi*,[92] begin with prompting compassion for the human Christ's suffering, as a necessary first step of contemplative ascent, but see this focus on the physical as passing naturally on to the spiritual, through the meditator's understanding (albeit non-rationally) and experiencing (albeit in part) of the Resurrection and the joys of heaven.[93] Only later in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England was affective meditation redefined as concentrating on the physical, human Christ, and constructed as particularly suitable for 'lewd' lay folk;[94] thus for example, Nicholas Love's early fifteenth-century *Mirror*, intended for a lay audience, carefully and thoroughly adapts the *Meditationes* on the premise that such 'symple' readers will find enough to do

[88] Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 2.
[89] Phillip Pulsiano, 'Redeemed Language and the Ending of *Troilus and Criseyde*' in *Sign, Sentence, Discourse: Language in Medieval Thought and Literature*, ed. Julian N. Wasserman and Lois Roney, 153-174 (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 158-161.
[90] *Passage to Modernity*, 37.
[91] Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 43-45.
[92] This extraordinarily influential work survives in over 200 manuscripts, and by the end of the Middle Ages had been translated into every major vernacular in Europe, including Swedish, Icelandic, Old Irish and Catalan; Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 87.
[93] Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 130.
[94] In the sense of uneducated, non-clerical, unable to read Latin; see *MED* 'leued' (adj.) sense 1.

meditating on the human Jesus and finding their affections stirred thereby,[95] and does not mention the transition onwards to his divinity which a twelfth-century meditation would take as standard.[96] Such efforts to control lay access to theological authority, which took their most explicit form in Arundel's *Constitutions* (1407-1409), still left open between political intention and lived practice a zone of slippage, made possible by Augustinian ontology, which mysticism could exploit. The Augustinian view of the cosmos as God's utterance fostered what Gail McMurray Gibson calls an incarnational aesthetic, that is, 'a tendency to see the world saturated with sacramental possibility and meaning and to celebrate it'.[97] The physical world, the community, an individual's emotional, intellectual and devotional life all brim with meaning, and express the outpouring of God's creative love. Watson similarly notes that a wide range of devout activities, from the reading of saints' lives and other treatises to the study of nature promoted by the Victorines, or 'pious embroidery' of altar clothes and vestments, could all be contemplative exercises, drawn into the practice of *otium*.[98] While as Watson reminds us such practices are not necessarily mystical, they open a space for the mystical encounter. In this ill-defined overlap of performance, affect, ideology and representation where physical can always stand as sign for spiritual, the potential for mystical utterance is ever-present.

Authority then becomes an important issue. As Katherine Zieman reminds us, monastic *affectus* was not simply any non-conceptual feeling, but rather feeling shaped by monastic

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[95] *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Full Critical Edition*, ed. Michael Sargent (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), prologue, 10.

[96] See Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 218-219. Watson discusses the association on the symbolic level of this restricted affective piety with the laity and the vernacular in 'Conceptions of the Word', 93. The latest substantial work on this association is by McNamer, who argues that not only were women, as the quintessential lay readers, the most common intended audience for affective meditations on the life of Jesus, but also this kind of spirituality of compassion arose among women religious, and that women continued to be the motivating force behind the writing of such texts. Explicitly situating her work in the tradition of 'scholarship on gender and the history of devotion' begun by Walker Bynum, McNamer models affective compassion as a gendered emotion, arguing that for late medieval people to feel compassion was to 'feel like a woman'; *Affective Meditation*, 3, 7. She proposes that the original *Meditationes vitae Christi* was in fact written by a woman; see *ibid*., chapter 3, 86-115, particularly 113.

[97] Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 6-7. Rosemary Drage Hale has explored how late medieval Christians experienced sacred images, both plastic and visual, as having 'a high valence of actuality', in that they were taken as 'immediate evidence of God's presence in the world revealed to the eyes and the senses', and so prompted an interactive exchange in the form of a physical action or psychological response from the faithful; Rosemary Drage Hale, 'Rocking the Cradle: Margaretha Ebner (Be)Holds the Divine,' in *New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, ed. Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Zeigler, 211-239 (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 217-218.

[98] Watson, 'Introduction,' 18-21.

practices like *lectio divina* and the Divine Office, and so sanctioned by the institutional framework of monastic life, with its authoritative spatial, temporal and social coordinates.[99] Yet with the rise of the universities, and the spread of monastic spirituality into the active world, the province of the institutional Church and the schools became increasingly associated with *scientia* and *intellectus*, that is, with explicit grammatical meaning – which left *affectus*, linked with *sapientia*, ranged on the side of the ungrammatical and the 'lewd'. As Zieman says, 'feling' (the most common Middle English translation of *affectus*) 'held the possibility of distancing understanding from the realm of *scientia*, allowing those without the benefit of training in human, institutional knowledge to draw upon the experiential and affective wisdom to help direct their spiritual lives.'[100] Exactly where the line should be drawn between authorized and illegitimate 'feling', and to what degree such feeling in turn authorizes one to speak of God, are questions without clear answers. As discussed above, negotiating such legitimacy for his experiences of *fervor, dulcor* and *canor* is a central concern of Rolle's throughout his career.

Compounding such uncertainties was the gradual dismantling of the Augustinian cosmology by the philosophical developments mentioned briefly above, spearheaded by the nominalist understandings of language that began to appear in the late thirteenth century. These see humanity's power to name not as an *imitatio* of God's creative utterance, but simply one of the characteristics that make us human, and language as having a wholly conventional and contingent relationship with reality.[101] William of Ockham (*c*.1285-1347),[102] who often stands as exemplar of this new philosophy, rejected both Platonic and Aristotelian versions of the Forms, maintaining that the only universal entities it makes sense to talk about are universal *concepts* and the universal *terms* derived from them. These concepts are only 'universal' in the sense of 'predicable of many'; metaphysically each entity is a singular instance.[103] So 'in the statement "X has relation Y to Z," the term "relation Y" has no ontological status apart from the juxtaposition of X and

[99] Zieman, 'Perils of Canor,' 139-145.
[100] *Ibid*., 154. Barbara Newman similarly notes that the 'cultivated' visions arising out of this kind of meditation were "safe" when experienced and contextualized as part of the privileged cultural practice of contemplative elites, but became extremely threatening when loosed into the lay world and interpreted prophetically; Barbara Newman, 'What Does It Mean To Say "I Saw"? The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture,' *Speculum* 80 no. 1 (2005): 5-6.
[101] Reynolds, *Medieval Reading*, 45-49.
[102] Ockham was an almost exact contemporary of Rolle (1290-1349).
[103] Paul Vincent Spade, 'William of Ockham,' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed 23 April 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/ockham/

Y'.[104] Philosophy is therefore mistaken if it tries to find abstract principles that ground the sensible world, since it should actually work to make sure we use the terms of language correctly.[105] In effect, nominalism breaks reality, thought and language apart.[106] For the mystic, this means that the mystical utterance no longer has any points of reference on the level of signifiers, and so the mystic's feeling of having been hailed and his or her answering *volo* become defining of the utterance's authority. Our modern usage of the term 'mysticism', to designate a particular kind of experience – the definition that Watson complains about, as I discussed in my introduction above – first appeared in the early modern period. De Certeau suggests that this mysticism, as a mode of knowing God and performing our relationship with him, became more widely practiced, clearly defined and ultimately distinct from the practices and discourses of institutional Christianity in the early modern period precisely because it filled the void between word and world left by nominalism, or at least seemed to offer a way to do so since it replaces the lost cosmos with the fervour of the *volo* as ultimate guarantee of revelation.

Although this sea-change in philosophical thought was already having an effect on Julian's society,[107] this thesis will show that her mystical practice shows little sign of it. This practice and the theology that accompanies it remain deeply set within the Augustinian worldview that sees language, thought and being as a unity, and our spiritual faculties as the site of the *imago Dei*. It is precisely because of her immersion in the contemplative tradition that a practice-studies approach is so useful in examining Julian as a mystic, so that the mystical elements of her practice – those that aim to meet the transcendent on its own terms, as Watson would say – can be distinguished from and discussed in terms of all the other layers of spiritual discourse and practice within which these mystical elements occur.

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[104] Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 24.
[105] Rosemann, 'Philosophy and Theology in the Universities', 555.
[106] Colish, *Mirror of Language*, 7. For a lucid summary of the nominalist position, see Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 37-41.
[107] The recent work of Frederick Bauerschmidt studies her political thought, focusing on her social imaginary, that is, her metaphysical image of society, in the context of the two models vying for currency in late medieval England, the older feudal image of the body politic with its three divinely-instituted estates, and the emerging modern image, influenced strongly by nominalist ideas, 'in which order finds its foundation not in itself, but in the will of those with the power to instantiate and maintain a particular order'; see *Mystical Body Politic*, quote from 31.

Julian's aching, weakening body in the bed, propped up by cloths, is the intersection point of *the event* of an encounter with the divine, *the world* of social relationships and practices in which Julian lives, and *the symbolic discourses* available to her – contemplative, devotional, visionary, systematic, secular. Her mystical discourse with its particular ways of speaking and acting has to be mapped within this context. Particularly strong in Julian's work is the outward trajectory of the mystical encounter, visible in what Christopher Abbott calls the pastoral imperative of her texts:[108] she pursues her roles as visionary, author, mystic and theologian because she believes that as she has been hailed, so too she must call her readers into the on-going revelation of love begun on that day in May 1383. The next chapter therefore traces the 'ways' of speaking and acting to which Julian is led by her showings, which she then stages in her text as mechanisms for hailing her audience as sites of meaning in their own right. In so doing she defines a unique way of knowing God, 'beholding', which model of knowing which is always informed by authoritative contemplative theory, but also appropriates this theory for her own ends.

[108] *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 134.

Chapter 2 Julian's staging: hailing, mystical knowing and authority

"Set all your trust in God and fear not the language of the world."
Julian's words to Margery Kempe[1]

love . . . leieþ þe note and þe kernel wiþinne þe schelle unbroke . . . to make hem have þe more cleer insiȝt in divine undirstandinges to divine love, and declare it hemsilf.
M.N.'s prologue to Marguerite Porete's *Miroeur*[2]

Though Julian's mystical 'ways of speaking' are not confined to the religious, as the second half of this thesis will show, her contemporary spiritual culture is the major background of her project. This chapter focuses on this religious culture and the discourses, practices and relationships it contributes to Julian's text and the outward trajectory within these discourses of the irruption caused by the mystical utterance. Julian calls herself a 'lover of God'; this subjectivity, the site of the mystical encounter, is sedimented by long-term performative engagement with the contemporary spiritual practices that recognisably structure her interiority.[3] Her vision happens in this citational space constituted by devotional culture. This space is shared by those devout readers who make up her audience. Yet the mystical utterance exceeds this space, comes from somewhere beyond it and breaks into it as the speech act of hailing, which constitutes the hearer as a mystic subject. Any text that hails readers has to make each audience member feel summoned to attend, as if the text were addressing him or her purposefully and individually. Contemporary cultural ideologies provide the vehicle by means of which such hailing operates, as it addresses readers via their already existing belief structures, textual and social literacies, and place within a political system.[4] In the case of a mystical text, the hailing opens the space for the mystical encounter, summons the subject to the mystical

[1] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 43.
[2] See Nicholas Watson, 'Melting into God the English Way: Deification in the Middle English Version of Marguerite Porete's *Miroeur des Simples Âmes Anienties*,' in *Medieval Mystical Tradition in England VII*, 19-50 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), 34.
[3] An example of this performative sedimentation in action can be traced in book II of Walter Hilton's *Scale*: Hilton carefully explains that the soul is an inner, spiritual (in the sense of non-material) faculty, whose 'kyndeli werkynge' is the ability to see and know God as 'sovereyn soothfastnesse' and love God as 'sovereyn goodnesse', and then, encouraging his readers to strive for self-knowledge, says, 'Seke thiself in noon othir place; but the more fulli and the more cleerli that thou maight thenken on the kynde and the worthynesse of a resonable soule, what it is, and what is the kyndeli werkynge of it, the betere thou seest thisilf' (*Scale* II.30.1954-1957). Following his authoritative construction of a soul, the 'seeking' he advocates will also be a 'shaping'.
[4] Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 19-20.

volo, that stripped-down, open presentness which believes that here, now, God is going to speak *to me*.

Once the reader is prepared to listen, God's utterance sounds through the interstices of the criss-crossing symbolic systems making up the audience's world and leaves its traces in the changes it makes to how these systems are meaningful. The mystical knowledge met in a written text is only knowledge in the sense of the experience of a continual unsettling of symbolic systems.[5] In Julian's case, Christ's voice literally breaks through to her, in the series of locutions and visions she receives, but in a broader sense in her mystical encounter the mystical utterance inserts itself between the various discourses and social structures[6] that give her subjectivity its coordinates, and leaves her unsettled, with only one orientation point, the fact of the utterance itself. She is a mystic subject, 'one who hears'. Julian is led by her experience to formulate a unique and detailed theology, centring on the notion of our exemplary 'substance' kept safe in God, as she strives to capture in determinate form the effect her mystical encounter has had on her. However, this theology is to be lived, not merely understood intellectually. One of the strengths of her Long Text particularly is that, even in its theological activity, it works primarily to create a subjectivity for its readers in relationship with God. This is the second stage of hailing. In the initial stage, the mystic subject is confronted with a reality so overwhelming that it shatters all systems of knowing and leaves behind an absence, a lack of cognizable knowledge. Julian's text follows this initial hailing by invoking its readers in terms that offer them a way to live this subjectivity of lack and desire joyfully and wholeheartedly. As I will argue in the last three chapters of the thesis, Julian draws on secular discourses of courtly identity to create this subjectivity.

The present chapter lays the ground for this argument, by examining how the first stage of hailing is achieved by Julian's style, which invites her readers to become sites of God's utterance. First, I explore how Julian's vision escapes all her attempts to grasp and process

[5] Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 36.
[6] This idea is adapted from Karma Lochrie. She describes this effect, which she calls 'interdiction' (in the sense of *inter* 'between' and *diction* 'speaking'), in Margery Kempe's writing, observing that Kempe authorizes her text through 'her insertion of her own voice between text and reader' in order to enable the reader's access to the text. Such enabling is dramatized near the beginning of the book, where Kempe's second scribe struggles to read the first version of her dictation until through her intercession and his renewed faith in the project his sight is repaired; *Book of Margery Kempe*, 5. This interdiction of Kempe's mirrors the mystical utterance itself, which is 'God's interdiction in the mystic's soul'; see *Translations of the Flesh*, 100-101, including note 9.

it using contemporary affective and contemplative lore, and teaches her the hard lesson of surrendering hermeneutic control to the utterance itself. Then, I trace Julian's application of this lesson to her own utterance, particularly in the Long Text, as she orchestrates the discourses available to her, to inscribe opportunities for her audience to experience God's utterance for themselves. She shows that she has learned well the lessons taught by the showings, turning the various frustrations and surprises she has experienced into what could be called mechanisms for hailing[7] her readers.

Julian's engagement with contemporary spiritual discourses also has to achieve another important function, which is to authorize her decision to write. In medieval culture, a text 'practices intertextuality to authorize itself at the same time as it sets itself up as "intertext" to some future work'.[8] Which inscribed authorizing gestures a particular text will use depends on the nature of the text. For example, a sermon will draw its authority from the office of preacher, deferring to divine authority along the lines of scriptural authors,[9] whereas a literary text will skilfully marshal references to God as primary author and to illustrious examples from previous generations of authoritative texts and authors, but in such a way as to draw attention to its author's own creativity and claim a place for itself within authoritative tradition.[10] Gower for example gives his *own* texts glosses and commentaries, to increase their authority.[11] In contrast, mystical texts work to authorize the mystic utterance, the oral text within their written texts, because it is their only justification. Yet the mystic's efforts are plagued by a strange circularity, since as de Certeau says, 'divine utterance is both what founds the text and what it must make manifest'.[12] Fundamentally, the only authority the mystic has is as the site of the utterance, but then he or she has to prove that the source of this utterance is God rather than flesh or devil, and also locate this site with reference to the institution with traditional claims to

[7] Adapting a term used by Zieman, 'mechanisms of interpellation'; 'Perils of Canor,' 158. Zieman's term refers to broader cultural discourses that construct the subject in relationship with God. The features of Julian's text I discuss tend to be adaptations of such discourses, unique to Julian's work, and to function on a more intimate level, between the individual reader and the text.
[8] Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 98.
[9] Alastair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Scolar, 1988), 136-138, 174-177.
[10] Rita Copeland calls this practice *inventio*; *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 185.
[11] Graham D. Caie, 'The Manuscript Experience: What Medieval Vernacular Manuscripts Tell Us about Authors and Texts', in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Dennis Renevey and Graham D. Caie, 10-27 (London: Routledge, 2008), 20-24.
[12] *Heterologies*, 92.

revelation, the Church – and all despite the fact that a written text is unable to fully capture or directly authorize a mystical utterance. Rather than trying to draw on the magisterium and its language for authorization, or trying to challenge them for supremacy, the mystic has to draw a circle round an alternative location of speech, which is his or her own desire.

Julian's ways of speaking

A central technique of Julian's style, often commented upon, is what Barry Windeatt vividly describes as a 'cinematically vivid, montage-like' method of compiling disparate 'images and impressions, sensations and heard words'. This method governs both her visionary experience and the two texts she builds around it.[13] Vincent Gillespie calls this 'a tactical and literary purposeful technique' by which each of the registers, codes and narrative modes Julian draws from theological and devotional tradition is kept distinct and recognizable, so that ultimately what she shapes is 'the local textual experience of her audience'.[14] She builds up a particular horizon of expectation so as to shatter it. In this way, Julian forges an apophatic language from the positive discourses available to her. The Long Text is like a 'vast echo chamber of allusion and imitation',[15] and the audience entering this chamber have to learn the hard lesson Julian does, which is to surrender hermeneutic control. Her apophatic practice works at two levels in her text, which I will discuss in turn: first she models how she learns, in the course of her showings, that truly hearing God requires suspending her own hermeneutic preconceptions. Second, she develops a style that guides her audience to a similar openness, by first setting up and then disappointing their expectations of her text. In effect, Julian makes a virtue of the impossibility of capturing the oral mystical utterance in a text.

This is not to say that the mystical utterance is some "thing" outside of and prior to the text. Gillespie falls into this presupposition when he describes the rationale for Julian's mosaic-like style as 'narrative honesty': Julian realizes, he says, that as the 'intermediary' of her own distinctive 'vision of Love' she cannot express this message in already existing

[13] Barry A. Windeatt, 'Julian of Norwich and Her Audience', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 28 (1977): 73. For discussions of this stylistic feature, see also Kerrie Hide, *Gifted Origins to Graced Fulfilment: The Soteriology of Julian of Norwich* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001), 32, 34; Elizabeth Robertson, 'Julian of Norwich's "Modernist" Style and the Creation of Audience,' in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy, 139-153 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 148.
[14] Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 196-197.
[15] *Ibid.*, 195.

discourses since this would be to make 'God in the image and likeness of man's fallen language'. Gillespie continues: Julian worries not so much about ineffability, although this is always part of her horizon of expectation of visionary experience, but rather incommunicability, in other words the difficulty of ensuring that 'however the reader or hearer "takes" her text, they do so in a way that preserves the freshness of her showings and immediacy of her understanding of them'.[16] These statements imply that the mystical encounter is somehow an entity to which Julian's style has to be accurate, and to which her audience has to gain access. Gillespie talks of how Julian's rhetoric guides her readers into a 'three-dimensional' and 'non-discursive' apprehension.[17] This language is similar to that used by Gillespie and Maggie Ross in a study of Julian's apophatic discourse, where they argue that reaching God's meaning involves a kind of self-annihilation; the usual human mental state is made up of 'self-consciousness' and 'the discursive mode of awareness', which are 'integrated, dependent on, and enriching to, each other', and the reader has to move progressively away from these towards 'apophatic consciousness', a mode of knowing beyond the mediation of signs.[18] This language of 'consciousness' focuses on subjective interiority, understood along the lines of a stable Cartesian knowing subject. Such terminology is limited and unhelpful in exploring the nature of mystical events and contacts, which begin with the radical dislocation of the self in the *volo* and the reconstitution of the subject as the site of the mystical utterance, sedimented by the flow and intersection of available discourses which can only ever circle around the absent encounter itself. As my discussion will make clear, the techniques of pastiche, parody and disappointment that Gillespie identifies work to constitute a mystical subjectivity, as a site of encounter with the divine. This is why I call them mechanisms of hailing. The 'knowledge' or 'experience' that transpires is always relational, an encountering, rather than something that is grasped.

Julian experiences God's utterance breaking through to her, both in her vision and in her earliest responses to it. This irruption is staged already in the Short Text, though her own development of it as a rhetorical device is much more clearly marked in the Long Text. The next two sections thus explore, respectively, the entrance of the divine into Julian's

[16] *Ibid.*, 196.
[17] 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 193, 199.
[18] Gillespie and Ross, 'Apophatic Image', 55-56, including n.9.

world as portrayed in the Short Text, and her inscription of a similar experience for her readers in the Long.

The Short Text: experiencing the divine utterance

Even in the relatively less-sophisticated Short Text, Julian highlights the revelation's power to surprise her and so 'deconstruct her own instinctive tendency to process' her showings according to the popular theological and devotional codes of her day.[19] The initial form in which she is hailed is entirely traditional: she presents her 'shewings' as a supernaturally-granted, spontaneous waking vision. As Barbara Newman shows, this was the most authoritative type of vision in medieval taxonomies of visionary experience, as opposed to dreams or delirium.[20] However, close reading of Julian's account reveals how frequently her vision is not spontaneous, strictly speaking, as it expands and unfolds. For example, Section 19 of the Short Text records the locution, "I am grounde of thy besekinge"[21] (XIX.17-21), and also insights which are no longer unmediated and inspired, but rather seem to arise out of a *lectio divina*-like meditation on this locution (e.g. XIX.40-46). Here too Julian is consistent with the culture of her day. Two other types of vision that are much more common in medieval devotional literature are often presented as unmediated and spontaneous, namely 'cultivated' visions, integral to the contemplative ethos and practice of monastic communities; and 'scripted' visions, characteristic of the experience of lay people unlikely to have access to the intensive training and time required for full monastic contemplative practice. Cultivated visions require a memory well-stocked with text and images from scripture, liturgy and classical tradition. Such visions are born out of the rich milieu of monastic tradition, with literary training in the art of memory and rhetorical *inventio*, and religious training in *lectio divina* and 'the cultivation of meditative trance'. In contrast, scripted visions arise in the vivid imaginative meditations guided by texts like Aelred's *Rule for a Recluse* or the pseudo-Bonaventurean *Meditationes*. These texts tend to assume that their readers will have much more limited access to books, with vernacular versions not even presuming direct knowledge of the Gospels. The visions they script thus tend to be much more formulaic.[22] Julian's 'shewings' clearly have similarities to both cultivated and scripted visions. In actual fact, then, they are closer to 'visualizations', to

[19] Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 196, see also 203.
[20] Newman, 'What Does It Mean To Say "I Saw"?' 3-5.
[21] When I quote from the text words that Julian presents as locutions or direct speech, I place them in double quotation marks, "".
[22] *Ibid.*, 14-33, quote from 25.

use Bernard McGinn's term.[23] A further layer of mediation is often present in the writing of a visionary account, since this type of religious text was a well-developed *literary* genre with a hoard of stylistic and content-related formulae on which writers often drew.[24] The impression Julian's texts create of startling freshness and immediacy of inspiration therefore actually often results from her highly skilful orchestration of the various contemplative discourses and devotional techniques available to her. Neither this literary shaping nor the fact that her visions are part visualisation prevents Julian from claiming the status of visionary, however.

Though devout preparation and aesthetic refinement could not be acknowledged in the contemporary paradigm of authoritative visionary experience, such mediation was uniformly present, to varying degrees and in a wide range of forms.[25] Mediation is unavoidably part of any mystical encounter, which happens outside of discourse and only interacts with the realm of explicit meaning indirectly, via the patterns of disturbance in existing symbolic systems it leaves in its wake. The topos of spontaneity is actually a traditional mystical way of speaking, used by biblical authors to signal the mystical utterance's irruption into the world of humankind. In the opening narrative scene of Julian's accounts, this trope forms the central strand of the tactically deployed interaction of devotional codes by which she recreates her hailing, her constitution as a mystical subject. This recreation uses a dramatic mode that Mary Suydam calls 'staging'; Julian does not give her account in the third person, with asides and interpretations, so as to highlight the nature of the account as *written* and keep the experience at a distance from the readers. (This is a common format for saints' *vitae*.) Rather, Julian uses the first-person, 'fully staged' mode, first sketching a self-portrait of her younger self before the vision and then taking the audience into the moment of the showings' beginning, like a performance which the audience experiences at first hand.[26] In this way the directedness of the mystical

[23] *Foundations*, 30.
[24] Newman, 'What Did It Mean?' 3-4. See Barry Windeatt, 'The Art of Mystical Loving: Julian of Norwich,' in *Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, ed. Marion Glasscoe, 55-71 (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980), for example, which compares Julian's *Revelations* with *Piers Plowman* and the conventions of the dream vision genre.
[25] Newman, 'What Did It Mean?' 5.
[26] Mary Suydam, 'Beguine Textuality: Sacred Performances,' in *New Approaches to Late Medieval Spirituality*, eds Mary A. Suydam and Joanna E. Zeigler, 169-210 (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 181-182. Suydam's idea of the 'staging' of a text draws on a model developed by theatre theorist Jean Alter, who describes how a final theatrical performance comes into being through the rehearsal process: each rehearsal is a fragmentary and unstable version of the text, and a series of such rehearsals cumulatively builds into the final performance text. Suydam posits that visions and other

irruption is highlighted: the audience sees Julian being hailed, swept up completely, into the revelation.

In section I of the Short Text and chapters 1-2 of the Long, Julian takes time to evoke quite a detailed psychological and spiritual self-portrait, depicting her younger self before and at the time of her sickness and initial visionary encounter.[27] This portrait leads the audience into a subjectivity shaped largely by affective piety's constructions of holiness and how to obtain it: the language of 'wounds', the requests for more 'felinge in the passion of Criste', the mention of the three-stage affective programme of compassion, contrition and longing for God (I.4-5, 40-41; Preamble.2.5-6, 34-36), all these details are recognizably drawn from contemporary affective tradition. As mentioned above, Julian's interiority becomes a space where her readers can engage with her and her ideas, as sharers of this tradition. The strong links to affective devotional practice also constitute an authorizing gesture, since this is the spirituality promoted for lay people and women.

This conventional horizon of expectations is reinforced by the account of Julian's illness, to which the text then moves (section II of the Short Text, chapter 3 of the Long), as a strong narrative momentum begins to build forward towards the visionary event. Julian's arrangements for her death bed have an air of being premeditated, or at least shaped in their performance, as she enacts her death in what seems the most suitable manner, in terms of the discourses of holiness available to her. She is wracked with pains (II.13-14, 35-36; Preamble.3.12-13, 29) and sees the darkness of her room fill with the ugliness of 'fendes' (II.32; Preamble.3.26-27), both of which are mentioned in devotional literature like the *Pricke of Conscience* as examples of the fearful horrors of death.[28] She takes on a striking pose, expressive of a contemplative's proper destination: 'mine eyen were sette upwarde into hevene,' she says, 'whether I trustede for to come' (II.24-25; Preamble.3.20-21). But she also shows proper humility by obeying her curate when he tells her to direct her gaze to the crucifix. Julian's dramatic sense of how this significant moment of human life must be properly enacted is supported by the ritual structures of the Church, with the priest

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ecstatic performances can be called forth in the same way, as rehearsals – in the sense of imitations – of other composed works or ecstatic performances meditated on, witnessed or read of. She takes care to note that a 'staged text does not try to recover an original, compelling performance [which does not exist] but to engage the participant/reader in a current performance'; *ibid*., 183-184, 193.

[27] See Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 56-60 for a detailed exploration of this feature of Julian's text.

[28] *The Pricke of Conscience (Stimulus conscientiae): A Northumbrian Poem, by Richard Rolle de Hampole*, ed. Richard Morris (Berlin: A. Asher, 1863), lines 1820-1825, 2220-2245.

placing a crucifix before her, and speaking the opening words of the prayer for comforting the dying (II.22-24; Preamble.3.19-20). As Abbott puts it, Julian's 'human nature, her "flesh" in the Pauline sense, is doing its best to create an authentic religious experience but aching for something beyond its unaided capacities'.[29] The description of her preparations also has a rhetorical effect, constructing the audience as viewers of the scene and building their expectations towards some kind of miraculous happening. The dramatic timing of the narrative builds the tension maximally, as Julian's sight fails and her upper body begins to grow numb, until finally she believes she is 'atte the pointe of dede' (II.36; Preamble.3.29-30). At this perfectly staged moment, the encounter begins. Julian's pain disappears, she is seized by a desire to share in Christ's suffering and, apparently simultaneously,[30] she sees the head of the crucifix start to bleed. Her surprise is marked by repeated use of 'sodeynlye' (II.37, III.1 and 10; Preamble.3.30, 32, 36, i.4.1, 6), alongside other words and phrases evoking astonishment, such as 'merveylede' (II.38; Preamble.3.32), 'fulle gretlye I was astonned' (III.16; i.4.14), 'wondere and merveyle' (III.16; i.4.4-5). Though the spontaneity of the vision's arrival is so deeply informed by traditional expectations as to constitute a literary trope, its rhetorical effectiveness in Julian's staging is undeniable. Her amazement is a register of the utterance's shattering power.

One very important function of highlighting the vision's spontaneity is protection; Julian's gesture of depicting herself as a visionary renders her simply the mouthpiece of the true author, God. She insists that she only ever desired the affective identification with Christ (III.6-8; Preamble.3.41-42) that church authorities decreed suitable for the laity, so that when granted this sudden, apparently unmediated sight of his face, she can claim immediate authority: 'I conceyvede treulye and mightelye', she says, 'that it was himselfe that shewed it me, withouten any meen' (III.13-14; i.4.1, 4-5). God has instantaneously traversed the immeasurable distance between them; he is the author and instigator of the showings, and Julian but his humble mouthpiece. Following apostolic precedent which forbade teaching by women,[31] the gendered culture of medieval *auctoritas* excluded women by definition, and debarred them particularly severely from public discourses like preaching and instruction.[32] In the Short Text, Julian heightens her characterization as a

[29] Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 59-60.
[30] 'And *in this*, sodenly I sawe . . .' (III.10, i.4.1, my emphasis), referring back to the vanishing of her pain and her desire for compassion.
[31] 1 Timothy 2:12-14.
[32] Alexandra Barratt (ed.) *Women's Writing in Middle English* (London: Longman, 1992), 5.

simple woman, referring directly to her own gender, noting her mother's presence, and recording how the priest calls her 'doughter' (X.26, II.22).[33] She also authorizes her utterance with reference to God's earthly deputies; the word of a clerical figure marks both the beginning of her vision, which is precipitated when the curate tells her to look at an authorized icon, the crucifix (II.23-24; Preamble.3.19-20), and its ending, when Julian finally accepts her vision as authentic because a 'religiouse person' takes it seriously (XXI.6-11; xvi.66.12-17). The deathbed setting is important to Julian's tactical claim, since there was a precedent in medieval hagiography for mystical utterances made by women sick unto death.[34] As James Simpson suggests, Julian in this way accepts the official limitations of lay spirituality so as to turn them into strengths, and boosts her authority as a female author.[35]

Though the trope of the spontaneous vision has its origins as a marker of the divine utterance, Julian's citational performance of the role of visionary is not the *volo*, an unconditioned illocutionary act, but rather a felicitous speech act in which she strikes the right notes, constructing a setting of expected and agreed-upon circumstances. What makes Julian's visions 'mystical' in the sense I have defined, although they have a large element of cultivated visualisation, is their refusal to stay within her horizon of expectations, forcing her desire 'for more feling of the paines of our saviour' to become truly the *volo*, which is a desire without a specified object. So although the trope of the spontaneous vision cannot express the mystical utterance, it continues to be the sign under which Julian's account functions, a finger pointing along the direction towards the real encounter, which happens outside any human roles or registers. Julian traces a space of openness around her illness-wracked body on the bed, by means of familiar and authorized relationships, practices and discourses. This openness becomes the site of the mystical encounter. She cannot evoke this encounter itself, the 'experience' pole of de Certeau's model of the body, so she plots the 'world' and 'discourse' poles as triangulation

[33] Lynn Staley, 'Julian of Norwich and the Late Fourteenth-Century Crisis of Authority,' in *Powers of the Holy: Religion Politics, and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture*, coauthored with David Aers, 107-178 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 117.
[34] Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 23. Barbara Newman however reminds us that this tradition was continental, with no English examples; *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2003), 224.
[35] *The Oxford English Literary History Volume 2, 1350-1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 437. Simpson points out that visionary writing in England (both in English and translated) comes almost entirely from women, from the late fourteenth century until the reforms of 1534; 437-438.

points for the audience. The *volo* proceeds via available language, although it cannot settle down within it.

Almost immediately the showings upset well-known narrative modes for visionary literature. Julian's opening sight, the bleeding head of Christ, is certainly a highly conventional affective image, but she sees it 'uncoupled from its usual chain of signifiers and of significations' within the larger Passion narrative, so that the image breaks free of the routine interpretations of affective devotion and functions liminally, standing open for new meanings.[36] The showing continues in this disjointed fashion, juxtaposing images, locutions, emotions and insights in fluid and often surprising ways. This fragmented style is unusual, in that the visions of other late medieval female ecstatics like Bridget of Sweden, Mechtild of Hackeborn or Elizabeth of Schönau, textual versions of which were just reaching England in the last decades of the fourteenth century, tend to be much clearer, with an overall outline or story which is fairly easy to recount clearly.[37] Rather than this kind of syntactic narrative structure, Julian's showings follow a more paratactic pattern that achieves something of the effect of apophatic 'over-saying' that I mentioned above, when discussing mystical ways of talking.[38]

The standard emotional trajectory of affective piety is similarly overturned. For example, the meditation on Christ's thirst and his drying body (Section 11 of the Short Text and Revelation 8 of the Long) is initially unremarkable, falling within the horizon of expectations for presentations of the Passion formed by the treatments in the authoritative *Glossa ordinaria*, Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* (both twelfth century) and the *Legenda aurea* (*c.*1270) and the tradition based on them.[39] Julian does include unique and sharply imagined details, such as the different colours Christ's lips take on as they dry (X.1-4; viii.16.1-4), and the gradual detachment of his torn scalp under the weight of the thorn 'garlonde' he wears (viii.17.12-22), but this degree of visualization is still normal for late-medieval gospel meditations.[40] The inscribed affective response is also initially very much that expected of affective gospel meditations, as Julian feels intense bodily *compassio*: 'This

[36] Gillespie and Ross, 'Apophatic Image,' 62-63.
[37] Nicholas Watson, 'The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*,' in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England* V, ed. Marion Glasscoe, 79-100 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), 84.
[38] See Chapter 1 p.28.
[39] Besthul, *Texts of the Passion*, 32.
[40] *Ibid.*, 146.

shewinge of Criste paines filled me fulle of paines' (X.23; viii.17.41). All of this familiar structure, which constructs Julian as the busy meditator examining Christ's immobile body as an object, a tool with which to evoke the sanctioned emotion of compunction, is then 'sodaynlye' overturned.[41] '[B]ehaldande in the same crosse', she sees that 'he chanche[s] into blisfulle chere' (XI.17-18; viii.21.8-9),[42] and Julian has no choice but to be transformed likewise, instantly feeling 'alle gladde and mery as it was possibille' (XI.17-19, viii.21.9-10).[43] This joy is *precisely the opposite* of the climactic pangs of grief and compunction that usually crown a Passion meditation, as the meditator dwells on Jesus' wounded body.[44] Julian is confronted with a living version of the salvation narrative that refuses to follow conventional channels.

In its teachings about sin – which will be discussed in much more detail in Chapter 4 – the vision similarly leaves Julian with a gap between received expectations and the revelation. The showing that sin is behovely and that all will be well seems to contradict not only church doctrine but common sense (XIV.1-5, XV.1-2), and to lead to the incoherent proposition that we should strive to sin more (XVIII.1-11). Julian stages how she tries to grapple with these problems. In Section 16, Julian is reminded that she cannot avoid sin (XVI.22-23), a thought that is so intolerable that she resists it for a time. The *volo* is an on-going process of creating an empty place for the utterance – Julian has to learn to orientate her desire properly in accordance with God's will, to refrain from trying to force her own meaning onto the showings rather than accepting what they reveal.

Another example of how Julian's showings overflow her expectations, this time about her role as a visionary woman, comes in Section 16 (Revelation 13). In the middle of the series of revelations about sin, soon after she has been taught that 'alle shalle be wele', Julian says, 'when God allemightye hadde shewed me plentyouslye and fully of his goodnesse, I desired of a certaine person that I loved how it shulde be with hire. And in this desire I

[41] The Long Text heightens the drama by noting that Julian, in accordance with the meditative models she is used to, waits in strained anticipation to see the moment of Christ's death (viii.21.5-6).
[42] Jesus's sudden change has been noted by several scholars, including David Aers, 'The Humanity of Christ: Reflections on Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Love*,' in *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture*, coauthored by Lynn Staley, 77-104 (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1996), 90-91; Gillespie and Ross, 'Apophatic Image', 76; Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 198.
[43] Abbott argues strongly that Julian's 'self-involvement is disrupted by the experience of vision which brings into the reckoning a wholly other, untameable reality'; *Autobiography and Theology*, 66.
[44] See for example Rolle's Passion meditations in *English Writings*, 24-27, 34-36.

letted myselfe, for I was noght taught in this time' (XVI.12-14; xiii.35.1-4). As Watson and Jenkins note, such prophetic information about people living or dead was a traditional feature of visionary experiences,[45] and Barbara Newman describes how women visionaries often freed souls from Purgatory by means of their prayers during visions.[46] Julian clearly has something like this focussed, personal ministry in mind. Instead, however, she is directed to the general theological import of her visions, as a voice in her reason says, '[t]ake it generally, and behalde the curtaysy of thy lorde God as he shewes it to the. For it is mare worshippe to God to behalde him in alle than in any specialle thinge' (XVI.15-17; xiii.35.5-7). The showing directs Julian away from an intercessory role, established as suitable for women and so relatively safe, towards the decidedly more risky job of theologian.[47] As in the upsetting of Julian's affective expectations, the showing here insists that she be faithful to it, record it as it is, rather than shaping and processing it according to already existing models.

Having established the showings' insistence on verisimilitude, Julian then contradicts it, by inscribing into her textual account an impregnable quality to the showing: for example, it is not clear in the Short Text why she chooses Jesus as her heaven (X.50-60). She only knows that she 'walde nought' look away from him (X.58). There are thus parts of the revelation she cannot understand, though they involve her deepest affective impulses and wilful choices. Later, in the Long Text, we learn that the Short version hides whole sections of the revelation, including the Lord and Servant tableau, because at the time of its writing they still mystify Julian. Also, one of the showings made to Julian is that God has secrets, before which he desires us to adopt a posture of patient courtesy (xiv.46.37-41), rejoicing in him 'for alle that he sheweth and for all that he hideth' (xiii.36.25-26). The vision thus simultaneously insists that Julian on the one hand 'see' it faithfully and 'read' the body of Christ as it is revealed to her, and on the other disappoints and resists her obedient

[45] Margery Kempe has many such showings; *Book of Margery Kempe*, 1.59.
[46] See *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), chapter 4.
[47] The Long Text records a second instance where Julian's expectation as to the course of her vision is disappointed. Also during the revelations about sin, she expresses a reverent desire to have 'full sight of hel and of purgatory', but is again denied (xiii.33.1-11). On one level, this desire is born out of her confusion over what she is being taught about sin. But arguably Julian's wish also reflects her familiarity with visionary tradition, in which as Peter Dinzelbacher notes a tour of hell and purgatory is the most common form taken by visions in the thirteenth century; *Vision- und Visionsliterature im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1981), chapter 5-7, referenced in McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 27.

scrutiny. As Lochrie would put it, the 'divine remains unread as well as unuttered',[48] and Julian is left again with her desire for God intensified yet undirected. She is led deeper into the total concentration of the *volo*, in which her subjectivity is constituted by her desire and lack.

In none of these examples is tradition cast away as useless. Affective *compassio* continues to be a valid mode of response, retained in the Long Text as the first of the 'thre maner of beholding' the Passion that Julian learns (viii.21.1-4), and traditional wisdom about visions remains useful in guiding discernment, as when she notes that she sees the fiend in a dream vision (XXI.23-24; xvi.67.9), which as mentioned above was generally held to be less authoritative than a waking vision. Julian's expectations may be disappointed and her instinct to process her showings according to established models may be deconstructed, but this only highlights the intensity of her desire to know God. In de Certeau's terms, her text circles round desire and utterance, without ever capturing them. The overall effect is not the rejection of traditional constructs, but rather the highlighting of their inadequacy in the face of the mystical utterance's abundance. The mystical encounter is not some 'thing' that exists outside or prior to symbolic systems, but truly 'an alterity that enables and exceeds linguistic determinations', in Rubenstein's words.[49] Julian is truly hailed, jerked into the present moment of an encounter that she cannot control or predict, and transformed into a mystic, "one who hears". This surrender of hermeneutic initiative is a stripping or *kenosis*, but as Lochrie nuances it, this 'noughting' is not self-denial or self-effacement, but rather a leaving behind of the stability of the world so as to transform the self into a passageway for the divine utterance.[50] Even in the Short Text, the unpredictable and resistant character of Julian's showing lifts it away from the realm of cultivated and scripted visions and makes it a means whereby the mystical utterance can enter the world. Even at the relatively early stage of the writing the Short Text, Julian understands that her vision is not tame or controllable, and that her surrender of hermeneutic initiative is the core message she must convey, as she becomes role model and guide for her audience, who must share in her performance: 'Alle that I saye of myselfe, I meene in the persone of alle mine evencristene, for I am lernede in the gastelye shewinge of oure lorde that he

[48] Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 75.
[49] 'Unknow Thyself,' 388.
[50] Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 64.

meenes so' (VI.1-2; i.8.31-32). Her readers have similarly to abandon their preconceptions, in an act of self-emptying humility.

How to help the audience to make their own *volo* in imitation of hers is the task facing Julian as author. She uses the traditional topos of God making good her text's failure to speak his fullness, underscoring her faith in his generosity by her conviction that we are one in his love: 'the gastelye sight I maye nought ne can nought shewe it unto yowe als oponlye and als fullye as I wolde. Botte I truste in oure lorde God allemighty that he shalle, of his goodnes and for youre love, make yowe to take it mare gastelye and mare swetly than I can or maye telle it yowe. And so motte it be, for we are alle one in love' (VII.1-7). She also makes a few direct, slightly clumsy attempts at hailing, proclaiming in section 6 that 'it is Goddes wille . . . that ye take it with als grete joye and likinge as Jhesu hadde shewede it yowe as he did to me' (VI.8-9), and in section 13, after Christ's 'I it am' speech, saying that 'Thies wordes I declare nought, botte for ilke man, efter the grace that God giffes him in understandinge and lovinge, resayfe tham in oure lordes meninge' (XIII.29-31). Here the nature of Julian's implied audience, the reader she anticipates or constructs,[51] works both for her project and against it. This audience is clearly familiar with standard teaching on the spiritual life, and well versed in affective devotional practices.[52] As such, they have available a reservoir of faith in visionary experiences and an open performative style of reading, born out of *lectio divina* and affective prayer, which they can apply to Julian's text – but at the same time the channels of their affective response will be as deeply worn and their hermeneutic expectations as firmly laid as Julian's own, and as difficult to divert. In the period between completing the Short Text and formulating the Long, therefore, Julian develops a style that builds hailing into the audience's experience of the text. As will be traced below, her acquaintance with contemplative theory has expanded between the writing of the Short and Long Texts. She keeps the staging of how she learns to abandon her own preconceptions and the radical openness that must replace them, and adds to it that mosaic-like orchestration of recognisable discourses mentioned

[51] As opposed to her actual contemporary audience, about whom we know very little, and her inscribed audience, whose role is limited although she manipulates it with some skill – most notably the priests who precipitate and approve her visions. The taxonomy is Paul Strohm's 'Chaucer's Audience(s): Fictional, Implied, Intended, Actual,' *Chaucer Review*, 18 (1983): 137-164.

[52] For example, in her discussion of 'thanking' in xiv.41.45-55, Julian in passing mentions various devotional techniques, including recollection ('turning oureselfe with alle oure mightes'), vocal prayer ('breketh out with voice . . . cry upon oure lorde with voice'), and passion meditation ('rehersing his blessed passion'), assuming that her readers will be familiar with and practiced in them.

at the beginning of this section, thus inscribing into her text potential sites for God's utterance in her audience's own hearts.

The Long Text: inscribing opportunities for hailing

Although Julian retains the form of the visionary account, her allocutionary dramatics move far beyond the trope of the spontaneous waking vision, and the protective authority it provides. In the Long Text, Julian is no longer simply a visionary, describing primarily the showings she receives, but both seer and exegete, staging her vision and her process of interpreting it and formulating her distinctive theology from it.[53] The text retains the format of a visionary 'text' and an accompanying 'commentary',[54] since large sections of the Short Text are repeated *verbatim* although Julian had plenty of time to incorporate them smoothly, in the years of meditation and composition that went into producing the new text. In this way Julian conveys how her revelation is a continuing series of present *events* rather than a stable, finished doctrine; the full showing is an on-going process of interpretation. The Long Text retains and heightens the 'cinematographic' character of the vision recreated in the Short Text and, as suggested in the introduction to this chapter, adds to it a variety of hailing practices that oblige the audience to become the site of meaning themselves. These mechanisms can be traced in turn.

The sign made opaque

The first of these hailing techniques is that the Long Text, like the Short, draws liberally on established and recognizable discourses. Among the most obvious is the tradition of affective piety, within which Julian's sight of Christ's bleeding body fits so well. An example comes from Revelation 4 where she describes this body: 'as thus: the fair skinne was broken full depe into the tender flesh with sharpe smitinges all about the sweete body' (iv.12.2-3). As Gillespie notes, these lines seem 'artfully contrived' with their onomatopoeia, alliteration and conventionalized epithets.[55] Most importantly, however, here in the Long Text Julian marks this affective register as 'provisional', as 'pastiche', by introducing it with the phrase 'as thus'. The language evokes the trained affective response, while

[53] Staley, 'Crisis of Authority', 139.
[54] Watson, 'Trinitarian Hermeneutic,' 98.
[55] The notes to these lines in both the Colledge and Walsh and Watson and Jenkins editions refer to similar language in *The Privity of the Passion*, edited in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*, 2 vols, ed. Carl Horstman (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1895-1896), I, 198-218. Gillespie also suggests *The Fifteen Oes*, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 200 n.25.

simultaneously highlighting the constructed nature of this response.[56] On the other end of the continuum of stylistic registers, Julian builds tight 'word knots'[57] using the Middle English equivalents of technical scholastic vocabulary, which sometimes reach palindromic levels of complication when she explores metaphysical ideas: examples include 'thus is the kind made rightfully oned to the maker, which is substantial kinde unmade, that is God' (xiv.53.38-39), or 'Our soule is made to be Goddes wonning; and the wonning of oure soule is God, which is unmade' (xiv.54.8-9). These word knots tend to feature key terms that appear repeatedly throughout the text and in their varied uses acquire a poetic richness of meaning, such as 'made', 'unmade', 'kind', 'substance' and 'rightful'. Language strains to accomplish all that Julian requires of it: the riddle-like structures invite the rational mind to untangle the mystery, while these densely allusive words defy systematic paraphrase. Though this word-knot technique uses very different language, it functions in the same way as the pastiche of affective terminology: the sign is made opaque and its artificiality highlighted in its inability to convey the mystical utterance. The point is not that the words are not faithful to the reality Julian encounters, but rather that they are all she has to offer, since God exceeds all telling. The text invites its audience to open themselves to the fullness of the divine intention that sustains, upholds and yet immeasurably overflows all words.

Another iteration of this technique is the same resistant quality apparent in the Short Text that I explored in the previous section. Julian explicitly names this feature in the Long Text, when she describes the polyvalent allegory of the Lord and Servant as a 'misty and indefferent' showing before which she stands 'mekille in unknowinge' (xiv.51.58-59, 75-76).[58] In fact, she says, 'alle the shewing be full of prevites' (xiv.51.230-231), and this paradoxical simultaneity of revelation and concealment reflects a fundamental truth about her understanding of revelation: we fail to see God fully not because he does not show himself but because of the abundance of his self-revelation.[59] It is part of Julian's hermeneutic meekness that she lets her revelation remain confusing, rather than forcing interpretation on it. Julian's devotion to the image as a means of communication stems

[56] Gillespie, *ibid*., 200.
[57] Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross, '"With Mekeness Aske Perseverently": On Reading Julian of Norwich,' *Mystics Quarterly* 30, no. 3-4 (2004): 131.
[58] This is the reading from Sloane; Paris has 'thre knowynges'.
[59] Bauerschmidt points to the same insight when he says that, for Julian, the 'incomprehensibility of God lies not in God's hiddenness, but in the fullness of God's revelation in the paradoxical sign of the crucified'; *Mystical Body Politic*, 34.

from far more than a desire to protect herself, a woman theologian, by keeping to the limits set for lay spirituality; an image contains meaning impossible to end-stop or paraphrase. The position of the mystic subject is thus a locus of desire, always knowing there is more to know. In Revelation xvi, almost at the end of the Long Version, Julian expresses this desire:

> For the kindly desyer of oure soule is so gret and so unmesurable that if it were yeve us to oure solace and oure comfort alle the nobley that ever God made in heven and in erth, and we saw not the fair, blisseful chere of himselfe, yet shuld we never stinte of morning ne of gostely weping – that is to sey of painful longing – till whan we se verely the fair, blisseful chere of oure maker. (xvi.72.33-37)

Into this stance of active, never-satisfied openness Julian's text hopes to invite its audience.

Orchestrating fragments

A related method which the Long Text uses to gesture towards the fullness of God's meaning is to arrange different discourses side-by-side so as to highlight how each of them, though internally consistent and functional, only addresses a fragment of this meaning. Gillespie discusses this effect under a different name, noting how sometimes Julian's use of a recognizable discourse amounts to parody, when a conventional response is evoked only to be pointedly upset. The Long Text retains the staging of the shock Julian experiences when Christ fails to die on the cross (Revelation 8), and adds other episodes using the same technique. A striking example comes in the very first moments of the showings. The major trend of the text thus far has been affective; Julian has just mentioned *compassio* (III.7; Preamble.3.41), and the opening vision, of the bleeding face of Christ, is one of the most iconic figurations in the affective tradition. The stage seems set for exhortations to readers to feel Christ's pain as their own and stir themselves to compunction for causing this suffering. Instead, the Long Text's additions (i.4.6-12) offer a complex theological reflection on the Trinity, using language that is 'ratiocinative and abstract' rather than emotive and somatic.[60] For example, when Julian says 'the trinity is our endlesse joy and our blisse, by our lord Jesu Christ and in our lord Jesu Christ . . .. For wher Jhesu appireth the blessed trinity is understand', her language carefully distinguishes the theological implications of 'by' and 'in' Christ, and exploits the multivalence of the word 'Jhesu' which refers simultaneously to the historical man and the divine Trinity. Such language 'positively block[s] off' any affective elaborations, by engaging the intellect instead. The bleeding head leads not to affective devotion but to metaphysical

[60] Aers, 'Reflections on Julian,' 83-84.

discussion.[61] Contemplative prayer was traditionally supposed to culminate in meditation on the Trinity's being in joy, so Julian's subject is not unusual. What is surprising is that nothing in the text so far has prepared for this radical shift from affective *compassio* to contemplation of eternal truths. Having deliberately evoked one horizon of expectation, Julian suddenly decamps to another, jolting her audience to awareness that this showing is not tame or easily processed according to expected patterns.[62] The audience has to become as self-aware as Julian is of how quickly and easily conventional hermeneutic modes take over. The text's requirement of this stance from its readers becomes a form of hailing, leading the audience into the same kind of hermeneutic 'noughting' as Julian experienced.

The *ductus* of the text is also confusing. Both the Paris and Sloane manuscripts provide a table of contents, which suggests a selective mode of reading, bequeathed to devotional discourse by the monastic tradition.[63] Yet on closer examination, the table is arranged according to revelation number, not chapter number: the real 'text' to be read is the vision itself, which cannot be accessed directly via the written page. Similarly, the Sloane manuscript's colophon asks for a different, sequential reading mode, which takes the whole text into account in interpreting individual portions: 'And beware thou take not on thing after thy affection and liking and leve another, for that is the condition of an heretique. But take everything with other'.[64] Yet within the text few concessions are made for an audience who reads it straight through, since transitions between registers and narrative modes are often unsmoothed, especially between sections originally in the Short Text and additions made to the Long. A particularly abrupt break of tone occurs between

[61] *Ibid.*
[62] The compiler/scribe of the Westminster manuscript, in which portions of Julian's text are arranged after sections from Hilton, seems to have learnt this lesson too. Marleen Cré explores how the selection from Julian begins with the scene from revelation 1 where the first-person narrator describes how she is shown the wisdom and truth of the Virgin's soul, which Julian then understands is Mary's beholding of God at the Annunciation. This section of the text begins on folio 72v, after half a blank page of vellum on folio 72r. The reader thus experiences a sudden shift from the didactic and meditative mode of the passages from Hilton, to something much more immediate. 'Stumbling over the threshold of half an empty piece of vellum, the readers happen upon a scene that cannot but catch their attention and make them aware that here they witness the experience of someone whose "goostely eye" was "opened in beholdynge" (f. 15v). Thus, the readers behold the beholder behold Mary beholding her God that is her creator and who wants to be born of her that was created'. See 'Reading the Fragments,' 124. The arrangement of the text on the page heightens the sense of immediacy and spontaneity associated with Julian's vision.
[63] Wogan-Browne *et al.* (eds), *Idea of the Vernacular*, 212-215.
[64] Given in the textual notes to Chapter 86 of the Watson and Jenkins edition.

chapter 63 and 64, where the high, serene theology of the last 20 chapters of Revelation 14 suddenly switches back into the first-person visionary mode of the Short Text. The audience is never given a chance to settle into a particular reading mode. Julian's practice of occasional cross-referencing could foster either selective reading, pointing out similar passages that could be explored, or systematic reading, helping an audience keep track of unfolding arguments. The opposing approaches to textuality are kept in dialectical tension, so that hermeneutic control in the end lies neither with Julian nor with her audience.

The text also balances different theological doctrines and perspectives. For example, two positions about the reason for the Incarnation are placed side-by-side (ii.10.40-43): 'In the same maner wise, we know that when man fell so depe and so wretchedly by sinne, ther was no nother helpe to restore man but thorow him that made man. And he that made man for love, by the same love he woulde restore man to the same blisse, and overpassing'. The first view holds that only a God who was also human could respond to the sin of humankind, and the second that Christ became human for love of us, as he created us for love. The 'juxtaposition', as Kerrie Hide notes, 'creates a rhythm between different theological perspectives that enables her readers to appreciate the value of both positions'.[65]

Perhaps the most significant example of this kind of juxtaposition is when Julian places side-by-side the Church's teachings about sin and the message of comfort she derives from her revelation. In chapter 45 she describes both positions using the same word, 'dome', which in the late fourteenth century meant an act of administrative justice arrived at through rational enquiry and carrying the force of law, and was commonly used to refer to the Last Judgement.[66] Julian thus implies that her revelation is as rational and as authoritative as the public rulings of the Church. She even calls her revelation's doom 'higher', and the Church's 'lower' (xiv.45.20-22). This move is a complex negotiation of authority, since by insisting on the truth of Church doctrine Julian protects herself, while simultaneously she claims equal status and trustworthiness for her insights. She does not only state that received discourses of self-knowledge and sin are correct, but performs them as integral to her devotional and theological practice. So chapter 46 of the Long Text,

[65] Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 31.
[66] Staley, 'Crisis of Authority', 145.

as Gillespie points out, presents a great deal of perfectly standard teaching on self-knowledge in perfectly standard language, both of which Julian could have gained from 'many proverbial, penitential or homiletic writings'. She then puts this 'comen teching' alongside her revelation of our eternal perfection:

> And yet in alle this time, fro the beginning to the ende, I had two manner of beholdinges. That one was endlesse continuant love with sekernesse of keping and blissful salvation. For of this was all the shewing. That other was the comen teching of holy church, of which I was befor enformed and grounded, and wilfully having in use and in understonding. (xiv.46.13-17)

Maintaining the validity of her own showing's teaching of enfolding salvific love, she nonetheless reveals the body of the chapter to have been a performance of how thoroughly she is 'enformyd and growndid' in the Church's 'historically contextualized' doctrine and practices.[67] As is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, Julian creates a parallel account of sin that answers a lack in the Church's existing account; out of her desire for a more satisfying narrative arises a creative theology.[68]

Stage-managing the exceeding of boundaries

As well as these indirect means of guiding the audience to openness beyond human language, on more than one occasion Julian also sets up a process of *lectio divina*-like interpretation and invites her audience to complete it. One such passage occurs in the Short Text section XII, which is Revelation 9 of the Long Text.[69] Christ has just made the speech about being 'payade' if Julian is satisfied (XII.1-5; ix.22.1-5), and she has been lifted by his words to a vision of the 'thre hevens' (XII.6-27; ix.22.6ff). In the final lines of the section, Julian unpacks Christ's words phrase by phrase, using a variety of techniques. The phrase "It is a joye, a blisse, and ane endles likinge to me" is interpreted allegorically, as Julian explains, 'for the joye, I understode the plesance of the fadere; for the blisse, the wirshippe of the sone' and so on (XII.31-33; ix.23.2-4). Christ's next phrase, "Erte thow wele payed?" is glossed in the Short Text in a command to rejoice in our salvation (XII.35-38), which in the Long Version is expanded into a meditation on the 'thirde beholding' of the Passion (ix.23.5-22). Finally, "if thowe be payed, I am apaide" is explored in the form of a

[67] Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 204-205.
[68] See Jantzen on desire premised on lack as a source of creativity; Grace M. Jantzen, 'On Philosophers (Not) Reading History: Narrative and Utopia,' in *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology: Reason, Meaning and Experience*, ed. Kevin Vanhoozer and Martin Warner, 177-190 (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2007), 186-188.
[69] See other examples in XIX.17-29, XX.7-28.

more detailed speech which is placed directly in Christ's mouth (XII.38-40) to which the Long Text adds the discussion of 'a gladde gever' (ix.23.26-34). In both texts, the variety of rhetorical methods Julian employs attempts to convey the richness of her visionary experience to her readers; 'Plentyouslye and fully was this shewed to me', she says (XII.40-41; ix.23.34). The interpretation of the final phrase from Christ's locution, she leaves unfinished, bidding her audience to think 'also wiselye of the gretnesse of this worde' and promising them 'a hye knawinge of luffe' (XII.41-43; ix.23.27-40) if they complete it. In this way the text opens a space for her readers to follow her exegetical example and let Christ's simple words expand in their meditation into a range of meanings. The text stage-manages the transcending of its boundaries, and also blurs Julian's role as author. 'This boke is begonne', she says in her final chapter, 'but it is not yet performed' (xvi.86.1-2). The audience is hailed to take part in interpreting the showing, that is, entering into their own mystical conversation.

Speaking for the other

Another strikingly bold hailing device Julian uses is to place into Christ's mouth words that are her own exegesis, rather than actual locutions.[70] For example, in Revelation 10: 'oure good lorde saide full blissefully, "Lo, how I loved the," . . . as if he had saide: "Beholde and see that I loved thee so much, or that I died for thee, that I wolde die for the" . . .' (x.24.11, 16-17). This technique is not unique to Julian[71] – Walter Hilton for example gives Christ words very similar to Julian's 'See I am God, see I do all' speech (*Scale* II.36.2520-2531)[72] – but she does use it unusually frequently. She develops a set of phrases that signal her expositions and extrapolations, for example 'as thus', 'as if he had said', 'to my sight',[73] which a careful reader will notice marking out when Christ's speeches are actually Julian's. The remarkable thing, however, is that Julian successfully creates a special register and style characteristic to her Christ (using for example many 'high style doublets', as Gillespie notes;[74] this style is discussed in more detail in the next section), which matches those of the locutions, so that fairly soon it is difficult to notice the markers of fictionality. The high style in which he speaks signals the fullness of meaning towards which this technique gestures. Julian, the real author, dissolves into the text, setting up a charismatic and

[70] Gillespie calls this technique ventriloquism; see 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 201.
[71] Although Gillespie suggests it is; *ibid*.
[72] Hilton's Jesus chides and emotionally blackmails his failing lover, however!
[73] Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 201.
[74] *Ibid*.

convincing artificial speaker while at the same time carefully signalling his constructedness. It could be argued that the technique works to strengthen the authority of Julian's ideas, making them seem to come directly from the male Christ, for whom Julian the woman is only a mouthpiece or, in this case, scribe. As we have seen, the Short Text makes use of this gendered authorizing trope. Yet Julian draws attention to the artificiality of this Christ as speaker. A genuinely mystical effect of this rhetoric then emerges. The written text is always a place-holder for the mystical dialogue itself, which takes place just out of earshot. In such a text, the mystic substitutes her 'speaking *I* for the inaccessible divine *I*', albeit temporarily. This substitution is not a replacement, but rather a 'representation of what is missing'.[75] The marker phrases ('as thus', 'as if he had said') work like metaphors, shifting the writing into a different, parallel field. They signal the fact that the other speaks in Julian and makes her speak. In addition, the identity of the mature Julian writing the text, with whom the audience is familiar as the narrative voice, is revealed as an intersubjective identity rather than complete and self-sufficient according to the Cartesian model. The text performs Julian's theology of our identity as 'beclosed' in Christ and he 'beclosed' in us (xiv.54.18).

A second rhetorical technique similarly constructs the revelation's meaning as appearing in the space of mutual attentiveness between Christ and Julian. In his exchanges with Julian, Christ often uses a particular argument structure which is called 'examining' the soul (iii.11.47): he will demonstrate a state of affairs or make a series of statements, and then ask her a question about her response which causes her to re-evaluate her reaction. Examples include Christ's question to Julian, "Whate es any pointe of thy paine or of thy grefe?" just after he has shown her his 'blissfulle chere' on the cross (XI.17-20; viii.21.8-11), his speech beginning "See, I am God" which ends with the question "How shoulde any thing be amisse?" in iii.11.42-47, the speech in section XIX beginning, "I am the ground of thy besekinge" (XIX.17-21; xiv.41.7-10), and the one starting with "Sudanly thowe shalle be takene fra alle thy paine" in section XX.7-13 (xv.64.8-15). Christ interjects his voice into Julian's hermeneutic process, diverting her interpretations down unexpected paths. Julian first models this experience for her readers, and then requires of them. The rhetorical effect makes Christ appear not as an authoritarian teacher but as a warm and charming friend who depends on Julian's intelligence and honest self-insight, appealing to her willingness to make a gift of her trust to him. Julian copies this rhetoric and invites the

[75] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 188.

same relationship with her readers by herself using this argument structure, for example in Section XIX: she first insists that God shows 'greate plesance and … grete likinge' when we pray that his will be done, and then puts a direct speech in Christ's mouth, saying that it is 'as if he saide: "Whate might thowe plese me mare than to bisike bisily, wisely, and wilfullye to do that thinge that I wille do?"' (XIX.43-46; xiv.43.10-14). The gentleness of this narrative mode, so characteristic of Julian, appears clearly when contrasted with Rolle's more forthright style. In the first paragraph of *Ego dormio* he says to his reader, 'my dere syster in Criste, my wil þou dose if þou lufe [him]'. Rolle immediately and directly inserts himself and his desire into the text. In contrast, Julian and her Christ *woo* readers into their *volo*, rather than commanding them or ravishing them away.

Extragrammatical hailing

Julian is also alive to the possibilities of affect as a means of hailing. As Latinate textual authority was disarticulated by the rise of the vernacular in late-fourteenth-century England, various facets of this authority that were not directly dependent on explicit conceptual meaning were experimented with by vernacular writers. Zieman reminds us that Latin often functioned in ritualized, sacralized form to convey 'extragrammatical' rather than conceptual meaning. Ritualized language, such as the liturgy, has 'the capacity to produce excess meaning in its performance – a sense of illocutionary force perceived as sacred that in turn authenticate[s] the emotional experience connected to it as inspired'.[76] Newman similarly notes how *oratio*, the third stage of *lectio divina* (in which a monk spent several hours every day) could take the form of 'a quasi-literary exercise' in which the praying person uses what Guigo II calls 'burning words' to stir desire for God and so progress into full contemplative stillness.[77] Situated within the monastery walls, this meaning-laden affect took its place as one of the elite practices associated with monastic leisure (*otium*), and entered into monastic contemplative theory. Outside in the lay world, disassociated from its institutional frame, the excesses of such extragrammatical meaning could represent access to the divine that bypasses institutional mediation. Walter Hilton, always committed to the institutional Church's claims, firmly reserves sacralized ritual prayer for those in orders: the 'most special praiere that the soule useth and hath most

[76] 'Perils of Canor,' 137, 145.

[77] In the classic four stages of *lectio divina* as described by Guigo II in his twelfth-century *Scala claustralium,* the reader first reads attentively out loud (*lectio*), then meditates discursively on what was read (*meditatio*), then passes into vocal or mental prayer (*oratio*) and finally attains a deep stillness or attentiveness to God's voice (*contemplatio*). 'What Did It Mean To Say "I Saw"?' 18.

confort in' he says 'is the Pater Noster, or elles psalmes of the sautier; the Pater Noster for lewid men, and psalmes and ympnes and othere servyce of Holi Chirche for lettred men'. He does allow that in both cases the familiar words are given new sweetness and fire by contemplative love.[78]

Julian's access to this traditional authorizing structure is not definitively known, because we are not sure whether she was a nun or not, although later in her life as an anchorite she occupied a semi-official status parallel to that of a professed religious.[79] However, her early response to her showing suggests that she also thinks of ritualized Latin speech as an act through which the subject comes face-to-face with the divine. As she sees the blood begin to trickle down Christ's face, she says, "Benedicite dominus!" (III.15; i.4.13-14). This phrase, though grammatically incorrect, has a powerful ritual valence, as the greeting used by Benedictines in which 'the junior asks for, and the senior offers, blessing'.[80] The words, which Julian continues to utter throughout the first showing (V.3; i.8.1-2), thus open a space of meeting, as she experiences the vision as an overture – both a beginning and a hailing – from God that requires acknowledgement. The fact that this involuntarily uttered phrase is Latin and of institutional provenance reflects how deeply ingrained this practice of ritualized vocally-linked affect is in Julian.

By the time of completing the Long Text, she seems to have become interested in the vernacular's ability to achieve similar effects. Ena Jenkins notes that to modern ears Julian's prose often seems to ask to be rearranged into poetry, for example when at the close of Chapter 51 in the Long Text (xiv.51.276-280) the story of the Redemption is concluded with 'a majestic, richly allusive psalm … a measured, creedal statement of relationship'.[81] Jenkins' use of the word 'psalm' is telling, as the psalter underlies the liturgy sung by the monastic choir. Many similar examples can be found in the Long Text. For example, at the end of Revelation 3 the text moves from considered scholastic discussion of God's power and foreknowledge to one of Christ's characteristically splendid speeches beginning 'See, I am God. See, I am in all thing' (iii.11.42-46). Julian is shown responding

[78] *Scale* II.42.3167-3181.
[79] See Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), for the institutional mechanisms controlling and so authorizing anchoritism e.g. the bishop's canonically instituted role was 'to investigate, to enclose, and to ensure that the recluse's life remained true to its purpose,' 53.
[80] Watson and Jenkins sidenotes.
[81] 'Julian's *Revelation of Love*: A Web of Metaphor', in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy, 181-192 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 188.

with joy and openness: 'Thus mightly, wisely, and lovingly was the soule examined in this vision. Than saw I sothly that me behoved nedes to assent with great reverence, enjoying in God' (iii.11.46-48). Julian's textual persona models the reader's proper response, and this modelling is reinforced by the excess meaning generated by the poetic register of the "See, I am God" speech, with its repeated anaphoric structure and mode of direct personal address. The heightened literary quality of the prose recalls the 'burning words' Guigo II recommends as a prompt for contemplation. The grammatical teaching of the revelation passes over into 'enjoying', merging 'knowing' with 'feeling'.

In fact, as mentioned above, this rhapsodic intensity of style becomes a feature of Christ's speeches, both direct locutions and Julian's additions placed in his mouth; these include the "I it am" speech in XIII.26-29 (xii.26.4-8), "I may make alle thing wele" from (xiii.31.2-4), "That that is unpossible" in xiii.32.41-43, the expanded "I it am" speech in xiv.59.11-16 and (though the speaker is not directly named) the final speech about love (xvi.13-16). These speeches tend strongly to simple, repetitive phrasing and doublets, using clear, everyday vocabulary, which makes them as sweet on the tongue as poetry. The first "I it am" speech, which crowns the Passion meditation sequence of the opening 12 revelations, is an impassioned, ecstatic declaration of identity by Christ our lover. The simple repetitions take on a ritual, theurgic quality:

> [O]fte times oure lorde Jhesu saide to me: "I it am that is hiaste. I it am that thowe luffes. I it am that thowe likes. I it am that thowe serves. I it am that thowe langes. I it am that thowe desires. I it am that thowe menes. I it am that is alle. I it am that haly kyrke preches the and teches the. I it am that shewed me are to the."

Christ designates himself in the only way that God can be designated in human language, as the terminus and object of the untrammelled desires of the mystic *volo* in all its permutations of loving, delighting in, serving, longing for, intending. The repeated phrase 'I it am' is reminiscent of God's self-identification when he appears to Moses in the burning bush in *Exodus* 3.14, a passage which was interpreted in the contemplative tradition as a paradigm of mystical experience.[82] The Scripture's enigmatic 'I am' is transformed here into what Lochrie calls 'an extravagant litany of naming, of searching for

[82] Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 60; Hide, *Soteriology*, 107.

new words and idioms for God',[83] and the excess meaning and strong affect generated by the speech's formal aspects give the passage extraordinary hailing power.

The extragrammatical meaning generated by Julian's prose-poetry does not, as in Rolle or the *Cloud*-author, sacrifice 'knowing' to 'feeling', but works to complement it. The reformulated "I it am" speech in Revelation 14 is an example of this marriage (xiv.59.11-16):

> "I it am, the might and the goodnes of faderhode. I it am, the wisdom and the kindnes of moderhode. I it am, the light and the grace that is all blessed love. I it am, the trinite. I it am, the unite. I it am, the hye sovereyn goodnesse of all manner thing. I it am that maketh the to love. I it am that makith the to long. I it am, the endlesse fulfilling of all true desyers."

This passage gathers together the theology developed in the preceding chapters. The closely balanced yet often paradoxical phrases can each be thought about in turn, and their conceptual meaning interrogated in terms of the text's argument. At the same time, the arrangement of the phrases one after another and their rhythmic structure bring all the exceedingly complex ideas into such close proximity that they spill over each other, until all that is left is the resounding cadence of the sounds themselves. Something similar happens in the final showing of the text, the speech about love:

> I was answered in gostly understonding, seyeng thus: "What, woldest thou wit thy lordes mening in this thing? Wit it wele, love was his mening. Who shewed it the? Love. What shewid he the? Love. Wherfore shewed he it the? For love. Holde the therin, thou shalt wit more in the same. But thou shalt never wit therin other withouten ende." Thus was I lerned that love is oure lordes mening. (xvi.86.12-17)

Presented as an answer to Julian's final question, the word 'love' is put through such a series of semantic hoops that, when the passage is performed, 'love' seems a formal indicator of an overwhelming reality rather than a signifier with a specifiable referent. The experience of the entire revelation, over the twenty years and more that it has been part of Julian's life, is the teaching of this 'love'. The circling rhetorical structure enfolds the performer as a site of rapture, rather than spelling out a conceptual explanation. The pleasure offered by the beauty of Julian's writing has functions as a mystical way of speaking, a point to which my discussion will return in its final chapter.

In all these ways of creating space for God's utterance in the soul, and so hailing the audience as mystical subjects, Julian's text manages to speak what Scholem, quoted in

[83] Lochrie, *Translations of the Flesh*, 66. She is speaking of the devotion to the Holy Name, popularized by Rolle.

Chapter 1, calls meaning infinite yet unspecified. The kind of knowing that Julian's text creates is thus never whole and completed. The *Revelation* does, as Watson says, reveal an 'optimistic and intimate expectation' of full knowledge when we get to heaven,[84] but this remains in the future as one of the 'goods' which 'are tresoured and hid' in Christ for us (xvi.75.19). The image is of fruition and birth,[85] of rich reward in the fullness of time. Julian's faith in meaning is sure, and in the intention of God the divine speaker that orders all of existence, despite her grasp of human language's inadequacy. The image of Christ pregnant with knowledge is followed by a version of the monastic mnemonic *topos* of a temple or building constructed of knowledge;[86] in heaven, Julian says, 'we shalle se verely the cause of alle the dedes that God hath done. And, overmore, we shalle see the cause of alle thinges that he hath suffered. And the blisse and the fulfilling shalle be so depe and so high that, for wonder and merveyle . . . that the pillours of heven shulle tremelle and quake' (xvi.75.21-25). The idea of structured meaning is not cast aside even in Julian's model of heaven.

The kind of subject as knower created by Julian's mystical text is not easily reconciled, however, with the knowing subject constructed by medieval contemplative theory. The culmination of contemplative ascent is to know God truly. If, as in Julian's model, knowing remains a never-complete process, then the self remains a site of desire. Julian speaks of wanting her book to be 'performed' (xvi.86.2), that is, completed, put into action, or perfected.[87] The verb retains the sense of an event, that is, it has a temporal quality that makes it more like a speech than like a written text that has a permanent form through time. A word heard can never be unheard, but equally it cannot be reheard in identical

[84] Watson, 'Trinitarian Hermeneutic,' 81.

[85] For more on how Julian combines a 'sapiential theology grounded in Neoplatonism', which traditionally personifies the divine mind as the womb of creation, with 'affective devotion to Mother Jesus' popularized for example by Anselm, Aelred of Rievaulx and the Monk of Farne, see Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 225-226. Newman argues that Julian is unusual in making this combination, but then three pages later quotes Albertus Magnus who says that Christ is our 'more than mother' because he 'formed us in the womb of foreknowledge, carried us in providing for our life, and suffered the pangs of childbirth in his passion'; translation is Newman's own, quoting from *Postilla super Isaiam* 49.15, ed. Ferdinand Siepmann in *Opera Omnia* vo.19 (Aschendorff: Monasterii Westfalorum, 1952), 491. Also, see Ritamary Bradley's wide-ranging collection of examples of the God as mother image; 'Patristic Background of the Motherhood Similitude'; see also 'Mysticism in the Motherhood Similitude of Julian of Norwich,' *Studia Mystica* 8 no. 2 (1985): 4-14.

[86] See Mary Carruthers, 'The Poet as Master Builder: Composition and Locational Memory in the Middle Ages,' *New Literary History* 24, no. 4 (1993): 881-904, for a discussion of architectural images e.g. temples, strongholds, amphitheatres, citadels and monastic buildings, in mnemonic practices.

[87] The verb 'performen' in the *MED* has the senses: to complete or perfect; to act or accomplish; to make or construct; and to cause.

form.[88] As Catherine Bell reminds us, the *act* of performance must not be devalued to a position secondary to the semantic meaning it "embodies".[89] This is why de Certeau calls the mystic *volo* a speech act, following the model of the Virgin's words to the angel at the Annunciation. By having all the fragments of the discourses she imitates interact dialectically, Julian allows meaning to become utterance, not text, the living Word made flesh in our hearts.[90] Her audience have to be familiar with, even adept in gospel meditation, affective *compassio*, vocal prayer, *lectio divina* and *spiritualis*, *imitatio Mariae*: the *volo* happens somewhere between them all. And the identity of the performer making the *volo* is constituted as the no-place marked out by the passing and crossing of the various hailing mechanisms. In the second half of this thesis, I discuss the contribution that secular, courtly discourses make to this mystical subjectivity.

Julian's texts aim to hail their readers to perform this subjectivity. How successful this hailing is will depend significantly on Julian's authorizing gestures and how convincing they are.

Parallel sites: the mystical utterance and authority

Julian does not represent a direct command from an authority figure, such as a confessor, to write her text. The authority lies with that which makes her write. The 'visionary' trope is an imaginary that offers itself as the place from which she can write, and authorizes her speech.[91] What drives the text is the strength of Julian's will to write, impelled by her mystical encounter with the Other; the demands of orthodoxy, measured in the judgement of her text by its audience and the presence of the intertextual network of *auctoritas*. This presence is kept understated in both Julian's texts. Throughout, almost the only two voices we hear are Christ's and Julian's. Between the completion of the Short Text and that of the Long Julian has clearly done extensive research, looking for interpretative frameworks that are true to her experience. Whether she derived this learning from Latin or vernacular sources, from reading herself or being read to, Julian makes no explicit reference to her

[88] This is not to try to recover some kind of primacy or priority for presence; the performance's meaning remains hermeneutic.
[89] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 45.
[90] See Mark S. Burrows, 'Raiding the Inarticulate,' for an exploration of theology written in this mode, that is, theology that inscribes a state of becoming rather than a fixed, final metaphysics, as a *poetics*.
[91] See *Mystic Fable*, 190-191.

sources, as for example the *Cloud*-author cites Thomas Gallus.[92] The notes to editions of her texts reveal that it is seldom possible to identify a direct source. Unlike a clerical male author, Julian cannot simply assume that her text has a place within and continues the work of authoritative tradition. On the other hand, she also does not deploy Latinate tradition indirectly to reassure her readers, as does Margery Kempe for example, who recounts how her bewildered scribe has his faith in her boisterous weeping restored by reading of similar manifestations in texts like the *Stimulus Amoris* and Jacques de Vitry's life of Marie d'Oignies, among other texts. Kempe simultaneously insists that the only authorizing she needs is Christ's, while surreptitiously linking her text with Latinate tradition via her scribe's wish for reassurance.[93] Julian does make one such move in the Short Text, mentioning how her desire for the three 'wounds' was incited by hearing clerk tell the story of St Cecelia (I.36-38), preserved in texts like the *Legenda aurea*,[94] but she removes this from the Long Text. She hides nearly all traces of her reading or learning process, in contrast to Margery Kempe and also a lay male author, the knight of the *Book of the Knight of the Tower*, who inscribes authority within his text by depicting how he has priests and clerks read to him from authoritative texts, from which he then selects examples to include in his own book.[95] So while the fruits of Latinate learning are everywhere evident in Julian's texts, she herself as female author remains firmly the mediator of this tradition, rather than it constructing and supporting her.

Julian's relationship with scripture similarly privileges her voice. She very rarely quotes directly, favouring a *lectio divina*-inspired method of free, multiple scriptural allusion, which creates verbal echoes in the memory of the audience, and so evokes richly suggestive images, phrases and words from associated scriptural passages. References to Christ as the wisdom of the Trinity, for example, recall the Wisdom books of the Old Testament, particularly Proverbs and Wisdom, the opening of John's gospel with its *logos* theology and Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 1:17-25.[96] These texts are present only as

[92] Prologue to *Deonise Hid Diuinite,* in *The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Treatises*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson, Analecta Cartusiana 3 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg, 19820), 119 ll.9-10.
[93] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 292-296. See Lochrie's discussion, *Translations of the Flesh*, 117-120.
[94] Watson and Jenkins notes.
[95] See Wogan-Browne *et al.* (eds), *Idea of the Vernacular*, 110, referencing excerpt 2.16, Caxton's translation.
[96] Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 36.

echoes within Julian's own arguments, rather than produced explicitly as *auctoritates*.[97] The indirectness of Julian's relationship with the scriptures appears even more strongly if compared with Walter Hilton's, for example; he quotes often, in the original Latin followed by his own translation prefaced by the phrase, 'that is: . . .'.[98] He is invested in the authorizing structures of their culture, and as a male cleric has the right to interpret the scriptures for the lay and female audience who are his audience. In contrast, Julian's sublimation of the Bible places the authority of her statements in her own words, and the second life of the scriptures within the texture of her experience. Colledge and Walsh suggest that Julian's syntax sometimes follows that of the Vulgate, implying that she is translating (or working with someone who is translating) directly from the Latin.[99] Though the directness of Julian's access to Latin scripture cannot be known for sure, the kind of verbal echoes Colledge and Walsh identify would certainly place Julian's voice ambiguously: on the one hand, the reassurance of cadences and turns of phrase so familiar to the medieval ear, but on the other, the unsettling fact that they come from the mouth of a woman.

That this distancing from the authoritative text is deliberate can be seen from the occasions, rare but accomplished, when Julian does use scripture in a more conventional mode. The only time she quotes the Bible directly in the Long Text (the Short has one additional reference, X.22-23) is in Revelation 7, which is an example of *lectio spiritualis* (focused attention to emotional experience during devotional reading and prayer).[100] She makes sense of her two alternating 'felings', first joyful peace and then sharp desolation, by citing two scriptural heavyweights, 'Paule' and 'Sainte Peter' (Romans 8:38-39 and Matthew 8:25, 14:30; IX.29-31; vii.15.13-16). This placing of interior feelings in interpretive conversation with scripture is as discussed in Chapter 1 characteristic of monastic hermeneutic tradition. Julian's explicit use of scripture in this familiar hermeneutic mode is a deliberate authorising gesture to bolster a most *un*familiar insight, one that indeed contradicts the teaching found in other devotional works: whereas the *Chastising of God's Children* and Hilton's *Scale* for example state explicitly that feelings of desolation are a sign

[97] Annie Sutherland, '"Our Feyth is Groundyd in Goddes Worde": Julian of Norwich and the Bible,' in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII*, ed. E.A. Jones, 1-20 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003).
[98] E.g. See *Scale* II.24.1346-1350, 1365-1367.
[99] 'Introduction' to their edition, 45-47.
[100] Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 89-91, 95; Stock, *After Augustine: the Meditative Reader and the Text* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) 106-170.

that Christ has withdrawn because of the soul's sin,[101] Julian argues that this is never so (IX.34-42, vii.15.17-25). As explored in the previous section, this moment of *lectio spiritualis* contributes to one of Julian's central arguments, that our fallenness and finitude reveal God to us just as much as our ultimate perfection. So she draws on the authoritative textual tradition to validate her felt insight: once again, Julian's encounter with the divine emerges as the primary site of meaning.

Overall then, Julian's authorizing strategy is to create a space not *within* Latinate tradition for her text, but instead parallel to it, in a sense *above* this written, human tradition, or perhaps *below* it, in what grounds it. The highly intertextual mosaic technique Julian uses in the end leads to a dispersal of traditional, text-based authority: her subjectivity alone, as the locus of all these experiences, links them together. Her status as the centre and authority can be shown clearly by a comparison with a passage from Hilton's *Scale* where he demonstrates how he depends on authoritative textual tradition. He describes the experience of contemplation using a flurry of descriptive metaphors:

> The openynge of the goostli iye is that lighti merkenesse and that riche nought that I spak of bifore, and it mai be callide purité of spirit and gosteli reste, inward stillenesse and pees in conscience, highnesse or deepnesse of thought and oonlynesse of soule, a liyfli feelynge of grace and priveté of herte, the waker sleep of the spouse and a taastynge of heveneli savour, brennynge in love, schynynge in light, entré of contemplacion and reformynge in feelynge. (*Scale* II.40.2863-2868)

These phrases include many traditional apophatic formulae, but rather than grounding them in his personal spiritual narrative, Hilton immediately cites his source as the 'holi writynge' of various authorities, which though varying in expression are 'alle oon in sentence of sothfastnesse' (2868-2871). His text makes a gesture towards apophaticism, but the play of signification is end-stopped by the appeal to authoritative texts. In contrast, Julian's written account leads only to her subjectivity, the site of desire. Only she is the holder of the full oral text, the mystical utterance. In fact as her life of meditation and writing unfolds, she becomes that text, in her performance of the subjectivity of one who beholds God.

The text hails its audience, inviting them to make their own *volo* and perform this subjectivity for themselves, and in this way paradoxically disperses Julian's authority

[101] *Chastising*, 111; *Scale* Chapter 41 dwells on how the fading of grace and consequent experience of dryness and weakness is due to 'corrupcioun of mannes freelté' (3025-3026) and is a lessening of perfection (3070-3071).

among them.[102] In the Short Text, where Julian is more clearly a visionary recounting her personal showings, the introductory scene setting includes several individuating details that are removed in the Long Text: the cloths that support Julian's head (II.16-17), the relatives and friends who surround her bed including the 'childe' who accompanies the curate (II.18-19), and the details of her physical weakness (II.33-35). The effect is first to focus the Long Text version much more intensely within Julian's subjectivity, the space constituted by all the various circling discourses the text employs. Also, the revelation is transposed into the present, something that happens as the audience reads the text. A small detail highlighting this presentness comes in the preamble, when Julian's pain disappears just before her visions begin. In the Short Text she says, 'and I was alle hole, . . . as evere I was before *or after*' (II.38-39, my emphasis), but in this Long Text, 'and I was as hole . . . as ever I was befor' (Preamble.3.31). The action is concentrated in an immediate "now", in which the audience is also present, ready to go with Julian into their own mystical encounters. In contrast to the idea of contemplatives as a spiritual elite, which is visible for example in Hilton,[103] Julian's implied authorship is on one level broadly inclusive. She removes the Short Text's references to contemplatives and instead addresses the Long Text to all her 'even Cristians' without restriction of gender, class, education or institutional affiliation: 'his mening was for the generalle man .... For the blessed comfort that I sawe, it is large inough for us all' (xvi.79.2, 4-7). However, the demands of the *volo* cannot but distinguish those whose commitment to the revelation is whole-hearted from those who hold back. A phrase that Julian often uses to signal the transition to a particularly abstract or inclusive insight is 'behold and see', a formula also found for example in *The Privity of the Passion*.[104] For example: 'Beholde and se. Here hast thou matter of mekenesse, here hast thou matter of love' (xiii.36.33-34). The phrase operates very much like Christ's 'He who has ears, let him hear',[105] as a hailing device, not to direct the reader's emotional response as in an affective Passion lyric, but rather to create a select group of those who can hear the message as opposed to those who are unable or unwilling

[102] Elizabeth Robertson makes a similar argument, but she constructs the relationship between them as a question of authorship of Julian's text, making the readers 'co-authors'; 'Julian of Norwich's "Modernist" Style,' 146.
[103] See for example Chapter 18 of *Scale* II, where he ponders why so few reach the state of reformation in feeling, which is his definition of the full contemplative life.
[104] *Yorkshire Writers*, I, 201. See also the references to medieval drama, hymns and religious lyrics in Gillespie, 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism and Parody,' 200, n.26.
[105] E.g. Matthew 11:15, Mark 4:9.

to do so. Here her full meaning of 'behold' operates; the invitation to 'behold and see' cannot but be exclusive to those willing to make the *volo*.

Julian also cannot escape setting up the two parallel positions, institutional Church and mystical speaker, although she insists they are sites of complementary truth. In her apology in the Short Version (VI.35-49), she advises her audience to forget her as soon as possible, so as to concentrate on 'Jhesu that is techare of alle' (VI.45 – note the pun on 'alle', which can mean 'everything' and 'everyone'), and so implicitly claims divine authority for her message. She frequently refers to the Church's authority, most notably in XIII.40-44, when beginning her unusual discussion on sin. Declaring her willingness to submit 'to the techinge of haly kyrke' at this point is clearly a protective gesture. In the Long Text this apologetic tone is absent, reflecting the confidence Julian has gained as author and theologian. However, she remains innately conservative in her wish to maintain a relation of mutuality with institutional claims to revelation. In Revelation 14 she places personal beholding side-by-side with the Church's teaching as sites of truth: 'us nedeth not gretly to seke ferre out to know sondry kindes, but to holy church, into oure moders brest: that is to sey, into oure owne soule wher oure lord wonneth. And ther shall we finde alle: now, in faith and in understanding, and after, verely in himselfe, clerely, in blisse' (xiv.62.18-22).

In an interesting dramatization of the peaceable relationship Julian tries to build between her experience and magisterial authority, the Long Text repeats the earlier version's marking of beginning and end by the authorizing presence of priests. A priest, or rather an authorised sacramental moment, helps precipitate Julian's vision, and another priest causes her to believe in it by taking it seriously, and so giving her the courage to trust in it and in herself as the site of utterance. These are the only points in the text where Julian seems to construct a division between laity and clergy, legitimating 'the clergy's position as gatekeepers of the word of God'; in a time when harsh attacks on the clergy were common (by reformers or Lollards), she maintains a carefully negotiated deference to the Church,[106] while implicitly challenging the hierarchy to value the resource it has in its lay congregation.

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[106] Wogan-Browne *et al.* (eds), *Idea of the Vernacular*, 233, quote from 124.

This chapter has shown how Julian constructs her readers as sites of desire, and mystical knowing as performance of meaning as process. The demands of the mystical utterance mean that she cannot compromise by depending wholly on established ways of talking about God, and yet she cannot risk alienating her readers or antagonizing ecclesiastical authorities by rejecting such language altogether. With no small degree of skill, therefore, Julian deploys conventional modes and authorizing gestures to establish her text as a parallel site of revelation, complementary to that of the Church. Such accomodations are always required in the mystic's attempt to find a workable style of living out a subjectivity based on desire. The next three chapters explore a performative discourse she offers for managing and living out this subjectivity, for appropriating the lack and homelessness at its core. She draws for this purpose, most unusually, on the secular discourses of self and identity of the courtly world.

Chapter 3 Courtly imagery: God as knight, lover and lord

But thou, O man of God, fly these things: and pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness. Fight the good fight of faith!
1 Timothy 6:11-12

Emprise, Amour, Largesce
Eustache Deschamps, 'Lay de Franchise' line 221[1]

We have seen that a central element of Julian's mystical project is the hailing of her readers as subjects in dialectical relation to God. I now turn to exploring the second stage of her text's hailing technique, which is crafting a subjectivity with which to live out the consequences of having met God in a mystical encounter. For the guiding style of this subjectivity, Julian draws on the secular discourse of honour-based courtly identity which was clearly distinguishable, alongside more explicitly Christian conceptions of the self, in her society and its texts. By 'courtly' I mean defining of the knightly class, the secular elite of late medieval English society, which included the peers (those entitled to receive an individual summons to parliament), the lesser knights and the squires.[2] Anna Maria Reynolds called *courtesy* and *homeliness* 'the warp and the woof' of Julian's writing.[3] As will become clear, these terms are part of a much wider network of courtly imagery that patterns Julian's texts, and reaches a peak of rhetorical beauty and theological importance in the Long Version. As I discussed when outlining my approach to mysticism and mystical discourse, any positive term applied to God only describes some aspects of his infinite being, according to that term's own limited conceptual and affective range. However, in Julian's hands, the imagistic field of chivalric honour culture becomes a tool of remarkable precision and evocativeness, both in its idealized form, found in courtly literature, and its specific historicized instantiations, as courtly roles and relationships such as *knight*, *lord* and *retainer*. By means of this imagery, Julian first unfolds some of the richness of God's nature, as creator, keeper, lover, redeemer and Trinity, and then evokes our relationship with him as his creatures, servants, chivalric retainers, lovers and fellow

[1] *Oeuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, ed. Le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire, 11 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1878-1903), vol. 2, 203-214 (lai no. 307).
[2] See Chris Given-Wilson's introduction to his *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1-25.
[3] Anna Maria Reynolds, '"Courtesy" and "Homeliness" in the Writings of Julian of Norwich,' *Mystics Quarterly* 5 no.2 (1979): 1.

knights. Hers is truly an imaginative theology in the sense developed by Barbara Newman, a theology that thinks by means of images.[4]

Julian's texts make plentiful use of words related to social status, such as *royal*, *noble*, *precious*, *worship*, *worthy* and *high*. In late-fourteenth-century English, such terms could simply imply 'worth' or 'value', broadly conceived – one of the senses of 'noble' listed in the *MED* for example is 'good' or 'respectable' – and Julian does on occasion use them so.[5] However, in general, her meaning depends on more literal uses of courtly terms, as markers of class status.[6] A clear indicator of this literal level of meaning comes early in the Long Text in the 'open example' from i.7.27-33.[7] Julian is shown that it is

> the most wurship that a solempne king or a gret lorde may do to a pore servante if he wille be homely with him, and namely if he shew himselfe of a fulle true mening and with a glad chere, both in previte and openly. Than thinketh this pore creature thus: "Lo, what might this noble lorde do more wurshippe and joy to me than to shew to me, that am so litille, this marvelous homelyhede? Sothly it is more joy and liking to me than if he gave me gret giftes, and wer himselfe strange in maner."

This showing, which speaks to Julian's sense of how greatly God has condescended to her in speaking directly to her in the showings, uses the language of status: repetitions of words like 'pore' and 'litille' in contrast with 'solempne', 'gret' and 'noble' chart the social gap between the two characters. Clearly, 'to do [the servant] wurshippe' here means to treat him with respect and esteem exceeding that owed to someone of his lowly social standing. The sense of the insight lies in a literal reading of the hierarchical social image. So when Julian describes her amazement that 'oure lorde Jhesu … that is highest and mightiest, nobliest and wurthiest, is lowest and mekest, hamliest and curtysest' (i.7.37-38)[8], an intimation of marvellous closeness is conveyed by means of status distinction, not by sweeping this inequality away. 'Courtesy' in Julian's texts comes to stand for this

[4] See Introduction p.7.
[5] See *MED*, 'noble' (adj.) sense 3 a), b) and d). In xiii.32.4-7, 'noble' does have this kind of simple comparative meaning: 'he wille we witte that not only he taketh heed to nobille thinges and to gret, but also to litille and to smal, to lowe and to simple, and to one and to other. … he wille that we wit that the lest thing shall not be forgeten'.
[6] She even on occasion uses the term 'gentil' (e.g. xvi.83.4-5), which more explicitly imples chivalric status than its synonym 'courteous' and so is relatively rare in religious texts; Jonathan Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the* Gawain-*Poet* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), 7-8.
[7] This example is not mentioned in the Short Text, and seems to have been 'shewde' to Julian at some time later than her original experience, whether as an actual vision or rather as a visualisation during prayerful composition of the later text.
[8] The Short Text has a simpler version of this notion: 'this was the maste comforthe to me: that oure lorde es so hamlye and so curtayse' (VII.11-12).

relationship of mutual recognition *in difference* that a lord shares with his servant, and God shares with us. The metaphor of courtesy, and the identities and communities that it defines, form the central links of a network of imagery of aristocratic courtliness which is maintained right through Julian's mature thought.

In this chapter I focus mainly on courtly imagery applied to God: his role as honourable knight, courtly lover, and courteous lord. Separating out one particular line of Julian's richly patterned imagery, be it courtesy or lordship or motherhood, always risks simplifying her effect and becoming repetitive in argument, because her metaphors are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. My discussion here, of how Julian depicts God in courtly terms, will in some measure anticipate the exploration that follows it, of her model of human nature as courtly and what this model implies for an understanding of sin and salvation. This chapter and the two that follow it trace the conceptual and affective range offered to Julian by the subject positions of courtly imagery. The common thread in all these courtly roles is their foundation in the honour economy of chivalric culture, which maintained the knightly elite's status and power by insisting on its superiority to other classes. This distinction was marked by symbolic capital in a range of forms, like prowess, lavish lifestyle, sophistication of speech and manners, refined sensibility in love and war – all those aesthetic and material graces that defined the courtly knight. We will see how Julian adapts these markers of honour into an ever more rhetorically engaging and theologically complex language of self, which shapes her readers in their relationship with God.

The use of courtly roles for God in Julian's works has been noted before, most significantly by Jay Ruud and Alexandra Barratt. I consider the finer points of their arguments where relevant in my discussion, but the outlines of their approaches can be sketched here. Ruud argues that God fulfils the requirements of firstly the broad late-medieval masculinity of the patriarchal man,[9] who fathers children, and protects and provides for his dependents,

[9] 'Julian, Romance Discourse, and the Masculine,' 183-186. Another example would be the celibate clerical man who is invested in the value of the next world; Daniel Rubey, 'The Five Wounds of Melibee's Daughter: Transforming Masculinities,' in *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the* Canterbury Tales *and* Troilus and Criseyde, ed. Peter Beidler, 157-171 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 166. See also David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 223, on the patriarchal man. Throughout the medieval and early modern periods, in art and literature, Christ's default gender tends overwhelmingly to be male; McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 14, n.60, citing Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

and secondly of an idealized literary sub-type of this masculine identity, namely the chivalric romance hero, who combines the masculine qualities of power, authority, courage, strength, action and honour with the more feminine perfections of humility, meekness, generosity, compassion and pity.[10] Ruud's study remains largely expository, tracing these features in Julian's texts, although he does briefly note some of the theological implications of the imagery. For example, he traces how the characterization of God as courtly knight lover invites Julian (and so her audience) to identify with the romance heroine, beautiful and beloved, and also claims for Julian as a woman, and so for all women, the dignity of being the type of humanity in its relationship with God.[11]

While Ruud focuses on idealized literary identities, Alexandra Barratt investigates how Julian's God also fits the model of real-world practice as a late fourteenth-century English lord. Such a lord, bound to his retainers by a profoundly personal and affective bond, rewards service with fees or other material rewards, and with favour and patronage, shown particularly in supporting a servant's causes at court; these duties were collectively known as 'good lordship'.[12] Barratt in effect argues that we must not forget that Julian's theology and experience of herself in relationship with God are profoundly shaped by the assumptions of courtly culture. She also suggests that Julian's 'ease' with language and imagery drawn from late-medieval courtly society, and the fact that she does not pause to explain or justify them (particularly the term 'good lordship', which in the late fourteenth century was all too often evoked quite cynically and corruptly) suggests that she came from a knightly background herself and that her intended audience, insofar as she has one, shares this background.[13]

As this chapter will show, Ruud and Barratt actually discuss two sides of the same phenomenon, namely late-medieval courtly identity, which is located in the public space of an honour economy and exists in citational interplay with courtly literature. Julian's presentation of God in the courtly roles of knight, lover and lord shares this citational space. Before her knightly Christ can be discussed, therefore, the world of late-medieval English knightly identity must be explored.

[10] Ruud, 'Romance Discourse, and the Masculine,' 186-189.
[11] *Ibid.*, 193-194.
[12] 'Lordship, Service and Worship,' 177; 'Julian of Norwich and the Holy Spirit,' 78–84.
[13] 'Lordship, Service and Worship', 187-188.

Courtly culture: roles, practices and identity

In Julian's day, social stratification was very much a matter of contemporary perception rather than legal definition, and the knightly class was somewhat porous on its boundaries. Throughout the period merchant- and artisan-born men achieved chivalric status through war or service to the crown and higher nobility.[14] Yet this fairly broad social stratum can be talked of as a class in the sense that its members all 'moved in much the same country and national society, with similar ambitions, interests, and occupations',[15] and they all identified with the same courtly, chivalric ethos as the basis of their claim to position and authority. In this sense the aristocracy existed as a culture as well as a political entity.[16] I argue that the chivalric ethos holds a central place in Julian's imagination. This ethos functioned according to the dynamic of 'honour', also called 'worship', 'renown' or 'fame'. This honour, which is the instantiation of the knight's status as symbolic capital – that is, non-financial social assets that enable social mobility[17] – exists in the public arena of the opinion of his peers.[18] The opposite of 'honour' is not 'wrong-doing' or 'evil' but rather 'shame', in a specifically public and social sense rather than as an interiorized affect.[19]

The core ideal of chivalry is always knightly prowess (originally and literally the physical ability to beat an enemy in armed combat) as the principal means of winning honour, although such prowess was often present symbolically, on the level of ideas and ideology,

[14] An example is Sir Robert Salle, who made money ransoming French prisoners, and was killed by insurgents just outside Norwich in 1381; his assailants taunted him with the words, 'you are not a gentleman, but the son of a poor mason, just such as ourselves'; see Maurice Keen, 'Chivalry,' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove, 35-49 (Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 2005), 40, for other examples also.

[15] Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 4.

[16] Kate Mertes, 'Aristocracy,' in *Fifteenth Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. Rosemary Horrox, 42-60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 42.

[17] 'Resources available to a social actor on the basis of prestige or recognition, which function as an authoritative embodiment of cultural value'; 'Symbolic Capital,' in *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, accessed 10 March 2013. For fuller discussion see Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital,' 1986, reprinted in *Education: Culture, Economy, and Society*, ed. Albert. H. Halsey *et al.*, 46-58 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[18] Julian Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status,' in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J.G. Peristiany, 21-77 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 22, 36; Stephanie Trigg, *Shame and Honor: A Vulgar History of the Order of the Garter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 140; Philippa C. Maddern, 'Gentility,' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove, 18-34 (Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 2005), 27.

[19] See Trigg, *Shame and Honor*, 133 for a discussion of how the exteriorized and ritual aspects of medieval shame differ from our modern interiorized, emotion-centred definition.

rather than fully lived out.[20] This militaristic bent would have been perfectly familiar to Julian, since in her day tournaments continued to be important opportunities for knightly display,[21] and campaigning a livelihood.[22] Whether or not they ever actually did military service, gentlemen liked their effigies on tombs and brasses to show them in armour, with escutcheons of their arms beside them.[23] Masculine chivalric strength was a key component in the glamorous image sedulously promoted by the Plantagenet kings,[24] as will be discussed further below. Around the same time as Julian was planning or beginning her expansion of the Short Text, the Anglo-Norman poem *La Vie du Prince Noir* (c. 1395) constructs a version of leadership centring on chivalric prowess, in which the Black Prince is shown proudly equalling his father's reputation for chivalric might, in an implicit rebuke of the weakness of Edward's decidedly less valorous son Richard, then on the throne.[25] As a resident of Norwich Julian would have known about the exploits of warlike bishop Henry Despenser, who personally took part in killing rebels in the Uprising of 1381, and in 1383 mounted a (disastrous) 'crusade' in Flanders.[26]

In practice, chivalric honour also derived from a range of other determinants, in addition to (nominal) military achievements, chiefly birth, inherited land, lordship, and increasingly some other form of diplomatic, legal or administrative service.[27] Across the various substrata of the chivalric class the exact definition of honour could vary; in the Paston letters, for example, Phillipa Maddern traces a model of honour characteristic of the country gentry, which celebrates more bourgeois characteristics such as the ability to pay one's way as well as the more standard chivalric values of loyalty to friends and

[20] Richard W. Kaeuper and Montgomery Bohna, 'War and Chivalry,' in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350–c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Blackwell 2007) doi: 10.1111/b.9780631219736.2007.00021.x; Keen, 'Chivalry,' 45; R.R. Davies, *Lords and Lordship in the British Isles in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Brendan Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 48-49.

[21] In 1389 the male line of the Hereford earls of Pembroke died out when John, the 17-year old heir to the earldom, was killed in a tournament; Given-Wilson, *English Nobility*, 6.

[22] Keen, 'Chivalry,' 40. Miri Rubin observes that the war with France 'represented opportunity and fostered an ethos of service' until its end in 1453; *The Hollow Crown: A History of Britain in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 268.

[23] Keen, 'Chivalry,' 46-47.

[24] Staley, 'Crisis of Authority,' 153.

[25] Simon Walker, *The Lancastrian Affinity, 1361-1399* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 57, argues that John of Gaunt may have commissioned the poem to advertise the chivalric glory of himself and his men.

[26] R.B. Dobson (ed.) *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (London: Macmillan, 1970 reprint 1986), 235-237, 259-260, 334; R.A. Edwards, 'Henry Despenser: The Fighting Bishop,' *Church Quarterly* 159 (1958): 26-38; Staley, 'Crisis of Authority,' 155-156.

[27] Given-Wilson, *English Nobility*, ix; Keen, 'Chivalry,' 46-47.

faithfullness to one's word.[28] In essence, however, what marked the chivalric class off from lesser ranks was honour itself, made visible in a variety of forms of symbolic capital, from a title and legal privilege to a lavish and sophisticated lifestyle featuring particular fashions of dress, manners, leisure pastimes, habits of speech and genres of literature; in addition to any monetary worth, these things were valued because they distinguished the "courtly" from the "vulgar".[29]

Among the most important of these distinguishing qualities was 'courtesy'. The term brings together a group of ideals and behaviours hard to quantify, and described variously in contemporary sources as including beauty, *mansuetudo* (combining humility, tact, modesty, kindness, self-effacement), *largesse* (generosity and hospitality), self-control or moderation, compassion, *franchise* or *debonairete* (meaning gaiety and open-heartedness), gracious speech, good manners and loyalty.[30] These qualities made up the distinctive style of interaction that was the final and most subtle social marker of status, without which all other noble accomplishments were hollow. The display of *courtoisie* advertised chivalry as 'a sublime form of secular life'.[31] Given-Wilson describes how this style would be inculcated unconsciously into noble children through the practice of sending them away to other noble households, preferably of higher rank, for their 'noriture'. Here, 'surrounded by servants and the trappings of wealth, mixing with other young men of their own status, accustoming themselves to the constant passage of the great, that they learned what it was to be noble'.[32] Courtesy in this sense is a form of embodied cultural capital,[33] inculcated by

[28] Phillipa Maddern, 'Honour among the Pastons: Gender and Integrity in Fifteenth-Century English Provincial Society,' *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1998): 357-371.
[29] Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 4; Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 206. The notion of 'distinction' comes from Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).
[30] See e.g. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, 205; Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 94; Reynolds, '"Courtesy" and "Homeliness",' 13; Ruud, 'Romance Discourse, and the Masculine,' 187-191; and D.S. Brewer, 'Courtesy and the *Gawain*-Poet,' in *Patterns of Love and Courtesy: Essays in Memory of C.S. Lewis*, ed. John Lawlor, 54-85 (London: Edward Arnold, 1966), 57-58, 60-62.
[31] Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 67.
[32] *English Nobility*, 3-5.
[33] Cultural capital can be defined as educational 'credentials or other resources that an individual controls by virtue of evidencing greater attainment of knowledge, sophisticated taste, or other attributes of culture'; 'Cultural Capital,' in *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, accessed 27 March 2013. In its embodied form (as opposed to the objectified (books, art works etc) or institutionalized (academic qualifications) forms), cultural capital is culture as an integral part of the person, as *habitus*; Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital*, 48.

a life of privilege and acted out at the level of *habitus*. As a 'poetics' or 'rhetoric' of conduct,[34] courtesy's most important function was to endow the courtly class with ideological authority.

The fiction that *gentilesse* is innate in those of noble heredity[35] was deeply part of the aristocracy's self-definition. *La Vie du Prince Noir*, for example, opens its presentation of the Prince by establishing his perfect noble virtues, assuring the reader that he '[d]epuis le jour qu'il fut nasquy / Na pensa fors que loiauté, / Franchise, valour et bounté, / Et si fut garniz de proesce' ('from the day that he was born thought only of loyalty, of free courage and of gentleness, and was endowed with prowess'; lines 65-68).[36] These virtues are rooted in 'sa volunté noble et france' ('his own noble and free will'; lines 74-80) and reveal his 'hautesce' (lofty mind); combined with the proper 'noriture' they produce the perfect lord who devotes his life to upholding 'justice et droiture' ('justice and integrity'; lines 69-73). Despite such essentializing claims, however, chivalric status as manifested in honour – which exists in the public sphere, in the judgement and estimation of others – remained essentially exterior, located in 'the contingency of the material sign' as Lee Patterson puts it, and so had to continually be reconfirmed through display.[37] Anxiety lies behind the Chandos Herald's protestations of the Black Prince's innate nobility. This exteriorized quality of chivalric honour is cast into high relief when compared with a co-existing honour tradition, an ethical, philosophical understanding which constructed honour as moral virtue. This prudential model survived from the classical era, and informed interrogations of chivalric honour like that in Chaucer's 'Wife of Bath's Tale', which makes honour a matter of personal, private virtue whether or not this integrity will be publically known.[38] The virtue model of honour privileges the ethical, personal and interior

[34] To use C. Stephen Jaeger's phrase, although he is talking of courtesy in the European courts of an earlier period; *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilising Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 13-14.
[35] Mertes, 'Aristocracy,' 54; Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, 38.
[36] *The Life and Feats of Arms of Edward the Black Prince by Chandos Herald: A Metrical Chronicle with an English Translation and Notes*, ed. Francisque-Michel (London and Paris: J.G. Fotheringham, 1883), from which the English translations are also taken.
[37] Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 186. Crane bases her study of courtly identity as exteriorized and performative on a similar assessment of the 'externally orientated honor ethic'; *Performance of Self*, 2.
[38] Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, 102, ll.1109-1176.

dimension, as opposed to the fundamentally exterior location of chivalric honour and identity.[39]

The flip side to chivalric honour's dependence on ostentation, as Patterson suggests, is the vulnerability of its markers to encroachment by the socially ambitious. Because of their power, signifiers of noble status from heraldic coats of arms to table manners were coveted by the upwardly mobile, like the Franklin of *The Canterbury Tales*.[40] Rich urban merchants and craftsmen began taking up coats of arms in the mid-thirteenth century, and wealthy peasants in the fourteenth.[41] The 'courtesy books' that would flourish in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries first appeared at the end of the fourteenth,[42] and widely read courtly romances featured heroes and heroines who learn appropriate behaviour, and are shaped in their cultural and social identity. Such texts simultaneously reassured those of assured status and aided socially mobile audiences trying to hide their lowly origins and reinforce their right to move in gentry circles; this socially ambitious group was paradoxically just as invested as the established gentry in maintaining the fiction of essential gentility.[43] As Susan Crane says, 'courtly literature provided scripts for noble endeavour – for behavior between lovers, among knights, to prisoners, and to enemies in war .... Tournaments imitated those of romances, as did feasts and pageants'.[44] Among the most famous examples is the conscious recruitment of Arthurian tradition by the Plantagenet kings, as when Edward I personally sponsored two Round Table tournaments, at Nefyn in 1284 and

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[39] See Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 255-257 (including n.2), 302-306 for more on the differences between chivalric and prudential honour, and on the *miles/cleres* opposition that exemplified it in symbolic terms, including a discussion of Chaucer's use of the trope in *Troilus and Criseyde*. These two different ethics ultimately descend from Plato's opposition of an ethic of reflection and reason to the warrior ethic of glory and action; Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 117.

[40] See particularly his speech to the Squire in which the Franklin laments his son's lack of interest in associating with 'any gentil wight / Where he myghte lerne gentillesse aright', ll.642-694.

[41] Anthony Wagner, *Heralds of England: A History of the Office and College of Arms* (London: HMSO, 1967). See also Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 128, on how coats of arms came to replace actual military service in effecting entry into chivalric status.

[42] Kathleen M. Ashley, 'Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors of Female Conduct,' in *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, 25-38 (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 34. See also Maddern, 'Gentility,' 26-27.

[43] Raluca Radulescu, 'Literature,' in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, ed. Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove, 100-118 (Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 2005), 104; Maddern, 'Gentility,' 26-27. Maurice Keen notes that the fifteenth century *Squire of Low Degree* enacts ascension of the social ladder, including the ultimate reward of coat of arms, knighthood, and marriage to a king's daughter; 'Chivalry,' 43.

[44] Crane, *Insular Romance*, 177-178.

Falkirk in 1302, or when Edward III in 1344 announced a short-lived plan to found a chivalric order of the Round Table.[45] This relationship between courtly literature and life was thus fundamentally citational.[46]

So, while courtesy can be talked of as a personal quality, as a necessary facet of performative chivalric identity it was also a mechanism for managing interpersonal relationships. Embedded in the late-medieval imaginary that understood society as an organically structured body politic, courtesy could express an ideal of relationships within and between classes. John of Salisbury in the twelfth century described the general medieval view of society as a body politic: 'a republic is … a sort of body which is animated by the grant of divine reward and which is driven by the command of the highest equity and is ruled by a sort of rational management'.[47] In this organic model, the three 'estates' or 'orders' are seen as divinely ordained roles, to which individual members are assigned by God. John continues,

> The health of the whole republic will only be secure and splendid if the superior members devote themselves to the inferiors and if the inferiors respond likewise to the legal rights of their superiors, so that each individual may be likened to a part of the other reciprocally and each believes what is to his own advantage to be determined by that which he recognizes to be most useful for others.[48]

Society, according to this model, is naturally ordered by a hierarchical and teleological structure intrinsic to it (although the theological tradition also admitted that human inequality was the result of the Fall).[49] Society is healthy and whole if all its members play their particular roles properly, working towards the divinely-given end of the common good. This model thus gives each tier of the social hierarchy not only rights but also obligations. In actual fact, as Marc Bloch notes, the medieval social hierarchy was not a simple system of order but rather 'a complex aggregate of differing taxonomies' in which 'very different systems of classification cut across each other'; ecclesiastical hierarchy did not always match the secular class structures, for example, and royal and ecclesiastical legal jurisdictions overlapped and abutted rather than meshing easily. Late-medieval

[45] See Juliet R.V. Barker, *The Tournament in England 1100-1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1986), 91-95, 102.
[46] See Crane, *Insular Romance*, 9.
[47] John of Salisbury, *Politicraticus*, book 5 chapter 2, in *Medieval Political Theory, a Reader: The Quest for the Body Politic, 1100-1400*, ed. Cary J. Nederman and Kate Langdon Forhan (London: Routledge, 1993), 38.
[48] *Politicraticus*, book 6 chapter 20, *op cit*, 43.
[49] Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 22 n.90.

English people did not experience their society as having 'clear-cut contours'.[50] Yet on the level of the social imaginary, the idea of a beautifully ordered body of mutually interdependent parts remained both compelling and comforting.[51]

The paradigmatic social relationship within the secular elite, the underlying structure animating the king's bond with the great barons, those barons' with their subordinate lords, and so on all the way down to the lowliest country knight,[52] was that of lord and retainer.[53] As I argue in this chapter, this is the primary relationship that animates Julian's tableau of the Lord and Servant in the Long Text, although it is interwoven with aspects of the interaction between lord and peasant. The defining features of the dynamic between lord and retainer were its *personal*, *affective* and *mutually dependent* character. As mentioned above, in late-fourteenth century England the lord repaid his retainer's service with what was known as 'good lordship', a bond of personal responsibility within the fundamental social economy of status and honour.[54] According to this bond, the retainer has to serve the lord, and the lord has to 'keep' his retainers, which keeping has three major facets: first, favour and patronage, understood as a profound personal duty to forward the servant's interests; second, reward for his services, in the form of retaining fees ('maintenance') and other material goods; and lastly, support for the servant's "lawful causes" in a court of law.[55] Service was not seen as demeaning, but rather gave the servant

[50] *Ibid*. 21, quoting Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 2 vols, trans. L.A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 225. On this question of the intricacies of social ordering in late-medieval England, see also R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 16-22, 122-139.

[51] Christopher Dyer remarks that the fourteenth century saw more frequent invocation of the three Estates, at the same time as changes to social structures gave such invocations a more clearly fictional status; *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England c. 1200-1520* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17.

[52] Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 10; J.M.W. Bean, *From Lord to Patron: Lordship in Late Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 2.

[53] This relationship must be distinguished from that between a lord and his dependent peasantry; Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, 1-2. I use this term, 'retainer', fairly loosely to signify the idealized bond between lord and man which Julian invokes; in actual practice in late-fourteenth-century England, a variety of arrangements from full indentures of retinue to simply the granting of livery constituted the relationship between a lord and his dependent or client; for more on these relationships see Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, 10-11.

[54] 'Lordship, Service and Worship,' 177.

[55] See Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, chapter 1 'The Forms of Relationship between Lord and Man' for more detailed information; also Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 40 on the personal nature of the lord-servant relationship. Barratt notes that it is in this sense that Julian describes the Holy Spirit as 'our good lord', because he is the ultimate paraclete or intercessor at court; 'Lordship, Service and Worship', 177; also 'Julian of Norwich and the Holy Spirit', 81.

his or her social identity, since the political society of late-medieval England was 'built on and maintained by' the lord-retainer relationship'.[56]

In this personal, reciprocal bond, the lord's status reflects glory on the dependent, while in turn having many loyal servants increases the lord's worship.[57] The importance of this status network appears in contemporary examples, as when the life-indenture contract made in 1328 between Henry, lord Percy and Ralph, lord Neville, in its specifications for those occasions on which Neville would be summoned to assist his lord in a tournament, stipulates that he is to come with four knights who are to bring with them '*gentiz gentz come affierent*', 'such well-born attendants as seemed fitting'.[58] Public homage and fealty were also still practiced; the Black Prince summoned all those bound to do homage and fealty to him to come to London and do so; Roger Mortimer was given seisin of his lands in 1393 and went on progress to his manors in East Anglia, Wales and the March.[59] Honour was insisted on in this public manner because a lord's authority and power were essentially linked to his 'worship'.[60] The respective roles of the parties in this status network are encoded in the deeply hierarchical practice of courtesy (D.S. Brewer calls it an 'interplay between the necessary inequalities'); the lord shows nobility, power, gentleness, graciousness and mercy, and servant takes on a complementary posture of modesty, restraint, quietness, receptivity and self-negation.[61] Within the organic conception of society, however, the inequality between the different social ranks constitutes a beauty of form and ethic of reciprocal respect to which Julian is strongly drawn, as she is to the aesthetic quality inherent in many courtly forms of social and cultural capital.

Yet courtesy and the chivalric ethos have a shadow side which Julian has to negotiate. The polished exterior of the chivalric imaginary adorned a reality based on power, in which the chivalric ethos advances physical violence as the ultimate foundation of social order. The chivalric honour economy is driven by competitive assertiveness, taking for granted that 'resort to violence is natural and justifiable' and making competitiveness and aggression

[56] W. Mark Ormrod, *Political Life in Medieval England, 1300-1450* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 67, quoted in Barratt, 'Julian of Norwich and the Holy Spirit', 80.
[57] Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status', 28; Barratt, 'Lordship, Service and Worship', 177, 188. It is a feature of cultural capital that its net worth is cumulative for all the members of a network of social connections; Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital,' 21.
[58] Bodelian Library MS Dugdale 18, fols.39v-40; both cases quoted in Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, 57.
[59] British Library Egerton Rolls 8736, 8740-8741; quoted in Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 78-79.
[60] Rosemary Horrox, 'Service,' in *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England*, ed. Rosemary Horrox, 61-78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 62.
[61] Brewer, 'Courtesy and the *Gawain*-Poet', 58, 63, quote from 64.

inherent in the relationships of men of honour.[62] The displacement of violence into the symbolic realm of honour also enables chivalry to lie to itself about its motives. A particularly potent ideological mix used to justify crusading was the combination, described by Christina Heckman, of honour-based warrior culture and Anselmian soteriology, which constructed sin as dishonour and faithful Christian service as defence of God's honour through violence.[63] Chivalry is also intensely solipsistic, defining honour in terms of personal worth and so focusing on producing a perfect knight rather than a better world. By making honour the prime measure of identity and status, chivalry turns its selfishness into a virtue, and justifies itself 'by the very absolutism of its self-commitment and the intricacy and elegance of its performance'.[64] An example of this individualism is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Despite the narrative device of the Exchange of Gifts, Sir Gawain's concern is actually primarily his own *trawthe*, of which loyalty to his host (a social rather than an individual virtue) is only a sign.[65] Ideally, the outward signs of chivalric distinction were supposed to reflect innate excellence, whereas in fact the purposeful cultivation of elegance in dress, gesture, speech and table manners could be more calculated, or embody little more than a frank enjoyment of the highly wrought splendour of knightly life lived according to the gentry's sense of what was due to its status.[66] The *Gawain*-poet suggests how often appearances can lie, when for example in the opening of *Cleanness* he warns against those who 'conterfete crafte, and cortaysye wont / As be honest vtwyth, and in-with alle fylþe3' (lines 13-14).[67] All of these weaknesses in chivalry's discourse of self and status have to be carefully negotiated by Julian, when she makes the surprising move of recruiting chivalry's exterior, performative model of honour-based identity to the purposes of a discourse of interiority.

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[62] Mervyn James, *English Politics and the Concept of Honour, 1485-1642*, *Past and Present*, Supplement No.3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 1, 5. See also Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status', 29. Patterson notes how the discourse of honour allows investigation of deeper motives to be avoided, providing numerous examples, from Froissart, Guillaume Machaut and the Chandos Herald, of honour being used to justify aggression and mitigate defeat; *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 174-175.

[63] Christina M. Heckman, '*Imitatio* in Early Medieval Spirituality: *The Dream of the Rood*, Anselm, and Militant Christology,' *Essays in Medieval Studies* 22 (2005): 146.

[64] Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 175-176.

[65] D.S. Brewer's otherwise excellent and sensitive study of courtesy in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in 'Courtesy and the *Gawain*-Poet' is an example of criticism that takes chivalry's self-assessment at face value.

[66] Reynolds, '"Courtesy" and "Homeliness",' 2.

[67] *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 4th ed., eds Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002). See the discussion in Brewer, 'Courtesy and the *Gawain*-Poet,' 60-61.

Hailing always takes place from within an existing horizon of expectations. Various roles and ideals are characteristic of chivalric cultural identity: the warrior with his courage, hardihood, and power; the lord in his munificence and grace; the various forms of symbolic capital that distinguish knightly status. All of these had long been exploited by spiritual writers to explore various theological arguments and devotional practices, in rhetorical modes ranging from the hortatory to the systematic. To fully understand Julian's courtly imagery, therefore, historical and contemporary examples from medieval English literature of similar imagery must be explored, together with some of the relevant theological developments in which these images played a role. So I will discuss the various strands of courtly masculine identity which Julian draws together to depict God, as warrior knight, lover and lord, alongside relevant contextual examples.

Julian's God: warrior, lover, keeper and lord

From the earliest stage of their development, Julian's texts consistently use imagery of male chivalric honour, linked to prowess and lordship, suggesting how deeply embedded the dynamics of chivalric status are in her construction of Christ, and of salvation history. Julian as she depicts herself before her visionary experience is concerned with God's 'worshippe', his lordly honour, which she as his servant has to labour to increase, if she is to earn the reward of greater joy in heaven (II.8-13; Preamble.3.10-12). Similarly, the young Julian from the very first interprets Christ's pain on the cross as it is shown in her revelation not as a torturous sacrifice but as a heroic struggle that inspires her with 'strengh enoughe' for her death-bed battle (III.18-24; i.4.21). These early tendencies are reinforced first by the showings and then by Julian's meditative revision of her text, resulting in the rich patterning of courtly imagery observable in the Long Text. Our 'lorde God', she says, 'is so good, so gentil, and so curtesse' (xiv.53.4-5), signalling how the markers of aristocratic status, particularly the embodied cultural capital of courtesy, symbolise on some level God's divinity. We will see how she constructs her Christ: what the warrior glory represents, his divinity or humanity, and how his holiness is figured as 'worship' in the economy of honour. Chapter 4 then discusses how this depiction of God opens a particular range of subject positions and responses to us in our relationship with him, as servants and retainers of our noble lord.

Julian's genius lies in adapting the exteriorly-orientated, performative quality of chivalric identity to the purposes of a language of interiority. We have seen that the nature of

chivalry's codes of behaviour as 'techniques of self-fashioning' and the chivalric life 'its own goal'[68] makes the knight trope useful in devotional discourses that teach a person to focus on his or her own individual soul, and strive for holiness. Yet at the same time, chivalric status only exists within the estimation of others; it is symbolic capital. So as she develops her imagery of holiness as chivalric honour, Julian has to construct a company of which she – and her audience – are a part, and within which this spiritual honour economy can function.

Christ the warrior

The first and preeminent member of this company is Christ, and the presentation of him as a warrior protecting his dependents works to build up his 'worship' as much as possible. The trope appears clearly first in Section 8 of the Short Text and Revelation 5 of the Long. Interpretation of the scene is directed in both texts by the same locution, 'Herewith is the feende overcome' (VIII.32, v.13.4-5), suggesting a battle between Christ and Satan, but the knight image is spelled out more clearly in the Long. Here Christ is 'our good lorde – [who] endlessly having regard to his awne worshippe and to the profite of all them that shal be saved – with might and right . . . withstondeth the reproved' (v.13.15-17): he is a martial hero concerned with maintaining his reputation, and promoting the welfare of his dependents, within the heroic economy of 'worship' versus 'shame' (v.13.10, 12). Julian's response is mixed:

> For this sight, I laught mightely … And after this, I felle into a sadhede, and saide: "I see thre thinges: game, scorne, and ernest. I see game, that the feend is overcome. And I se scorne, that God scorned him, and he shalle be scorned. And I se ernest, that he is overcome by the blisseful passion and deth of oure lorde Jhesu Crist, that was done in fulle ernest and with sad travayle." (v.13.20, 29-33)

These words are repeated from the Short Text, but with Christ now in the Long Text more clearly a warrior lord, Julian's speech acquires a more obviously courtly cast; she takes on the role usually assigned to women in chivalric romance and fourteenth-century practice, watching the battle from the side-lines, rejoicing in the glory of her knight, mourning his wounds, and scornfully rejecting his enemy. The women in courtly romance and manuscript art symbolise the onlookers constituting the arena within which symbolic capital exists.[69] As one of 'them that shal be saved' Julian is a member of God's household,

[68] Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 175-176.
[69] Trigg, *Shame and Honor*, 54. Juliet R.V. Barker describes the literary inspirations behind the tournament ceremonials, and the importance of women to these spectacles in *The Tournament in England*, 84-111.

and so shares in his chivalric glory. In both texts she records herself as *saying* these words, rather than thinking them. The exteriorizing, performative impulse of chivalric identity shows in her *public* statements of what she has witnessed. Even in the visionary moment she experiences herself as one of a community of public opinion.

The multi-layered word 'game' combines the senses of 'joy, happiness; pleasure, delight, gaiety', 'a tournament or jousting; also, a battle', 'a joke, jest' and 'an action, proceeding',[70] succinctly expresses the role of prowess within the chivalric economy. The glamour and apparent effortlessness of the knight's ability with arms stand as aesthetic place-holders for the actual source of knightly power, which is brute strength and violence.[71] Julian is aware of the 'sad travayle' by which Christ's victory is won, but the main point is the worship he gains. The devil is humiliated, deprived even of the status of a valiant enemy; he is banished to hell after seeing 'that all the wo and tribulation that he hath done [to the saved] shalle be turned into encrese of ther joy without ende' (v.13.38-39).

In the Long Text's tableau of the Lord and Servant from Revelation 14, Christ again appears as a warrior or knight, with the Harrowing of Hell depicted as his heroic quest (xiv.51.254-256, 265-280) in an episode which carries strong echoes of the chivalric romance genre (I will return to this aspect of the tableau in Chapter 4). Julian's warrior Christ is actually an example of a set of ancient images, dating all the way back to Paul's metaphor of the Christian life as 'fighting the good fight'. In this tradition, Christ on the cross is presented as the living Saviour, triumphant over death and the devil.[72] At various points in the history of Christianity, the trope has accomplished different theological work, which makes interpreting Julian's version a matter for care.

Versions of the image which focussed on Christ's victorious divinity were characteristic of the Christology of the early church, and were retained in the late-medieval liturgy for Holy Week. The sequence *Victimae Paschali Laudes* for Easter Sunday presents the Crucifixion as a combat between Death and Life and similarly, the prayer '*Adoro te Domine Jesu Christe*', used for the solemn veneration of the cross on Good Friday, has the repeated

[70] Senses 1, 3-5 for the noun 'game' in *MED*.
[71] See C.G. Martin, 'The Cipher of Chivalry: Violence as Courtly Play in the World of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,' *The Chaucer Review* 43, no. 3 (2009): 321; Pitt-Rivers, 'Honour and Social Status', 29; James, *English Politics*, 1, 5.
[72] '*Certa bonum certamen fidei*', from 1 Timothy 6:12. See also 2 Corinthians 10:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:8; 2 Timothy 4:7. An excellent overview of the development of this representation of the Crucified Christ can be found in Michael Swanton, 'Introduction,' *The Dream of the Rood*, ed. Michael Swanton, revised ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1987).

refrain '*Domine Iesu Christe, adoro te in cruce ascendentum'*, which presents Jesus as an active victor climbing purposefully onto the cross.[73] Depictions in the visual arts tended to show this Christ with his body beautiful and whole but for the wounds borne like jewels, his posture upright and his eyes open, an icon known as *Christus triumphans*. A contemporary example from Julian's period is the painting (*c*.1381) at St Luke's altar in Norwich Cathedral, which depicts the risen Christ stern, victorious and almost inhuman in his indifference to the pain he has suffered.[74]

One of the most famous literary examples of the warrior version of this trope in the English tradition is the young 'hæleð' of *The Dream of the Rood*, who 'strang ond stiðmod' mounts the cross of his own free will.[75] Christ the warrior appears in devotional lyrics such as a couplet by William Herebert, dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, which celebrates the courageous figure of the warrior Christ who 'sthey opon the rode, that barst helle clos; / Ygurd he was wyth strengthe, the thrydde day aros'.[76] William Langland's Christ in Passus 20 of *Piers Plowman* (the C text)[77] is also distinctly a warrior knight, who

> … of his gentrice shal iouste in Pers armes,
> In his helm and in his haberion, *humana natura*;
> That Crist be nat yknowe for *consummatus deus*,
> In Pers plates the plouhman this prikiare shal ryde,
> For no dount shal hym dere as *in deitate patris*.

Jesus rides to the tournament in disguise, like Ipomadon and any number of other romance knights,[78] thus tricking the Devil into giving up his rights over sinful man by killing the sinless Son of God.

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[73] Late medieval devotional versions of the poem tended to replace the verb '*ascendentum'* with '*pendentum*' to suit a more affective theology; Christ is now the passive victim, hanging on the cross, and the Crucifixion something that happens to him, rather than his triumphal act; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 239-240.

[74] Julian rejects such 'violent triumphalism and callous indifference' in her depiction of Christ; Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 107.

[75] *The Dream of the Rood*, ed. Michael Swanton, revised ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1987), lines 39-40.

[76] In BM MS Additional 46919, f.210^{v}; No.37(a) in *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, revised ed., ed. Douglas Gray (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992), 35 and notes.

[77] William Langland, *Piers Plowman: the C-Text*, ed. Derek Pearsall, Corrected Ed. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994).

[78] See Crane's discussion of chivalric incognito in *Performance of Self*, 128-133.

Langland most explicitly references the soteriology known as the Devil's Rights theory which underlies the warrior trope. This theory sees the Crucifixion as a clever legal manoeuvre in which God tricks the Devil into overreaching his rights, killing the sinless Son of God and so forfeiting his claims to sinful humankind.[79] Christ's saving act thus depends not on his human nature but on his divinity, which the glory of the warrior represents; the earthly symbolic capital of prowess and honour stands for Christ's heavenly status and divine power, and our relationship with him is characterized as one of awe, reverence and dependence on his strength. The stress on the warrior's triumph, however, masks a striking inconsistency in the trope, namely that a warrior's victory involves killing the enemy, while Christ's necessitates his own extremely painful death.[80] By the late fourteenth century, however, the *Christus triumphans* was not the most common model of showing Christ crucified. The Devil's Rights theory had largely been replaced by satisfaction soteriology, of which Anselm of Canterbury's twelfth-century model was a particularly influential version. In his *Cur deus homo*, Anselm explains that he 'who does not render this honor which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonors him; and this is sin . . . considering the contempt offered, he ought to restore more than he took away . . . every one who sins ought to pay back the honor of which he has robbed God'.[81] Salvation is achieved by the human Christ, who through his propitiatory death redresses the dishonour done to God by our sin, thus drawing God's infinite and justified wrath away from humanity, which would otherwise be eternally damned.[82] Since in this understanding salvation depends on Jesus's sharing in our human nature, artistic representations of his earthly life tended to stress his frail mortality; the sacramentality of Christ's pain began to govern images of the Crucifixion, which became more and more gruesomely realistic, stressing the suffering of Christ's all-too-human flesh.[83] The Jesus

[79] Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 17.
[80] Rosemary Woolf, 'The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature,' *Review of English Studies* 13, no, 49 (1962): 10.
[81] *Cur deus homo,* in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, vol. 2, ed. Francis Salesius Schmitt (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946), 68, Book I, chapter 11, line 14: *Hunc honorem debitum qui Deo non reddit, aufert Deo quod suum est, et Deum exhonorat; et hoc est peccare . . . sed pro contumelia illata plus debet reddere, quam abstulit. . . . Sic ergo debet omnis qui peccat, honorem quem rapuit Deo, solvere*. Translation in *Cur deus homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane, *Medieval Sourcebook,* Fordham University, book I chapter 11, accessed 2 July 2013, http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-curdeus.asp
[82] Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 17; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 235.
[83] The Passion, and specifically the Crucifixion of Jesus, has always been one of the clearest sites for modelling christological and soteriological theory; Swanton, 'Introduction,' 56.

who appears in these images, dying or dead on the cross, scourged, twisted and bleeding, is known to scholars as the *Christus patiens*.[84]

Although this affective model for representing Christ on the cross became widespread, the warrior trope did not disappear, but adapted to reflect the new soteriological focus. Christ the warrior's selfless suffering is celebrated now, rather than his martial glory. Thus for example in the lyric 'Men rent me on rode',[85] the trope is put to work prompting contrition and compunction, in the service of affective devotion. The speaker is Christ, who says,

> Biheld mi side,
> Mi wndes sprede so wide;
> Restles I ride,
> Lok upon me! Put fro the pride.
> Mi palefrey is of tre,
> With nayles naylede thwrh me.
> Ne is more sorwe to se –
> Certes noon more no may be!

Though this Jesus is unmistakably a knight riding a 'palefrey' (line 13),[86] he makes himself an object for his subjective audience to view – indeed he orders them to do so (line 12) – so as to prompt them to 'sorwe' (line 15). Again, the real-world status of knightly rank is integral to the poem's meaning; here Christ's humility in accepting a wooden horse and a torturous death despite his nobility is a reproach to the worldly 'pride' (line 12) of his audience. Rather than the glory of power and triumph, the trope stresses the warrior lord's sacrificial character in his selfless protection of the weak and defenceless. The affective directness of hailing involves the audience in a reaction of compunction and gratitude rather than awe, while still placing them in a position of inferiority and dependence as lower in status to Christ.

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[84] Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 16.

[85] MS Harley 2316, fol. 25^{r}. The lyric is no.28 in *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, 27-28, and notes.

[86] *MED* palefrei (n.) is listed as '(a) A riding horse (as opposed to a war horse); a fine riding horse;' and in the examples given, the term appears (often in a couplet 'steed and/or palfrey') as a marker of status and wealth, particularly in sermons. Questing knights do ride palfreys e.g. Bevis of Hampton (lines 1353, 2063); in the second of these two examples he swops clothing *and horse* with a palmer to assume the disguise of 'a bretheling' (a wretched person); in *Four Romances of England: King Horn, Havelok the Dane, Bevis of Hampton, Athelston*, ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake & Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1999). In the *Alliterative Morte* the lord of Milan pays protection money that includes 'Palfreyes for any prince and proved steedes' (line 3143); see *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Larry D. Benson, rev. Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1994). In the lyric I quote, Christ says, 'restles I ride', suggesting that he is travelling the earth publicising his deeds – a palfrey would be a suitable aristocratic vehicle for such a journey.

Julian's use of the warrior trope draws on this affective tradition, but also supersedes it with a focus on *joy* in Christ's victory that harks back to the older *Christus triumphans* imagery. She makes this joy the third and crowning 'maner' in which Christ 'behold[s] his blessed passion' and which we are to learn from him; while we can read in his sacrifice his pain and the love that motivated him to it, our final and lasting sight is of 'the joy and the blisse that maketh him to like it' (see viii.21.1-3, ix.22.37-38, ix.23.5-6). Whereas the first two 'maners' of seeing the Passion, with pity and love, are drawn from standard affective teaching, this third one Julian bases on the authority of her visions; 'Jhesu wille', she says confidently, 'that the liking of our salvation be like to the joy that Crist hath of oure salvation as it may be while we be here' (ix.23.19, 21-22). The Long Text explicitly links the joy to her warrior knight image, calling Christ's deed on the cross *noble* and *worshipful*: 'For the paines was a noble, precious, and wurshipfulle dede done in a time be the wyrkynge of love. Botte luffe was withouten beginninge, and es, and evere shalle be withouten any ende' (ix.22.40). Christ's active rejoicing in his Passion in Julian's vision is particularly marked, compared to the meek obedience with which Christ accepts his Passion in classic Anselmian atonement theology.[87]

In an important detail, however, Julian's warrior trope is closer to the *Christus patiens*, in that the warrior glory of her Christ symbolises the nobility of his human nature as much as his divinity. In Revelation 8, when she discusses Christ's two natures and argues that 'the aninge of the godhead for love gafe strength to the manhede to suffer mare than alle men might' (XI.6-7; viii.20.1-3), she does not set Christ's divinity over against his humanity, but *links* them in beauty, worth and sophistication: 'he brought to mind in parte the hight and the nobilite of the glorious godhead, and therwith the precioushede and the tendernesse of the blisseful body, which be together oned' (viii.20.12-13). Here she contradicts the rhetorical point made in affective discourses, for example the 'Bihelde my side' poem above or a thirteenth-century tag: 'Of one stable was his halle, / His kenestol on occe stalle, / Sente Marie his burnes alle',[88] which place metaphors of Christ's nobility next to mentions of his humanity to highlight the almost inconceivable gap between the Son of God's divine perfection and the humble finitude of his human nature. This link Julian draws between Christ's humanity and his nobility animates her unique anthropology, in

[87] Hide, *Soteriology*, 109.
[88] No.8(b) in *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, 7 and notes 103-104.

which she labours to give her readers a living sense of their own nobility as *imago Dei*, a point to which I will return.

Julian's merging of the *Christus triumphans* and *Christus patiens* also goes some way towards helping her neutralize the violent associations of the warrior trope. By making the dying, bleeding Christ the victorious warrior, Julian manages to elide the notion of his warrior body as a vehicle of violence, and instead focus on it as the site of a glorious death. The locus of his prowess and worship shifts from his weapon-wielding hand to his wound-receiving body. Though this warrior Christ never strikes a blow, he is still the greatest champion ever to walk the earth. The association she draws in Revelation 8, quoted above, between the 'nobilite of the glorious godhede' and the 'tendernesse' of his body, signifying the intensity of his suffering and simultaneously his strength to bear it (viii.20.12-16), allows Julian to foreground certain features of prowess, namely courage, the active embracing of trial and the desire to protect the weak and helpless, while effacing others. She can thus rescue from the symbol of the warrior knight something of its glamour and energy, without endorsing its brutality. Here Julian is similar to the *Gawain*-poet, who is also interested in how, in its ideal form, the courtly code makes qualities like graciousness, sufferance and generosity just as much indicators of power as violence or force – it is because the noble man has the power to hurt yet refrains from doing so that he is courteous. Thus the king of Nineveh in *Patience* hopes that God 'Þat is hende in þe hy3t of his gentryse' will hear the sound of the people's repentance; 'I wot his my3t is so much', the king continues, 'þa3 he be mysse-payed, / Þat in his mylde amesyng he mercy may fynde' (lines 397-400).[89]

As Jay Ruud notes, uncontrolled, raw masculine power in the Long Text is embodied by Satan, whose violently physical and implicitly sexual attack on Julian in the fifteenth showing puts him in 'direct masculine competition' with Christ the knight, as is usual in the homosocial competition of romance plots. In Julian's text the devil's version of chivalric violence, characterized by anger and the need to dominate, untempered by socialising, courtly virtues, is unavailing and he is ultimately emasculated by God, his might all locked away.[90] Christ the warrior, who proudly declares to Julian that "I may

[89] In *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, 201.
[90] Ruud, 'Romance Discourse, and the Masculine', 194-201. It is a weakness of Ruud's argument that she makes no sustained examination of any actual examples from relevant romance texts, rather appealing to a general scholarly sense of what the romance hero is like.

make alle thing wele, and I can make alle thing welle, and I wille make alle thing wele, and I shalle make alle thing wele" (xiii.31.2-4), is justified in 'having regard to his awne worshippe', that is, taking delight in his heroic reputation, because the saving efficacy of his defeat is more effective than a violent victory could ever be.

Christ's worship then becomes the linchpin of an honour economy in which Julian places herself and all faithful souls. The courtly imagery and its focus on worship are developed further in the Long Text in Revelation 6, the showing of heaven as a feast. The Short Text already introduces the figure of our heavenly reward as the 'wyrshipfulle thankinge of oure lorde God', proclaimed publically before everyone in heaven (VIII.53-54, IX.1-16), and the Long Text now fills in the courtly context:

> I saw our lorde God as a lorde in his owne house, which lorde hath called alle his derewurthy frendes to a solempne fest. Than I saw the lorde taking no place in his awne house, but I saw him ryally reigne in his house, and all fulfilleth it with joy and mirth, himselfe endlesly to glad and solace his derewurthy frendes, fulle homely and fulle curtesly, with mervelous melody of endelesse love, in his awne fair blissed chere. Which glorious chere of the godhede fulfilleth alle heven of joy and blisse. (vi.14.3-9)

As with the 'example' of the servant from Revelation 1, the wonder of the situation lies in the transfer of social capital. Though the feast is described as 'solempne', which can mean of highest state as well as reverent in a religious sense,[91] the social interactions implied are characterized by the kind of graceful, joyous generosity implied in courtly discourse by words like *franchyse* and *debonairte*. God as lord does not insist on his status, but moves freely among his guests 'with joy and mirth'. It is he 'himselfe' who looks after their comfort and enjoyment. In striking contrast to the New Testament parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22.1-14, Luke 14.15-24), none of these guests is described as blind or lame or indigent, but rather the party is attended by all the beautiful people of heaven (vi.14.17). The 'wurshipfulle thanking' with which they are treated is explicitly likened to the status a subject gains when publically honoured by the king (vi.14.19-21).

Such an honour-based version of the gospel parable has parallels among Julian's contemporaries; in *Cleanness* for example the *Gawain*-poet shows heaven as distinctly a courtly fourteenth-century banquet, including roast swan and crane, and pen-fattened

[91] See 'solempne' (adj.) in *MED*, senses 1 a) 'Performed with due religious ceremony or reverence; sacred; of a sacrifice: offered reverently' compared with 1 c) 'ceremonious, of a formal character' and 2 c) 'dignified, serious, grave'.

poultry (lines 57-58).[92] This version makes explicit what remains taken for granted in Julian's depiction, which is the deeply hierarchical social structure underlying courtesy's graces: each of the waifs and strays brought in to replace the defaulting guests is '[f]ul manerly . . . mad for to sit / As he watz dere of degre dressed his seete' (lines 91-92). As in Julian's version, the *Gawain*-poet has God move among his guests to 'cherisch hem alle with his cher, and chaufen her joye' (line 128). In a detail that Julian does not include, *Cleanness* recounts the discovery of the wedding guest who has not put on celebration garments (the description of his clothes 'fyled with werkkez' (line 136), 'so ratted a robe and rent at þe sydez' (line 144) recalls Julian's Servant from the tableau, xiv.51.142-144). Once again, the interpretation is guided by the honour economy. The narrator says, the 'gome watz vngarnyst with god men to dele' (line 137) and the host is explicit that the guest's failure is an insult to his honour: 'Þou praysed me and my place ful pouer and ful [g]nede' (line 146). The accused guest's answering silence, which in the gospel account remains unexplained, is here interpreted as proper shame (lines 149-151). Though Julian's text is not as explicit, the honour she envisions as our heavenly reward is of this same performative kind, consisting of reputation in the public arena.

The courtly imagery guiding Julian's version of this heavenly feast also has another effect, which is to invoke its readers in extremely flattering terms. Putting courtly status metaphors to the service of discourses of spiritual exceptionalism is a recognizable trend in late-medieval religious literature. Anne Clark Bartlett discusses one sub-type of this trend, namely works which present Christ as a knightly lover,[93] and argues that even if these works' avowed intention is to encourage religious fervour, the pleasure of the courtly imagery's *literal* sense offers readers – most directly women but also men accustomed to thinking of their souls as brides of Christ – 'a heuristic fantasy of erotic love and

[92] In *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, 114-118 for the lines quotes in this paragraph.

[93] Marie de Lourdes le May distinguishes the Christ as knight tropes as follows: when Christ's devotion to his lady is celebrated most highly, he is Christ the lover knight, and when his prowess is stressed, he is Christ the warrior knight; *The Allegory of the Christ-Knight in English Literature*, PhD Dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington D.C. 1932 (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010), 1, 31. Two thirteenth-century examples are Thomas of Hale's *Love Rune*, in which Jesus is an eternally faithful, engagingly handsome and enormously wealthy wooer (in *Moral Love Songs and Laments*, ed. Susanna Greer Fein (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998) Online, TEAMS, retrieved 10 September 2010), and the *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, with Variants from Other Manuscripts*, ed. Bella Millet, EETS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), discussed in the next section, p.95. See also the lyrics in the section 'Christ's Love for Sinful Man', in *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, 39-46.

aristocratic power'.[94] Julian's depiction of the heavenly feast offers a powerful 'heuristic fantasy' along slightly different lines, not focused on erotic love but rather courtly renown more generally. Her eminently upper-class party is open to everyone 'that wilfully hath served God in any degree in erth' (vi.14.10-11), irrespective of their status in this mortal life. In the imagery of *fin amour* used in spiritual texts, particularly the kind of bridal bower construction to which Clark Bartlett refers, or the *mystique courtoise* developed by beguine mystics such as Hadewijk of Antwerp or Mechtild of Hackeborn,[95] the soul's subjectivity as lover and beloved of God is intensely private and individualistic, hidden away in the bower with the bridegroom or beloved alone. In contrast, Julian's image of the beatific vision draws on courtly identity's public nature – she is always one of the community of saints. The social network in which the immense symbolic capital she evokes is invested is the company of heaven, rather than any earthly society; this honour-based subjectivity is central to Julian's understanding of sin, as will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Christ the knight as lover

Though Julian draws on the exterior and public nature of chivalric identity, this is not to say that she does not use the knightly lover image. The trope of Christ as courtly, chivalric lover is a twelfth-century development of the warrior trope, arising in the period when Bernard of Clairvaux first wrote about Christian chivalry and Chrétien de Troyes about Lancelot. Julian's depiction of Christ is reminiscent of this tradition in his exchange with Julian in Section 12 (Revelation 9), where he charmingly expresses his concern over his lover's satisfaction.[96] The details of this episode, to be discussed shortly, are better understood alongside contemporary examples in the affective mode, which aim to evoke compassion and compunction. For example, in the lyric 'Lo! lemman swete, now may thou se',[97] Christ speaks directly to the reader:

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[94] Anne Clark Bartlett, '"Delicious Matyr": Feminine Courtesy in Middle English Devotional Literature for Women,' *Essays in Medieval Studies* 9 (1992): 10. The focus of this article and Clark Bartlett's later book *Male Authors, Female Readers* is how such courtesy discourse used in spiritual words played a role in late-medieval women's formation and normalization as subjects.

[95] See Barbara Newman's discussion of *la mystique courtoise* in *From Virile Woman*, 137-167.

[96] Ruud, 'Romance Discourse, and the Masculine', 192-193.

[97] A lyric from the late fourteenth-century Cambridge University Library MS Dd.5.64.III, fol. 34^{v}. No. 45 in *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, 47 and notes. This is a courtly version of a reproach lyric, which as Barry Windeatt describes is a poem in which 'Christ like a wounded lover reproaches onlookers with how much he suffers for his love of man's soul'; 'Love,' in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350–c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Blackwell 2007) doi:

And take myne armes pryvely
And do tham in thi tresory,
In what stede sa thou dwelles;
And, swete lemman, forget thow noght
That I thi lufe sa dere have boght,
And I aske the noght elles.

Here the soul is the lady who after the battle treasures the shirt or arms of the dead knight in gratitude and love, as a memorial of him.[98] The armour of the dead Christ becomes a symbol of his sacrifice, to be treasured up in secret – in the heart – and meditated on, to increase contrition, compassion and loving longing. The lover's bower remains an intimate, private space, but the site of mourning rather than bliss. The subject position offered by the poem is layered, with the meditator simultaneously exalting in being such a knight's courtly 'lemman' and feeling sorrow and guilt at causing his death.

This same strange mixture of flattery and emotional extortion characterizes the lover knight trope in the *Ancrene Wisse,* in which Christ the royal knight goes to war to save his hard-hearted lady Humankind from her enemies. He says to her, 'Dame, þu art iweorret, ant þine van beoð se stronge þet tu ne maht nanes weis wiðute mi sucurs edfleon hare honden, þet ha ne don þe to scheome deað efter al þi weane. Ich chulle, for þe luue of þe, neome þe feht upo me, ant arudde þe of ham þe þi deað secheð'. With a distinct note of threat the king dwells on the lady's helplessness and notes his own magnanimity in battling for her sake. The narrator approvingly notes, 'Nere þeos ilke leafdi of uueles cunnes cunde 3ef ha ouer alle þing ne luuede him her-efter?'[99] Here the anchorite is offered the courtly lady's role as symbolic capital herself, the prize of a knight's prowess. At other moments in anchoritic literature, a more inclusive version of this dynamic invites even women readers to take the symbolic capital of courtliness into their sense of self, encouraging them as practitioners of the difficult anchoritic life by making each of them feel that her case is special. So for example the *Ancrene Wisse* uses the imagery of love among the courtly class to suggest that the anchorite's devotion to Jesus separates her

10.1111/b.9780631219736.2007.00021.x. For further examples and discussion of the lover knight trope in the lyric tradition, see Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 49-50, 187.

[98] Woolf, 'Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight', 6.

[99] *Ancrene Wisse*, Part 7, lines 83-86, 93-94. 'Lady, you are beleaguered, and your enemies are so strong that you can in no way escape from their hands without my help. So that they do not put you to shameful death after all your grief, for the love of you I will take this fight upon myself, and rid you of those who seek your death'; and 'Would not this same lady be of an evil sort of nature if she did not love him ever after over all things?'; *Anchoritic Spirituality:* Ancrene Wisse *and Associated Works*, trans. Anne Savage and Nicholas Watson (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 191.

from the contagion of the world and ennobles her, while *Hali Meiðhad* praises consecrated virginity 'as a specialized form of social advancement'.[100] Spiritual status is symbolized by social status.

In Julian's version from Revelation 12, Christ risen and triumphant cries to her, "Arte thou wele paide that I sufferde for the?" She replies: "'Ya, goode lorde . . . Gramercy goode lorde, blissed mut thowe be!" "If thowe be payede," quod oure lorde, "I am payede. It es a joye and a blisse and ane endlesse likinge to me that ever I sufferde passion for the. For if I might suffer mare, I walde suffer [more]"' (XII.1-5, ix.22.1-5). Julian and Christ mutually take delight in and give delight to each other, as the imagery of lovers suggests. Julian – and then her readers – can explore the subject position of the courtly Beloved, beautiful and desired, who takes delight in her knight's service.[101] This courtly remodelling of our interaction with Christ also deepens the meaning of the three 'maners' of understanding the Passion. The second 'maner', the love that prompts Christ's saving deed, causing him to 'set[t] at nought all his traveyle and his harde passion, and his cruelle and shamfulle deth' (ix.22.19-20), is reinterpreted as a lover's desire. His reward, the joy that is the third 'maner', is his lady love; in heaven, Julian says, '[w]e be his blisse, we be his mede, we be his wurshipe, we be his crowne. (And this was a singular merveyle and a full delectable beholding, that we be his crowne!)' (ix.22.15-19). The Long Text's addition of the parenthetic exclamation stages our sharing in Christ's joy, delighting in ourselves as his delight. There is no hint that we should feel guilt, or gratefullness based in guilt. Rather, 'we be his blisse, . . . in us he liketh without end, and so shall we in him with his grace' (ix.23.13-14); our response to the Passion is the exquisite lightness and freedom of being beloved.

The extravagance of a courtly knight's service of his lady is suggested by the final phrase of Christ's declaration, "If I might suffer more, I wolde suffer more" (ix.22.41-42). He is cast as showing endless *franchyse*, and as wealthy enough so that '[a]lle that he hath done for us, and doeth, and ever shalle, was never cost ne charge to him ne might be', except for the time Christ spent on earth (ix.23.15-17). Julian explicitly links this generous extravagance to the *largesse* of a 'curtesse gever [who] setteth at nought alle his cost and alle his traveyle, for joy and delight that he hath for he hath plesed and solaced him that he loved' (ix.23.32-34). Christ's delight in giving for his love's sake is a stark contrast to the *quid pro quo*

[100] Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 58.
[101] Ruud, 'Romance Discourse, and the Masculine', 191-193, 201.

attitude of the lover knight in the *Ancrene Wisse*. This freedom of giving is part of Christ's divine perfection, in the Long Text's exploration of his love. In his lover-like speech to her she understands that Christ's love and his deeds are alike perfect, 'ordained as wele as God might ordaine it, [and] done as wurshipfully as Crist might do it. . . . [H]eerin, I saw a fulle blisse in Crist, for his blisse shuld not have ben fulle if it might ony better have ben done than it was done' (ix.22.45-47). As mentioned in the previous section, the chivalric ethos, and so the courtly love code that forms part of it, makes perfection its goal, and elegance its justification; Julian here turns this potentially narcissistic impulse into a symbol of the absolute gratuity and abundance of God's love, and a guide for our response as lovers of God. This is the same absolute openness as the mystic's *volo*.

God the courteous lord

Another face of the polyvalent 'I' which the courtly imagery offers to Julian and her audience is not the knightly lord's Beloved, but his retainer. As Alexandra Barratt has persuasively shown, Julian's lordly God is distinctly a late-medieval English lord of the chivalric class: this historical accuracy appears in turns of phrase, such as historically specific collocations like 'our good lord' (e.g. xiv.36.33) or 'my wille and my wurshippe' (e.g. XX.12-13, xv.64.14-15); in reference to contemporary status-marking practices, as when Julian notes the lord in the tableau's shameful lack of attendants; and in the detail of legal obligations, like the lordly God's 'werk' of 'rewarding' (xiv.58.43-46) his servant, which refers to the retainer's fee.[102] This relationship between God and Julian is not that of the lord of the manor with his dependent peasantry, as the term 'servant' may seem to imply, but rather the personal bond of mutual recognition and obligation between a lord and his retainer,[103] as detailed in the first section of this chapter. The exception is when the Servant in the tableau appears for a time as 'a continuant laborer and an hard traveler' (xiv.51.153-154), but as will be discussed futher in Chapter 4, this has to be read in the context of the tableau's romance-like narrative arc, which ends with the Servant returned from his lowly status to the full glory, enthroned at God's right hand. The lord imagery in its historicized accuracy would make the text easily understandable to Julian's audience; what I want to focus on is the structure of mutual obligation that in theory and symbol upheld the relationship of lord and retainer.

[102] Barratt, 'Lordship, Service and Worship', 177
[103] See Bean, *From Lord to Patron*, 1-2 on this distinction which was particularly marked in England as opposed to the continent.

The most important feature of the lord-retainer relationship, as Julian presents and uses it, is its dependence on the honour economy. Right from the beginning, even before her visions, Julian is concerned always that her actions increase God's worship (e.g. II.12-13, Preamble.3.11-12). This investment in God's honour reflects the nature of the lord-retainer bond as a network of social capital, in which the master's status reflects glory on the servant, while at the same time having many loyal servants increases the master's honour. Julian's visions and her long writing process then reinforce and broaden this inherited sense of God's lordship, focusing on the 'symbiotic' nature[104] of the honour relationship between lord and man, in its ideal form. This bond is intensely personal and affective, rooted in the interdependence of the two roles. The collocation 'to do the lord's will and worship' reveals how the lord's power is symbolically located within his person and will, authorized by his honour, which is in turn reinforced every time his will is obeyed, in a kind of self-constituting cycle. A lord's identity – his nature and existence as lord, in terms of the model of the body politic – lies in his worshipful maintenance of retainers. This is the interdependence that animates this model of society. So in the tableau from chapter 51, God the 'curteyse' lord watches his Servant labouring painfully and says, "[F]alleth it not to me to geve him a gifte that be better to him and more wurshipful than his owne hele shuld have bene? And els me thinketh I did him no grace" (xiv.51.43-44). God's lordship, understood as chivalric lordship, is given explanatory force, guiding Julian's interpretation of the tableau (this speech of the lord's is one of Julian's additions, placed in Christ's mouth). Similarly, though the retainer's willingness to obey the lord's will entitles him to material reward, more important on the symbolic level is that obeying gives him his identity within the honour economy. So when Christ says to Julian, "What shulde it than agreven thee to suffer awhile, sithen it is my wille and my wurshippe?" (xv.64.14-15), he appeals directly to the core of the subjectivity of the household retainer. Julian remains certain that God's 'owne wurshippe and . . . oure endlesse joy' are coextensive (xiv.47.32-33), such that fulfilling his will is reaching our highest potential and our greatest happiness.

As ever, Christ is our model, the perfect knight and the perfect retainer. The clearest demonstration of him in this role comes in a brief passage that follows his lover-like exchange with Julian in Revelation 12. In both the Short and the Long Texts, Julian is shown Christ's joy, bliss and 'endlesse likinge' in his Passion as three heavens 'alle of the

[104] The term comes from Barratt, 'Lordship, Service and Worship,' 181.

blessed manhede of Criste'. She explains: 'for the joye, I understode the plesance of the fadere; for the blisse, the wirshippe of the sone; and for the endeles likinge, the haly gaste' (XII.6-8, 32-34, ix.22.6-7, 23.1-4). So Christ's joy is in some sense the being of the Trinity itself. This is explained further in a passage, already present in the Short Text and given new resonance by the Long Version's sustained courtly imagery, which models the inner relationships of the Trinity as the Father giving 'mede' to his son:

> The wyrkinge of the fadere it is this: that he giffes mede tille his sone Jhesu Criste. This gifte and this mede is so blisfulle to Jhesu that his fadere might haffe giffene na mede that might hafe likede him bettere. (. . .)
>
> For [the Father] is fulle blissede {plesede} with alle the dedes that he {Jhesu} has done aboute oure salvation, wharefore we ere nought anely his thurgh byinge, botte also be the curtayse gifte of his fadere. We ere his blisse, we er his mede, we er his wyrshippe, we er his crowne. {And this was a singular marveyle and a full delectable beholding, that we be his crowne!} (XII.14-18, ix.22.11-19, differences in the Long Text are added in parenthesis {})

Our salvation is at once Jesus' achievement, and the Father's gift, just as the splendid riches with which a knight is rewarded are at the same time earned by his exploits and dependent on his lord's generosity. In this scene Julian recreates an idealized version of the chivalric practice of gift-giving.[105] This gift-giving is not fundamentally a financial transaction, but rather a means of creating, managing and sustaining social relationships. Whereas a commodity exchanged as payment or barter is alienable, in that the exchange means the owner loses or cedes ownership, a gift is inalienable, and so in fact extends the sphere of the donor's influence.[106] The exchange of gifts has a consecrating effect, transforming a contingent and voluntary relationship into a 'durable obligatio[n] subjectively felt', and the gift becomes a sign of mutual recognition.[107] So Julian dramatizes the core symbolic practice by which the two parties of the chivalric gift-exchange are constituted as *lord* and *servant*.

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[105] This practice constituted a functional economy up through the twelfth century, although by Julian's day it remained in ceremonial and literary form; Andrew Galloway, 'The Making of a Social Ethic in Late-Medieval England: From *Gratitudo* to "Kyndenesse",' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55, no. 3 (1994): 167.

[106] Ad Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities in *Sir Amadace*,' *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 51 no. 203 (2000): 371-394, 378. The paradigm case is a wife, who retains her links with her family though she is given in marriage, and so embodies the tie now created between her kin and her new husband's family; see Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possession: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 66-97.

[107] Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital', 52.

Such courtly gift-giving can subordinate or create alliances, stratify or bind together, depending on how it is deployed.[108] In Julian's example, the exchange is perfectly reciprocal and unifying, as a later repetition of this little scene, set in the court of heaven, makes clear:

> … Crist, us alle having in him that shall be saved by him, wurshipfully presenteth his fader in heven with us. Which present fulle thankfully his fader receiveth, and curtesly geveth it unto his sonne Jhesu Crist. Which gifte and werking is joy to the fader and blisse to the son and liking to the holy gost. And of alle thing that to us longeth, it is most liking to oure lorde that we enjoye in this joy. (xiv.55.1-7)

The syntax of the passage balances the three verb phrases, 'wurshipfully presenteth', 'thankfully … receiveth' and 'curtesly geveth' into a graceful cycle of mutual generosity and 'liking', joyful celebration. The diction of 'bliss', 'pleasing', 'liking', 'worship' and 'joy' stresses not the utilitarian dependence of the two contracting feudal parties, but rather the *beauty* of the idealized 'wurship' that binds lord and man, which is an end in itself.

This idealized image has conceptual meaning in Julian's argument, guiding her exploration of God's nature. The term 'enjoye' is her translation of Augustine's concept of *frui*, the loving enjoyment of something for its own sake, which he opposes to *uti*, use of a thing or loving it for the sake of something else.[109] In Augustine's words, '[t]hose things that are to be enjoyed [*fruendum est*] make us blessed'. In other words, the proper object of loving enjoyment is that in which we find blessedness – which means that God is the only proper object of such enjoyment. Everything else must be used such that it refers us to him as our proper end.[110] The little scene of courtly gift-giving, in which lord and knight mutually

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[108] Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities', 378.

[109] This distinction, developed by Augustine in the first book of *De Doctrina Christiana*, was extremely influential in mystical theology throughout the medieval period. See *De Doctrina Christiana*, in *Aurelii Augustini Opera Pars IV*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina XXXII (Turnhout: Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1962). Translating *frui* into Middle English proved something of a problem. The *Mirror*, a late medieval translation of the *Imitatio Dei* and Wycliff all use the loan word *fruishen* or its translation *use* (Augustine's distinction having been lost), but Julian, Hilton and the *Cloud* author do not. Misyn uses 'love', but love is only the mechanism of *fruitio*. Julian is perhaps most successful, with her consistent use of *enjoien*, which also recalls Philippians 4:4. In examples like 'leving the beholding of alle tempestes, that might lette us of true enjoyeng in him' (xiii.32.25-26), the link with *fruitio* is clear; Wolfgang Riehle, *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. Bernard Standring (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 105-107.

[110] '*Illae quibus fruendum est, nos beatos faciunt*'; *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1.3.3.2-3, all translations in this section are from *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. D.W. Robertson Jr (New York: Macmillan, 1958). God does not "enjoy" us but "uses" us, which means that he refers us to the proper object of our enjoyment, namely himself: '*quomodo ergo diligit? Ut nobis utatur an ut fruatur? . . . Nam si neque fruitur neque utitur, non inuenio, quemadmodum diligat*' (1.31.34.5-6, 11-12). Jesus, as both God and man, is both "end" and "means", a thing for our enjoyment and blessedness, and a thing for our use

delight in each other with a joy that at once adds to and celebrates their shared 'worship', is a dramatization of the *frui* that is the inner life of the Trinity, and in which humankind has a place. Present in God for all eternity (because God is always complete, xiv.59.20-23), we are continually both the result of, and the occasion for, that mutual joyful dynamic of giving and receiving between Father and Son that is God's nature. We are to 'enjoye' in this joy, and God takes 'liking' (use) in seeing us thus addressing ourselves to our proper end, himself (xiv.55.6-7). The exclamation at the end of the first gift-giving scene in the Long Text – 'And this was a singular marveyle and a full delectable beholding, that we be his crowne!' – shows Julian performing and so modelling for her audience the existential wonder that should grip us when we realize that such is our beauty and worth that we are part of the dynamic self-giving love of God's nature. If, as I mentioned above, Julian's intended audience were of the knightly class themselves, honour-based identity and the roles of lord and retainer would be deeply instinctive, at the level of *habitus,* and so Julian's imagery would have great rhetorical immediacy and force.

Julian's courtly imagery used in her representation of God produces a multi-layered evocation of joy – Christ the knight warrior's joy in his victory, Christ the courtly lover's delight in his beloved, and the joy taken by God the Trinity, as both lord and retainer, in the divine Persons' mutual dependence and in humankind as its manifestation and sign. Joy is the summit and aim of contemplation in medieval theory and practice, so there is nothing unusual in Julian's emphasis on joy; what is unique is her detailed use of contemporary secular courtly identity to evoke it.

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The next chapter continues exploring the subjectivity Julian constructs for her audience as *noble*. The courtly imagery of the lord and his retainer plays a central role in this construction, first as conceptual tool in Julian's imaginative theology and second as rhetorical aid in making her message of joy real to her audience. I turn now to discuss these facets as they apply to *our* role as God's retainers, in imitation of Christ our fellow knight. We will see how Julian's inability to conceive of God as anything other than honourable underlies first her account of human nature, and second her soteriology. In her use of the ideas of *frui* and a properly ordered love, the *ordo caritatis*, Julian is closer to

in achieving this blessedness: '*Cum ergo ipsa sit patria, uiam se quoque nobis fecit ad patriam*' 1.11.11.9-10; 'although He is our native country, He made Himself also the Way to that country'.

the teachings of twelfth-century contemplative theory, than some of its thirteenth-century developments. As Bernard McGinn traces, a tendency in thirteenth-century continental mysticism is to excess, particularly among women mystics, who aim for 'an infinite and "insane" pursuit of God, one based on an overpowering love that is subject to no law but itself and able to find no term but its own annihilation'.[111] This mode of mystical practice leads to a notion of union with God as much more a dissolution or annihilation than the traditional model of loving union between the infinite divine and finite human spirit. Julian's own understanding of mystical union, to which her imagery of courtly identity is essential, will be discussed. Simultaneously, I will begin to explore the affective quality of the lordship imagery, as it raises Julian's argument from theoretical postulation into an existentially convincing account of our identity as Christ's fellow knights and valued retainers, which she invites her audience to perform with her. Julian's conviction of the nobility of human nature causes her to insist that God protects his honour by 'keeping' us 'full sekerly' (xiv.37.8-9) and 'torning all oure blame into endlesse wurshippe' (xiv.52.82-83).

[111] *Flowering of Mysticism*, 157.

Chapter 4 Our 'fair kind': courtly identity, subjectivity and sin

. . . [A]lle þe courte als
La3en loude þerat, and luflyly acorden
Þat lordes and ladis þat longed to þe Table,
Vche burne of þe broderhede, a bauderyk schulde haue,
A bende abelef hym aboute of a bry3t greme,
And þat, for sake of þat segge, in swete to were.
For þat watz acorded þe renoun of þe Rounde Table . . .
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight[1]

Before her vision, Julian used to desire to 'be delivered of this warlde and of this life' (XX.1-2; xv.64.1-2), so as to be freed of the pain of being separated from God. She realises that this desire is misdirected, when 'oure curteyse lorde'[2] reminds her that heaven is promised to those who love him, but with this corollary: 'Whate shulde it … greve the to suffer awhile, sen it is my wille and my wirshippe' (XX.12-13; xv.64.14-15)? His closing phrase is drawn from the imagistic field of feudal relationships, and situates Julian's relationship with him within this field. Julian expands God's command to apply to all humankind, saying explicitly that he will reward our 'patience … in abiding [his] wille' (XX.14-15; xv.64.16-17). This idea, that the Christian must patiently wait on God's will and timing, is traditional; what is extraordinary about Julian's version is the spirit in which she wants us to wait:

> It is Goddes wille that we take his behestes and his confortinges als largelye and als mightely as we maye take thame. And also he wille that we take oure abiding and oure desese als lightelye as we may take tham, and sette tham ate nought. For the lightlyere we take tham, the lesse price we sette be tham for luff, the lesse paine sale we hafe in the felinge of tham, and the mare thanke we shalle hafe for tham. (XX.23-27; xv.64.49-54)

This is the same joyous, accepting spirit that Julian promotes throughout her text. Characteristically, her description of this state recalls the *debonair* grace of courtly life: 'it is the most wurshippe to him of ony thing that we may do', she says, 'that we live *gladly* and *merely* for his love' (xvi.81.13-14; my emphasis). The argument of the next two chapters is that Julian's courtly imagery, extended now from her depiction of God to a discussion of human life, offers a language of self, a performative vocabulary for living out the mystic identity as Julian perceives it. It is a language of interiority, available to both lay and religious, active and contemplative. Like a secular courtly identity, the identity of a 'lover

[1] Lines 2513-2519.
[2] In the Long Text; 'God' in the Short.

of God' has to be acquired personally, through investment of time and effort; it is cultural capital translated onto the spiritual plane.

But in Julian's mystical project, this courtly language of interiority plays an even more important role; it makes a place from which she can speak as a mystic. When discussing the mystical subject in my first chapter, I noted that, for the mystic, the soul is a site of dialogue.[3] The mystic experiences his or her self as 'an answer in search of what it is an answer to',[4] and so an adequate model of the soul has to make room for the infinite Other. This model will be developed in the context of the discourses of self available to the mystic. Julian's deep acquaintance with the contemplative tradition makes available to her a rich language of selfhood and interiority, at the heart of which lies the understanding of the human being as the image of Christ, who is the first, uncreated image of God.[5] As I discussed briefly in my first chapter,[6] this evaluation of human nature is part of a wider sacramental view of nature in general, which sees the created world as an ordered, meaningful reality, the *verbum materiale* that reveals God as surely as does the *verbum divinum* read in the scriptures and preached in the church. Both are forms of revelation that gain their ultimate meaning 'from God having become Word' in Christ.[7] One expression of this understanding is the notion that not only words can have allegorical meaning (*allegoria in verbis*), but also facts (*allegoria in factis*): the rhetorical and the ontic are linked. Paul already follows this logic, in interpreting Abraham's two wives, Hagar and Sarah, as the Old and the New Testament respectively, God's two successive alliances with humankind.[8] On this idea depends the medieval understanding of 'mystical' meaning and exegesis in general. The notion that the human soul is an *allegoria in factis* underlies the step-wise models of contemplative ascent developed by theologians like William of St Thierry and Bonaventure. These models are based on the belief that by closely observing our souls in action, in their work of knowing the world, we can read them as revelations of God's divine nature. I will show in the first part of this chapter that Julian remains deeply influenced by contemplative approaches to understanding the soul, particularly the notion, stemming ultimately from Augustine, that the soul's faculties are grouped into trinities, after the pattern of the divine Trinity. Yet her textual practice is to arrange the

[3] See Chapter 1, pp.21-22.
[4] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 188.
[5] Colossians 1:16.
[6] See Chapter 1 pp.34-36.
[7] Dupré, *Passage to Modernity*, 34-35.
[8] Galatians 4:21.

received model of the soul as a trinity of faculties alongisde a range of other imagery and languages of self: her own metaphysical categories of 'substance' and 'sensuality', maternal imagery, and courtly imagery. In this way, indirectly, she implies that the authoritative *allegoria in factis* is only an *allegoria in verbis* after all, like the other images she supplies. In the spaces between these languages, the site of the reader's mystical encounter is created.

In her depiction of Christ as noble, Julian takes care to include his humanity as well as his divinity in this high status. It is no surprise then that throughout her text Julian extends *to us* the courtly, nobility imagery she uses to describe Christ. Alone of all the 'kindes' or natures that God 'hath set in diverse creatures by party', she says, 'in man is alle the hole in fullhed and in vertu, in fairhed and in goodhed, in ryalte and in noblye, in alle manner of solempnite of precioushede and wurshippe' (xiv.62.14-17). To the qualities of wholeness, beauty and virtue, fairly standard in medieval conceptions of perfect being, Julian adds the metaphor of earthly status (punning on a philosophical sense of 'noble', meaning 'of high rank in the hierarchy of created things')[9] to signify our particular dignity as bearers of the *imago Dei*, and so the fullness of life for which we were created. The second part of this chapter explores the heuristic function of this nobility imagery, which is intended to guide readers into a lived sense of their beauty and belovedness.

Julian comes to learn that there is only one obstacle to our perfect 'oning' and likeness with God: sin (XIII.33-34, xiii.27.2-4). Yet God shows no wrath for us as sinners. Hilton lists three true sights among the spiritual comforts or profits that a contemplative soul gains: sight of the Church, in its beauty and its fallenness, sight of God's loving care of chosen souls, and sight of his righteous abandonment of the unrepentant to suffering in this world and damnation in the next (*Scale* II.45.3474-3492). Julian lacks this last explicitly. The obstacle lies in our wrath, which is our inability to forgive ourselves and to believe in God's perfect love for us. In this third section of the chapter, I follow Julian's discussion of these points, which contains some of her most striking and unusual imaginative theology, centring on courtly imagery. In preparation, Julian's explicitly metaphysical discussions of the soul must first be explored, tracing how she balances the trinitarian model she has

[9] The *MED* cites the *Ayenbite of Inwit,* Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer's *Boece* similarly speaking of the soul as 'noble'.

received from tradition with her own two-part structure, and then overlays this metaphysical language with equally multifaceted imagery of the soul as city and as womb.

Symbolising the soul

Metaphysical terminologies

Julian has an unshaken faith in our human act of knowing as the site of our nature as images of God, and her modelling of human nature draws heavily on the idea of the soul as a trio of faculties, mirroring the nature of the Trinity.[10] Her texts are patterned by trinitarian figures: the three divine attributes of might (or truth), wisdom and love;[11] the three Persons of the Trinity; and the faculties of the human soul grouped as memory, reason and will, or as reason, intellection and love. Lines xiv.44.9-12 summarise the correspondence between God and trinity and the soul as trinity:

> For God is endlesse sovereyne truth, endelesse sovereyne wisdom, endelesse sovereyne love unmade. And mans soule is a creature in God, which hath the same propertes made, and evermore it doeth that it was made for: it seeth God, and it beholdeth God, and it loveth God.

Both in explicit statements like this, and in the repeated pattern of three-fold groupings (e.g. the Trinity as our maker, keeper and lover in i.4.8-9, the three heavens in ix.22,7ff), the Long Text repeats this traditional model of the soul, and constructs its readers in these terms, inviting them to experience themselves as exemplars of this model as they engage memory, reason and will in relating to the text, as Julian does in her staging of her layered process of revelation.[12] A central aspect of her response to God is to enact the identity of one who has faith in the human soul and its processes of knowing as *allegoria in factis* that reveal God, in terms of the contemplative model of the soul. Julian's use of this established language of interiority is an example of how the mystical utterance is incarnated in the particular discourses of a historical moment. But she does not simply accept the trinitarian model of human nature of Augustinian tradition in its entirety. She retains its *method*, paying sensitive attention to the movements of her faculties during the showing, to deduce the structure of her soul from these movements. However, her experiences during the revelation lead her to move away from the *content* of the accepted model, a trinitarian

[10] See a detailed discussion in Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 109ff.
[11] The *Pricke of Conscience* also mentions the 'myght' of the Father, the 'witte' of the Son and the 'gudnes' of the Spirit e.g. ll.1-3, 8192-8194; as does Hilton e.g. in *Scale* II.32.2164-2165.
[12] 'Trinitarian Hermeneutic,' 98-100.

grouping of faculties, and to develop her own understanding of human nature, as made up of two parts.

Julian states this understanding clearly: 'we be doubel of Gods making: that is to sey, substantial and sensual' (xiv.58.32-33). These two parts of the human being, substance and sensuality, are not synonymous with soul or intellect on the one side and body on the other, but both have a part of bodiliness and of interiority. The Paris manuscript (P) explains in chapter 56 that 'as anemptis oure substance it may rightly be callid our soule, and anemptis oure sensuality it may rightly be callid oure soule, and that is by the oning that it hath in God'.[13] The closest Julian ever comes to summarizing her understanding of these two parts is to locate them in Augustinian fashion in the will; the substance is 'a godly will that never assented to sinne, ne never shall' which 'evermore continually . . . willeth good and werketh good in the sight of God' (xiv.53.10-12) and the sensuality, our fallen nature, is the 'bestely wille … that may wille no good' (xiii.37.15-16).[14] Also Augustinian is Julian's construction of our substance as *fruitio*, when she describes it as a very vivid, active kind of rejoicing, not something as static as the beatific vision: 'By the vertu of that ech precious oning we love oure maker and like him, praise him and thanke him and endlesly enjoye in him' (xv.58.6-8). The substance eternally takes part in the mutual delight of the Trinity, in a hierarchical relationship of perfect propriety:

> Wherfore God enjoyeth in the creature, and the creature in God, endlesly merveling, in which merveling he seeth his God, his lorde, his maker, so hye, so gret, and so good in regard of him that is made, that unnethes the creature semeth ought to the selfe. But the clernesse and clennesse of truth and wisedome maketh him to see and to beknowen that he is made for love, in which love God endlesly kepeth him. (xiv.44.12-17)

The richness and nuance of Julian's two-part model is never advanced systematically, but rather, in accordance with her mosaic-like style, unfolds in the course of her narrative at the site of interplay between received teaching on the one hand and her experience of the showings on the other.

[13] In contrast, the Sloane manuscript (S) reads, 'And anempts our substan[c]e and sensualite, it may rytely be clepid our soule' (56.90 in Glasscoe's edition), which makes the same point but is rhetorically less pointed.

[14] Here Julian follows Bernard's adaptation of Augustine, situating our imaging of God in the will. See Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 77-78; Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, 148-149.

The Short Text records intimations which Julian will later interpret as revealing our substance, such as the vision of God in a point, as he who 'dose alle that es done' (VIII.9-11), the experience of alternating 'liking' and 'hevines' with the teaching that sin is never the cause of dryness (IX.17-40), and the 'grete aninge' between us and Christ that the experience of *compassio* reveals (X.44). Most explicitly, in the locution "I kepe the fulle sekerly" and her insight into the 'holehed of luffe' with which God always regards us, Julian understands the teaching of our two wills, one 'goodely' and one 'bestely' (XVII.2-3, 8-9, 12). These beginnings are expanded in the Long Text, and the terminology of substance and sensuality introduced. The 'gret oning' with Christ is now explained as 'a *substance* of kinde love, continued by grace' (viii.18.3, 11). Julian is skilled in *lectio spiritualis*, and delicately separates out the components of her moment of *compassio*, noting both the 'wilfulle choyse' to suffer with Christ and an immediate reactive 'repenting' of this choice due to the severity of the pain. To these opposing movements of her will she links the 'two partes' of human nature, one 'high' and inward and the other 'fleshly' and outward (viii.19.21-32). Here Julian's use of the Augustinian inductive method is clear: she pays attention to the functioning of her faculties as revelations of her nature's structure, and then interprets this structure as *imago Dei*. Thus she allows her visionary experience to speak to the tradition, and vice versa.

This interplay becomes most obvious in chapter 54 and 55 of the long discussion of our nature that follows the tableau of the Lord and Servant in Revelation 14. Julian says we belong to heaven in that our substance is always in Christ, and turns to traditional accounts of the spiritual soul to explain what makes up this substance: 'For our faith is a vertu that cometh of oure kinde substance into oure sensual soule by the holy gost . . . . Oure faith cometh of the kinde love of oure soule, and of the clere lighte of oure reson, and of the stedfaste minde which we have of God in oure furst making' (xiv.54.22-23, 55.11-13). This trio of faculties is standard Augustinian teaching, where 'minde' is memory, stocked by God with the forms of knowledge from the moment of our creation, 'reson' is the illuminating light of the intellect that shines on these forms, and 'love' is the will, naturally orientated (but for the Fall) towards God's goodness and truth.[15] But then Julian continues: this non-material 'kind' alone is not enough. When we are 'made sensual' i.e. incarnated in a body, then 'mercy and grace beginne to werk' (xiv.55.13-21), and we come to fullness through all three, kind, mercy and grace. I will return to Julian's full argument of

[15] See Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 72-73.

how these three function, in this earthly life which we experience as 'a mervelous medelur both of wele and of wo' (xiv.52.6-7), to reveal to us that we share in both Adam's falling and Christ's rising. For the moment, the interaction between this trinity and the traditional grouping must be traced. Continuing her exposition, Julian says, 'thus was my understanding led of God to se in him, and to wit, to understonde, and to know, that oure soule is a made trinite like to the unmade blessed trinite'; the flurry of infinitive verbs suggests how what was once conceptual knowledge has become a lived understanding grasped at the deepest level of her being, 'fulle swete and mervelous to beholde, pesible and restful, seker and delectabil' (xiv.55.32-36). She experiences herself as a 'made trinite'. However, the term 'trinite' is polyvalent, in the context of her discussion, referring to both the traditional Augustinian group, of memory, reason and will, and her own triad, kind (which contains these faculties), mercy and grace. Her nature, real to her in this glorious moment, is the perfect image of God in its fleshly embodiment as well as its spiritual faculties, in its limitedness and fallibility as well as its 'kind'. The times when we do experience ourselves as images of God are intimations of our substance; the times of doubt and fragmentation are experiences of our sensuality.

With this insight, derived ultimately from the showings, Julian then returns to traditional doctrine and finds it transformed. For example, the nature of God as taught by the Church, made up of perfect truth, love, peace, might, wisdom and unity (xiv.46.24-33, also xiv.49.10-18), comes to have new meaning for Julian once she *sees* in her showing that God is never angry; she realises that the traditional qualities are incompatible with wrath. Julian may also be drawing on the writings of other women mystics; her notion of the substance bears similarities with thirteenth-century versions of the Neoplatonic idea of the soul's exemplary and virtual (in the sense of in divine power or *virtu*) pre-existence in God.[16] Augustine and after him John Scottus Eriugena and William of St Thierry argue for versions of this idea in support of the soul's dignity as *imago Dei*, but it is the thirteenth-century beguine mystics like Hadewijk of Antwerp and Marguerite Porete who make the notion of the exemplary soul central to their notion of mystical union and a source of

[16] Neoplatonic theology distinguishes two movements within the deity, emanation and return, or activity and repose. The Trinity includes both multiplicity, Father begetting Son and Spirit proceeding from them, and unity, the oneness that engulfs all three; Newman, *From Virile Woman*, 157. Julian's notion of substance that remains always with God and sensuality that has to emanate from him so as to return reflects this Neoplatonic model in some sense.

mystical authority.[17] If Julian was still revising the Long Text into the second decade of the fifteenth century, it is possible that she could have come across some such writings or the ideas discussed in them, considering the lively cultural exchange between Norwich and the Low Countries.[18] An inclusive attitude characterizes Julian's relationship with doctrine – she is not afraid to engage critically with it, if that is what the revelation demands, but always seeks to recuperate it for the life of faith. The touchstone and constant aim is faith in our ultimate perfection, born of God's eternal love for us. Knowledge of our nature, which is the act and definition of faith, has to be constantly worked at: 'For our faith is . . . nought eles but a right understanding with trew beleve and seker truste of oure being, that we be in God and he in us, *which we se not'* (xiv.54.24-26; my emphasis).

Julian once again turns to availables contemplative theories to help her understand her showing's teaching about our substance, which comes to its fullest revelation in the Lord and Servant tableau. She sees in the dual nature of the Servant that Christ encloses in himself both divine perfection and human fallibility. Julian's exploration of this idea and even some of the language she uses are reminiscent of the cognitive theory underlying affective piety, which gives central importance to the Incarnation, the moment when Christ unified in himself human and divine natures. In her meditation on human nature, Julian repeatedly describes Christ as epitomizing the marriage of our outer, fallen sensuality and our inner, perfect substance: for example, she says that the 'two perties [are] in Crist, the heyer and the lower, which is but one soule' (xiv.55.40-41), and again, 'he is mene that kepeth the substance and the sensualite togeder' (xiv.56.10-11).[19] She also demonstrates awareness of the tenet that reason is the form of our human nature (in the scholastic sense of that which makes us the kind of beings we are); she says our reason is one of the few glimpses of our substance that we can have in this earthly life (xiv.56.33-34).

[17] McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 214, 217.

[18] Hadewijk was not translated into Latin or English, so Julian is unlikely to have known her writings directly; Porete was translated into Middle English in the fourteenth century, as the *Mirror for Simple Souls*, although this work did have relatively restricted circulation; see Watson, 'Melting into God,' 25-26, including footnotes 19-20; and 31-32.

[19] And again: 'oure kinde, which is the hyer party, is knitte to God in the making; and God is knit to oure kinde, which is the lower party, in oure flesh taking. And thus in Crist oure two kindes be oned' xiv.56.9-11). At one point Julian echoes Bonaventure closely. He says, God is *proxima anima, etiam plus quam ipsa sibi*'; *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, XII.11, *Opera omnia* 5:386. God is 'closest to the soul, closer even than the soul is to itself'; Trans. Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 80. Julian quotes this phrase in translation in chapter 56: 'God is more nerer to us than oure owne soule. For he is grounde in whome oure soule standeth, and he is mene that kepeth the substance and the sensualite togeder, so that it shall never departe. (xvi.56.1-2, 8-11)

However, in affective cognitive theory ultimately every non-spiritual thing falls away and we contemplate God above matter, spirit to spirit.[20] In obedience to her showing, Julian parts company with this portion of the contemplative theory on which she otherwise is content to draw. She does not reject the material as only a step on the way to knowing the immaterial but, as the brief scene from Revelation 8 enacts, refuses to look away from the physical cross towards the higher abstractions of heaven, and instead chooses Christ in his suffering humanity as her heaven (X.50-XI.5, viii.19.1-20).[21]

This position is reinforced in Revelation 10, in Julian's carefully modulated interpretation of the wound in Christ's side. The older monastic version of the trope presented the wound as a symbol of that passage from physical to spiritual by which a devout soul reaches contemplation,[22] whereas contemporary affective discourse tended to focus on Christ's physical suffering and so end the meditation process at affective compassion.[23] Julian in the Long Text makes the wound an access point to God's divinity in a manner reminiscent of the monastic understanding: Christ says, 'Behold here my side' and shows her 'in part, the blessed godhede', strengthening her to be able to bear the sight (x.24.7-10). *Simultaneously*, however, she has her Christ identify himself as both 'thy lorde, thy God, that is thy maker and thy endlesse joy' *and* 'thin owne brother, thy savioure' (x.24.11-13).[24] He does not bid her leave behind the human nature they share to concentrate only on his glory. So Julian passes beyond affective piety's insistence that meditation on Christ's body

[20] This is true even of Bonaventure's version, which allows the imagination (and the physical things with which it deals) a part in leading us to knowledge of God; see Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 105.

[21] The notion that Jesus is heaven is a commonplace; see for example Walter Hilton, 'What is hevene to a resonable soule? Sothli, not ellis but Jhesu God' (*Scale* II.33.2232). Hilton's stress on our reason and Christ's divinity, however, reveals how unusual Julian's foregrounding of Christ's humanity is. As Watson notes, Julian's choice apparently bows to current restrictions of women's spirituality to the humanity of Christ, but also subverts such expectations by 'resisting the passivity and low prestige' associated with such devotions in contemporary discourse; '"Yf wommen be double naturelly": Remaking "Woman" in Julian of Norwich's Revelation of Love,' *Exemplaria* 8, no. 1 (1996): 7.

[22] For example, Bernard of Clairvaux describes the outer clefts in the rock – the wounds of Christ – with his humanity, and the space inside with his divinity; see *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* sermons 61-62. Similarly, James of Milan (a Franciscan friar) uses this traditional version of the image in his *Stimulus amoris* sees the wounds of Christ as the way in to union with God; Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi IV (Quaracchi, Florence: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1949), 71-72. For a discussion of this imagery, see Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition*, 154-159.

[23] See the lyrics collected under the heading 'Complaints of Christ' in *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, 25-31.

[24] This is in contrast to the Short Text's version of the scene, where the speech Julian gives Christ (XIII.2-5) offers his flesh as a stand-in for his divinity, which is inaccessible to a 'childe' as simple as Julian.

should lead only to compunction and longing for God, but refuses contemplative theory's rejection of all physical and imaginative aspects of spirituality as ultimately only stages on the way to union.[25] She departs from contemplative tradition by refusing to locate the *imago dei* in the intellect or construct the journey to holiness as a movement 'upwards' transcending sensuality into a realm of spirit.[26] Her view of the material world's part in revealing God opens out into an inclusive attentiveness to existence: 'the fulhed of joy is to beholde God in alle' (xiii.35.12), Julian says. But seeing every created thing as a proclamation of God is not to forget that each individual utterance and sign is inadequate, hopelessly partial as an effort to speak divine fullness. Like the truth uttered by her texts, the cosmos is a statement of becoming rather than being, of the richness of God's meaning continually in the process of revealing itself more fully.

This understanding of creation as God's endlessly unfolding utterance lies behind the discussion of 'meanes' in prayer in chapter 6 of the Long Text. Though Julian expresses impatience with the lack of faith that causes so many to depend overly on mediating images in prayer – particularly the affective images popular in her period, such as God's 'holy flesh and … his precious bloud, his holy passion, his dereworthy death and worshipful woundes … his sweete mothers love that him bare … his holy crosse that he died on' (i.6.10-14) – she accepts these images as 'meanes to help us full faire and fele' (i.6.19), the use of which pleases God (i.6.22-24). And 'the chiefe and principal meane is the blessed kinde that he toke of the maiden' (i.6.20-21). Julian's rhetoric enacts the way in which the material world speaks God's word; immediately after grouping our humanity among these inadequate 'meanes', she uses its most base, physical fleshliness to show God's closeness to us: 'For as the body is clad in the cloth, and the flesh in the skinne, and the bones in the flesh, and the hart in the bowke, so ar we, soule and body, cladde and enclosedde in the goodnes of God' (i.6.35-37). But the simile breaks down almost as soon as it is made: 'Yee, and more homely! For all these may waste and were away. The goodnesse of God is ever hole, and more nere to us without any likenes. … For oure soule is so presciously loved of him that is highest, that it overpasseth the knowing of alle creatures' (i.6.38-43). She invokes and then undercuts the most obvious material closeness, the organic knittedness

[25] Another example is the final showing, where Julian sees Christ enthroned within the human soul in all the beauty of his physical humanity and his glorious divinity, 'sufferayn might, sufferayne wisdome, sufferayne goodnesse' (XXII.7-10), together and inseparable. See similar discussions of Julian's refusal to separate affective and contemplative knowing in Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic of Christ*, 35-36, and Staley, 'Crisis of Authority,' 139-141.
[26] Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, 148-149.

of the body, to stage how by accepting the limitations of what we can say and see we both celebrate it and open ourselves to the inexpressible infinite beyond it. Julian's view of the visible, material world seems similar to what Mark S. Burrows calls a poet's way of seeing, which he describes as an 'awareness of surfaces, of visibility as an awakening not only to what *is* but also to what is *becoming* . . . [a] locating of ourselves in a reality that bears *and withholds* its own poetic articulations'.[27] Julian's understanding of the material is thus like her approach to established devotional and contemplative discourses, discussed in Chapter 2: limited in themselves, the things of this created world, including human signs, nevertheless provide opportunities for God's utterance.

Julian's central term for the act of performative openness that she would have us all learn is 'beholding'.[28] The embedded visual metaphor honours her poetics of surfaces. The word derives from the contemplative tradition; as the Middle English equivalent for *contemplatio* it also appears in a late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century translation of Guigo II's *Scala Claustralium*, probably by the *Cloud*-author, and in Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*.[29] Julian's beholding is certainly like the highest forms of contemplation, in that it includes but then surpasses reason, taking it beyond itself to fulfilment in knowledge of the divine. As attentiveness to God's utterance, beholding is multimodal; Julian's discourse blurs any distinction between soul and body by fusing the language of sensual perception and rational intellection, as when she says 'I had in perty touching, sight, and feeling in thre propertees of God' (xvi.83.1). The scholastic formality of 'propertees' is mixed with the strange preposition 'in', which suggests intimate participation rather than perception. Julian evokes this participatory knowing with a string of active participles: 'thanking, trusting, enjoyeng' (xvi.86.3).[30] For Julian, beholding is literally an imitation of Christ, because she repeatedly says that God also beholds us (e.g. xiv.42.50, 43.5) in an eternal gaze of love that sees our substance whole in him. This image of mutual presentness gives to beholding a sense of that relational knowing that is characteristic of the mystical encounter. I will return in the final chapter to this image of a meeting between two

[27] 'Mysticism, Poetics, and the Unlanguageable,' 185.
[28] Gillespie rightly links openness to the mystical utterance with Julian's 'beholding'; 'Pastiche, Ventriloquism, and Parody,' 194.
[29] Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 22; the translation appears in Appendix B of *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson, EETS, o.s. 231 (London: 1955). See Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 8-9, on how in the vernacular devotional tradition 'beholding' was often constructed as private and self-reflexive in the mode of Augustine.
[30] See McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 135-137, for an argument for the role of empathy in beholding.

persons, which Julian develops into the twin images of courtesy and homeliness and places at the core of the mystical subjectivity her text constructs. For the moment, we can note how beholding, as both attentiveness to God's utterance and the intersubjective identity Julian's text offers its audience, involves openness to divine infiniteness not despite the limitations of language, human nature, human knowledge, but by means of them.

The paradoxical quality of beholding, as a combination of separation in union, distance in closeness, ignorance in knowledge, is captured perhaps most tellingly early on in the showings, before Julian has even come to understand this mode of knowing, in an image of pregnancy. This is the showing of the Virgin as she was when she conceived, focusing on God with 'reverente beholdinge' and 'mervelande with grete reverence that he wolde be borne of hir that was a simpille creature of his makinge' (IV.24-26; i.4.27-29). Mary is a figure for the human act of beholding God: as a woman focuses her wondering awareness and love on the life just taking form in her womb, she is intensely aware of herself and also of this other, so closely part of herself and yet infinitely its own being, and therefore separate from her. The image gives a sense of the uniquely intimate yet respectful awareness that is beholding.[31] Calling on woman's experience, it opens especially to women readers a powerfully intersubjective construction of identity, along the same lines as that achieved by intense affective compassion of the kind studied by Walker Bynum.[32]

Julian simultaneously uses these two languages of the self: on the one hand the faculties of the soul grouped in trinities, and on the other, substance and sensuality. Both of these perform the soul as *allegoria in factis*, as facts about the real, ontic world that reveal metaphysical truths about God. But by juxtaposing the two different models, trinitarian and dualist, Julian moves them towards metaphor; they gesture towards a reality that they cannot speak. The meaning that they generate cannot be understood except as a succession of events, of movements between the various terminologies; this is then another version of Julian's indirect style that inscribes an opportunity for God's utterance. This tendency becomes explicit in her other means of evoking the soul, which is imagery; it functions to make a place from which she speaks, and also where her readers can enter their own dalliance with God and with themselves.

[31] See Herbert McAvoy, *Authority and the Female Body*, one of the central arguments of which is that Julian makes 'extensive use of the female body as hermeneutic tool for the explication of her unique experience of God', 23.
[32] Brad Peters, 'Julian of Norwich's *Showings* and the *Ancrene Riwle*: Two Rhetorical Configurations of Mysticism,' *Rhetoric Review* 27 no.4 (2008): 276.

Imagery

In a movement of overlaying similar to her parallel use of the two models of the soul, Julian evokes side-by-side two images of the soul, as city and as womb. The nobility of the soul is expressed literally in the repeated image of Christ seated in the centre of the soul:

> For I saw full sekerly that oure substance is in God. And also I saw that in oure sensuality God is. For in the same point that oure soule is made sensual, in the same point is the citte of God, ordained to him fro without beginning; in which citte he cometh, and never shall remeve it. For God is never out of the soule, in which he shalle wonne blissefully without end. (xiv.55.19-24)

The 'point' in which 'oure soule is made sensual' is analogous to the union of divine and human natures in Jesus.[33] The city (also mentioned in xiv.54.18-21) is described in more detail in Revelation 16 in terms that immediately place it within the public sphere of courtly identity. It is a 'wirshipfulle' city in which 'sittes oure lorde Jhesu, verraye God and verray man: a faire persone and of large stature, {highest bishoppe, solempnest kinge,} wyrshipfull{est} hiest lorde . . . cledde solemplye in wyrshippes' (XXII.3-6, xvi.68.4-6). Reputation becomes literally visible and public, in the 'wyrshippes' that Christ wears as clothing. This image, at once spatial, visual and social, is a powerful imaginative aid in creating a sense of interiority, a place where, no matter what the exterior circumstances, we all harbour within us a core beauty, worth and status. The image of a city enclosed evokes many allusive echoes – the biblical New Jerusalem, *hortus conclusus*, the chivalric court, the narrative space of courtly romance – but its meaning exists somewhere between them all. Julian's city at the core of the soul is a space 'at once other and inner', and inherently relational: the figure of Christ as enthroned at the centre of this city captures the essential nature of the soul, the site of the encounter, as opening out at its centre into 'the infinite dimension of an inner foreignness'.[34]

This familiar strangeness at the heart of the soul is similarly integral to the second image, of 'beclosing' and pregnancy. Julian several times rehearses a paradoxical notion of mutual 'beclosing',[35] centring on Christ who is born of a woman yet contains within himself all of humankind:

[33] Watson and Jenkins sidenotes.
[34] To borrow phrases de Certeau uses in discussing Teresa of Avila's image of the castle of the soul; *Mystic Fable*, 196.
[35] See also xiv.54.18-21, xiv.56.19-21.

> For in that same time that God knit him to oure body in the maidens wombe, he toke oure sensual soule. In which taking – he us all having beclosed in him – he oned it to oure substance, in which oning he was perfit man. . . .
>
> Thus oure lady is oure moder, in whome we be all beclosed and of her borne in Crist. . . . And oure savioure is oure very moder, in whome we be endlesly borne and never shall come out of him. Plentuously, fully, and swetely was this shewde; and it is spoken of in the furst, wher it saide: "We be all in him beclosed." And he is beclosed in us; and that is spoken of in the sixteenth shewing, where he seyth: "He sitteth in oure soule". (xiv.57.35-46)

In terms of Julian's theology this makes sense: the vital moment of salvation history is not so much the Passion and Resurrection as the Incarnation, which reveals to us the truth of our substance. The familiar patristic metaphor of the Father speaking the Son, his Word and Image, and Christ then making the world in an imitative act of creation[36] is replaced by the intensely fleshly image of pregnancy, the Word made flesh. Christ's womb in which we are 'endlesly borne' overlays and echoes the city within the soul in which he is enthroned, resulting in a sense of the soul as a polyvalent space, oscillating between the civic and the fleshly, public and private, masculine and feminine. The space evoked is 'a play of in-between'.[37]

At some level, Julian takes these metaphors of maternity and feudal relationships as allegorical. If Christ is eternally mother, we are eternally both within him and born of him. If God the Father is eternally the lord eternally rewarding his Son and faithful knight, as in the gift-giving scenes (XII.14-18; ix.22.11-19, xiv.55.1-7), then we are eternally the 'mede'. Fourth-century Christologists used the idea of pre-existence to explain and defend Christ's divinity: if God is eternally Father, then he has to have a co-eternal Son.[38] Julian's images play with the same argument. Our perfect substance is eternally actual, logically prior to our sensuality with its potential for perfection. The core insight of her revelation is the fact of our substance; it is a prophetic truth that must reorientate our entire subjectivity. The rest of this chapter and the next trace three developments Julian makes using the nobility imagery that grows out of her imagining of the soul: firstly, further 'heuristic fantasy', this time working to convince us of the truth of God's unbroken love for us; secondly, Julian's particular rhetoric surrounding sin and how it can be 'behovely'; and lastly, in Chapter 5, the role of courtesy as an image and practice for mystical union.

[36] See Chapter 1 pp. 34-36.
[37] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 198.
[38] Newman, *From Virile Woman*, 151.

Our nobility

The imagery drawn from the world of knightly society continues to add to Julian's explicit theology. Not surprisingly, she links nobility with our substance, as when she says 'anemptes oure substance he made us so nobil and so rich that evermore we werke his wille and his worshippe'. This nobility of substance is associated with a first 'oning', which occurs at our creation: 'In oure making he knit and oned us to himselfe, by which oning we be kept as clene and as noble as we were made' (xv.57.1-2, xv.58.5-6). This innate nobility of our substance only appears partially in our sensuality, which 'fails' to express the substance's 'fullness' (xv.57.6-7). Our substance is the ground of our being, but our finite, incomplete sensuality is the site of 'oure encrese and oure fulfilling' (xiv.56.36-37) because, as will be discussed in the section on the profits of tribulation below, in our finitude we experience God's mercy and grace, which are necessary parts of his self-revelation to us (xiv.59.1-6). Healed by this mercy and grace, the sensuality is united with the substance in a second 'oning', also described using the idea of nobility: we are 'mightly' rescued by Christ (the language recalls the harrowing of hell in xiv.51.188-191), and 'wurshipfully' taken to heaven where we are 'encresed in richesse and nobly by all the vertu of Crist, and by the grace and werking of the holy gost' (xiv.58.54-57). Like 'noble', 'rich' can also have philosophical connotations, meaning 'inherently precious', 'excellent', or 'good of its kind, admirable, splendid',[39] but within the text's overall pattern of status imagery takes on an added connotation of courtly wealth and position. Our wholeness is possible because both sensuality and substance are born of the fullness of God, planned for all eternity in Christ (xv.57.18-21). The particularly dense clustering of repeated terms and images – 'oning', 'rich', 'noble', 'worship' – makes the two 'onings' seem to merge into one, the unity with God for which we were always destined. Our earthly sensuality is not left behind but rather exalted and delighted in.

The first purpose of this nobility imagery, then, is as a kind of heuristic fantasy that reshapes the reader's view of him- or herself. Julian's deployment of the nobility trope is the opposite of the lyric 'Men rent me on rode' quoted earlier; rather than reproaching her readers for their pride, she wants them to develop some. As Grace Jantzen puts it, '[i]n taking pleasure in God who takes pleasure in us, we learn to take pleasure in ourselves'.[40] This is an unusual position for a woman to take, since medieval women tended to be

[39] *MED* senses 2, 4 for 'riche' (adj.).
[40] Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, 152.

taught to identify themselves with fleshliness and sinfullness. The use of earthly courtly status and its markers as symbols for heavenly perfection was fairly common in Julian's day. The Pearl maiden, for example describes heavenly joy by means of status imagery, mentioning God's reputation, worth and rank: 'I am holy [God's]: / Hys prese, hys prys, and hys parage / Is rote and grounde of alle my blysse' (418-420). However, often the trope can take on a tone of rather crude social ambition, as it does for example in the *Pricke of Conscience*. Here one of the joys of heaven is listed as 'honour', which involves all the righteous being 'corouned, als kynges and emparours … With alkyn nobelay, rychely dyght … And gret reverence þam salle be bed, / And be honourd als Godes frendes dere, / Ffor þe worschepe þat þai dyd him here, / In gud werkes' (ll.8530-8536; also ll.8742-8749). This seems very similar to Julian's vision of heaven in Revelation 6, but the *Pricke* continues: heaven is a city where the righteous 'bere heghe state … ever-mare' (l.9112) and receive crowns 'dightt with ryche perré, / And with stanes of vertu, precyouse to prays' (ll.9320-9321). In contrast, in Julian, Christ rules the city, though we share in its splendour, and we are his crown, the reward for his good works. Julian's expansion of the nobility imagery into the fuller feudal structure of a lord and his household enables her to celebrate our nobility at the same time as maintaining God's supremacy, and to explore the theological dynamics of lordship, service and *fruitio* that structure our relationship with him, while the *Pricke*'s imagery remains purely figurative.

One of the strengths, therefore, of Julian's imagery for the soul is that it allows us to experience pride and meekness simultaneously. Revelation 16 continues the description of the noble city by moving outside its walls, to the position of a 'creature that is led to se grete noblinesse and kingdoms' belonging to a lord, and is therefore 'stered to seke uppe above to that high place were the lorde wonneth, knowing by reson that his dwelling is in the wurthiest place' (xvi.68.19-23). The status imagery has a two-fold effect here: we are at once the 'dwelling' of God celebrated for its splendour, and the 'creature' who sees the dizzying height of the lord's status relative to ours. The Virgin epitomises the truth that combines these two viewpoints. The Long Text's first use of the term 'noble' occurs when Mary is described as beholding God, and Julian comments that this 'gretnesse and this nobilnesse of her beholding of God fulfilled her of reverent drede' (i.7.4-5). Mary is noble, the Mother of God, but her nobility lies in her understanding of the metaphysical size-gap between God and us. In her truth and wisdom, she perfectly combines awareness of God's greatness and our littleness with wondering acceptance that, despite this enormous

difference, we are made to love and delight in him because he loves and delights in us (IV.21-32; i.4.24-35). The 'reverence' or reverent dread modelled by the Virgin is defined as 'a holy, curtious drede of our lorde, to which meekenes is knit: and that is that a creatur see the lord mervelous great and the selfe mervelous litle' (xv.65.7-9). It is precisely Mary's meekness that opens her to fulfilment in grace (i.7.5-8), and makes her 'mare than alle that God made benethe hir in worthines and in fulhede … abovene hir is nothinge that is made botte the blissede manhede of Criste' (IV.30-32; i.4.33-35). Christ's nobility is thus attainable by other human beings, as Mary shares in it by his grace,[41] but a sense of hierarchy is maintained. We are to learn simultaneous pride and meekness: '[f]or ther the soule is hyest, nobliest, and wurshipfullest, ther it is lowest, mekest, and mildest' (xiv.59.16-17). Fully understanding our nature and God's implicates us in the body of Christ, made up of our fellow Christians: 'For of alle thing, the beholding and the loving of the maker maketh the soule to seme lest in his awne sight, and most filleth hit with reverent drede and trew meknesse, and with plente of charite of his evencristen' (i.6.55-58).

The theological element of Julian's imagery of nobility is also highlighted in comparison with another common use in devotional literature, which is to delineate a spiritual elite. As Barbara Newman points out, the *mystique courtoise* (also called *Minnemystik*) of the thirteenth-century Beguine mystics borrows the elitism of secular literature of *fin amour* to delineate a community of those who understand love over against the ignorant masses without this insight. The discourse of class distinctions meshes with the traditional evaluation of contemplatives as superior in the ranks of holiness. Newman suggests that this elitism acted as a kind of cultural barrier of protection to compensate for 'the lost privilege afforded by monastery walls', something that marked the Beguines as separate from the rest of the crowd of lay souls.[42] Rolle uses the register of courtly love for a similar purpose, for example when the opening of *Ego dormio* conducts the reader into seductive privacy, where Rolle's text, like a courtly paranymph, woos his divine master's beloved.[43] As Jennifer Bryan notes, such courtly imagery helps create an inner world that is 'sensual, emotional, highly prestigious yet glamorously antisocial', the realm of a self 'made both

[41] Peters makes this argument, but concentrates specifically on gender, noting that Julian's placement of Mary as next in worthiness to Christ 'feminizes' his nobility and so makes it available to women; see 'Two Rhetorical Configurations', 374.
[42] *From Virile Woman*, 142-143.
[43] See *English Writings*, 61.

autonomous and eloquent by desire'.[44] Rolle's claims to authority as author and mystic depend on his personal interior experience, which the glamorizing courtly imagery helps to exalt. In its democratic scope, however, Julian's nobility imagery avoids this discourse of spiritual exceptionalism. Rather, she implies that every human being, made in the image of God, has this quiet space of courtly splendour within him- or herself. Julian, perhaps because of the more assured status of the anchorite in English society,[45] does not find the democratic impulse of personal mysticism threatening; nevertheless, an internal identity of this courtly kind would provide a powerful refuge from the demands of outside duties and indignities. This kind of interiority contributes not a little to the serenity so characteristic of Julian.

A true sense of our nature as noble also leads Julian to rewrite the widespread devotional programme that teaches meditation on the self followed by meditation on God, which reflects contemplative practice in the monasteries.[46] Rather, Julian says it does not matter whether one aims for self-knowledge first or knowledge of God, because ultimately they proceed in tandem (xiv.56.8-9). First she sees that it is easier to come to know God than our own soul, because the soul is so deeply rooted in God (xiv.56.1-4), but then she acknowledges that full knowledge of God requires full knowledge of the soul, so that it is at the height of its powers (xiv.56.28-30). This fullness consists in the perfection of the sensuality, and its union with the substance, through Christ's Passion and our suffering here on earth (xiv.56.30-32). Knowledge of our true selves is the same as knowledge of God (xiv.46.11-12), because in truly knowing how lovely we are, we realise how loving he is.[47]

Unfortunately, this knowledge is difficult to keep hold of in the course of everyday living. One of the reasons Julian does not discard the Church's teachings on sin is that they satisfy our sense of unworthiness. Her idea of the two 'domes' thus addresses two opposing impulses she sees as central to human experience. As human beings we have very real experiences of guilt and fear of God's just punishment, times 'whan it semeth to us that we

[44] Bryan, *Looking Inward*, 45.
[45] See Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons*, 7, 17-18.
[46] Such meditational programmes were available in Middle English in for examples versions of Edward of Abingdon's *Speculum*, such as 'Contemplation of God and of His Deite,' in *Yorkshire Writers* Vol.1, 259.
[47] Abbott makes a similar argument: to say that the soul contemplates itself and then moves on to contemplating God for Julian makes no sense. 'The soul no more beholds itself than the eye beholds itself. . . . the conscious realization of the soul is experienced indivisibly as a conscious realization of the indwelling Christ'. This is the individual soul's eternal and unique dignity; *Autobiography and Theology*, 159-160.

be neer forsaken and cast away for oure sinne, and for we se that we have deserved it' (xiii.39.14-16); this is the experience to which the Church's 'doom' speaks in its teachings about repentance, penance and forgiveness (xiii.39.6-10). But we have to switch to the perspective of the higher 'doom' of Julian's revelation, in which 'betwen God and oure soule is neither wrath nor forgevenesse *in his sight*' (xiv.46.30-31, my emphasis; see also xiv.49.2-3ff). God *sees* us as eternally 'werking … his wille and his wurshippe, lastingly without stinting' (xiv.44.1-2). He *sees* in us only 'a godly wille that never assented to sinne, nor never shalle' (37.14-15, 19), whereas in the blindness caused by sin (47.15-16), we *see* only a 'bestely wille … that may wille no good' (37.15-16). The penultimate chapter highlights this fact of God's view again: that 'notwithstonding oure simpille living and oure blindhede heer, yet endlessly oure curtesse lorde beholdeth us, in this wurking enjoyeng' (xvi.85.1-3). This terminology of visualization implies a quality of purposeful constructedness in our sense of identity. The reader has to develop a similar double sight through which to see his or her self:

> A hye understanding it is inwardly to se and to know that God, which is oure maker, wonneth in oure soule; and a higher understanding it is and more, inwardely to se and to know oure soule, that is made, wonneth in God in substance – of which substance, by God, we be that we be. (xiv.54.9-12)

The text even imagines God's power and wisdom as bowing to the influence of love: 'For luffe makes might and wisdome fulle meke to us. For right as be the curtayse of God he forgettes oure sinne for time we repente us, right so wille he that we foregette oure sinne, and alle oure hevinesse, and alle oure doubtefulle drede' (XXIV.28-31; xvi.73.37-40). This is what we have to come to believe on an existential level, the level of lived wisdom. Julian's position is quite unlike a common late-medieval teaching, seen for example in the *Pricke of Conscience*, which stresses humankind's sinfullness and our proper stance of meekness and dread of punishment.[48]

Yet the required act of faith in our lord, that we should 'anely enjoye in oure blissid saviour Jhesu, and trist in hi for alle thinge' (XIV.34-35, xiii.30.19-21), is difficult. We lack faith not in God's greatness, but in our loveableness. This is why Julian uses the imagery of courtship, of us having 'comening and dalyance' with our souls (xiv.56.14-15), suggesting

[48] See e.g. the whole first book, 'Of Man's Wretchedness'. For example, the teaching that man must consider 'Of how foul mater he is wroght' (l.287) compares with Julian's teaching of our substance kept safe in God. Another example is Book I ll.619-634, which approvingly quotes Bernard on the filthiness of the body and all its operations – compared with Julian's insistence that God cares for us even in the 'lowest parte of oure nede' (i.6.32-33).

both that persuasion is necessary and the sweetness of love talk. As Julian puts it, 'many men and women {some of us} leves that God is allemighty and may do alle, and that he is alle wisdome and can do alle. Botte that he is alle love and wille do alle, thar they {we} stinte (XXIV.17-19, xvi.73.24-25). In XIX.12-16 (xiv.41.3-6), our lack of faith in our worthiness is said to be the cause of dryness in prayer. This 'failinge' on our part leaves us 'tempted, trubled, and … [in] unreste', and so we have to pray more, to prepare ourselves for Jesus by making ourselves 'souple and boxsom to God' (XIX.52-53; xiv.43.23-26). This prayer is not needed, however, to make God 'souple' to us; '[f]or he is ever ylike in love' (XIX.55; xiv.26-27). Our persistence in believing that as sinners we must dread God is, in Julian's terms, a false 'mekeness … a foulle blindehede and a waykenesse' (XXIV.23-24; xvi.73.23-24), and so the opposite of the might and freedom God offers.

In acknowledgement of this difficulty, Julian's texts acquire a performative quality in their insistence on the fact of God's love. An example is a passage of mantra-like repetition of the word 'seker' that appears in both texts:

> whate man or woman wilfully cheses God in this life {for love}, he may be sekere that he is chosene {loved without end, with endlesse love that werketh in him that grace}. Kepe this treulye, for sothly it is Godes wille {For he will we kepe this trustly,} that we be als sekere in tryste {hope} of the blis in heven whiles we ere here as we shulle be in sekernesse when we ere thare. And ever the mare likinge and the joye that we take in this sekernesse, with reverence and mekenes, the bettere likes him. (XX.29-34; xv.65.1-6)[49]

For an engaged, prayerful reader, the repetition is an opportunity to build a personal sense of this faith and 'sekerness'. Other passages reinforce this effect. For example, in xvi.77.11-21 Julian speaks to those experiencing dread because of their sinfullness; she advises them to 'fle to oure lorde' and even gives them a speech to say: 'I knowe wele I have deservede paine, but oure lorde is almighty, and may ponish me mightly; and he is all wisdom, and can ponish me skillefully; and he is alle goodnesse, and loveth me tenderly'. In taking these words as his or her own, the reader takes on the subjectivity Julian prescribes. The text also describes a cautionary episode, illustrating what happens when 'sekerness' is abandoned. In the interlude of returned physical sickness between Showings 15 and 16, Julian momentarily loses faith in the showing and its message, and is immediately attacked by fiends; she is saved by recollecting her showings and actively reciting familiar texts and

[49] A similar technique occurs in chapter 53 of the Long Text, where the tone hovers between prophetic announcement and desperate pleading with the repetition of the phrase, 'he will that we wit' (xiv.53.44-54).

prayers (XXI.15-35, XXIII.1-21; xvi.66.22-67.21, xvi.69.1-24). The text as the readers have it is thus simultaneously a performance of Julian's faith in God's message of love, and an attempt to persuade her readers to join her in this performance. She admits in a passage not found in the Short Text that moments of mystical experience are deeply longed for, when 'the gracious presence of oure lord' is felt, because such moments bring 'mervelous sekernesse in true faith and seker hope by greatnes of charitye in drede that is sweet and delectable' (xv.65.11-13). The status of the truth about our substance, as at once revealed and hidden, gives to the performed self its strange quality of both longing and certainty. Julian sees 'a gret desyer' in 'oure blessed lorde that we shalle live in this manner – that is to sey, *in longing and enjoyeng*, as alle this lesson of love sheweth' (xvi.82.18-20, my emphasis). The human condition is paradoxical, because it consists in living with both truths, the human 'dome' of our sinfullness and God's of our perfection, seeing only the lower but believing the higher (xiv.45.11-26).

Out of these arguments Julian builds her particular incarnational version of an ascent or return to God, which draws from Neoplatonic ideas: she agrees that we know God more and more fully as we are 'led' into his 'hye depnesse' (xiv.56.23-25). But as discussed above, she rejects the idea that this is a journey away from the physical towards the spiritual. Rather, enclosed in God we find Christ, both God and man, and our selves. Thus the 'longing' and 'penance' of the journey (xiv.56.23) is not the purging of matter so as to become pure, angelic spirit, but rather learning to know our 'medled' nature and God's fullness of love, mercy and delight. Jesus as the 'mid person' of the Trinity is the 'grounde and hed of this fair kinde out of whom we be all come, in whom we be alle enclosed, into whom we shall all wenden, in him finding oure full heven in everlasting joy' (xiv.53.25-28). Though she is shown clearly that when we are truly at peace with ourselves, knowing and accepting both our frail sensuality and our perfect substance, then will we be 'oned to God' (xiv.49.29-32, 36), she does not imply that this is achievable in a stable way in this life. Only God is 'oure stedfast ground, and shall be oure full blisse, and make us unchaungeable as he is when we be ther' in heaven (xiv.49.44-45).

The main problem, which prompts our 'wrath' and makes it so hard to believe in our substance, is sin. The culmination of the first series of showings in Revelation 12, the beatific vision of the glorified Christ as final goal of Julian's desire, is followed by her realisation that 'nathinge letted me bot sin'. She realises this is the state of us all; sin

prevents us from being 'like to oure lorde as he made us' (XIII.33-34, xiii.27.2-4). This insight seems to contradict the teaching that sin is behovely. How to make this teaching real to her audience is another major purpose of Julian's courtly imagery.

Sin

The awareness of sin loomed large in medieval culture, through the codifying of sin in parish manuals and devotional works, the rise of the practice of individual confession, and the many social rituals surrounding penitential practices such as alms-giving and pilgrimage.[50] Julian was clearly worried about sin; in her opening self-portrait, she records how she wanted to imitate Mary Magdalene, most often a symbol of compunction (which comprises guilt), rather than the Virgin, sinless model of innocent compassion.[51] One of the showing's most famous teachings is that "Sinne is behovelye", as Christ says to Julian, and she glosses the word *sin* (or in the Short Text, *wretchedness*) as 'generallye alle that is nought good, and the shamefulle dispite and the utter noghtinge that he bare for us in this life and in his dyinge, and alle the paines and passions of alle his creatres, gastelye and bodelye' (XIII.43-46, xiii.27.9-14). All this suffering is an 'uglye sight', but she does not see sin specifically, and concludes that 'it has no manere of substance, na partye of beinge, na it might nought be knawen bot be the paines that it is cause of' (XIII.54-57, xiii.27.21-25). The problem is reconciling the Church's teaching about sin and punishment, with which our existential feelings of guilt and failure so often tally, and the revelation's message that God is never wrathful and that sin is 'behovelye'.

Julian's theodicy falls within the tradition of the *felix culpa*, the happy fault. As James Simpson remarks, however, her use of this tradition is unique, in that she argues that the Fall is happy not because its consequence is Christ's redemptive death, but because the Fall itself is 'behovely'.[52] Denys Turner explains that 'behovely' translates the medieval Thomistic term *conveniens*, meaning *proper* 'not on account of being explained by a universal and timeless causal hypothesis' but rather as having that kind of intelligibility 'which you provide for a particular event, or kind of event, when you provide a place for it within a particular individual's story'. Sin is contingent rather than determined, but its

[50] Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 377; Duffy, *Stripping the Altars*, 287-298; Nowakowski Baker, *From Vision to Book*, 83-84.
[51] Sandra J. McEntire, *The Doctrine of Compunction in Medieval England: Holy Tears* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).
[52] *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 485-486.

'contingency is not that of the arbitrary'; there is a story within which it makes sense.[53] As this chapter will show, the imaginary in which sin makes narrative sense for Julian is the honour-based late medieval courtly world. This discussion is not intended as an exhaustive discussion of Julian's soteriology and theodicy, but rather a tracing of the field of courtly imagery within which her theology is unfolded.

Chivalric shame: worship, the romance plot and rites of passage

This story centres on the character already familiar from Revelations 5 and 6, Christ the warrior knight and lord. The significance of how Julian places Christ's identity and ours as his retainers in the public space of honour identity is revealed now in her thinking about sin. More fully developed in the Long Text, sin is discussed in terms of honour, of symbolic capital within a courtly interpretive community. Christ is established as a lord of sufficient might to overcome any shame. In his speech "I may make alle thinge wele", which he utters 'fulle comfortabelye' (XV.1-4, xiii.31.1-4), the sequence of active verbs makes this a mighty boast, Christ's statement of his power. This active power always takes the shape of God's nature, which is goodness and love, as discussed in Chapter 2 (XV.5-9, xiii.31.9). Julian's first objection to the locution that 'all shall be well' is that all cannot be well since sin causes such 'grete harme' to creatures (XIV.1-3, xiii.29.1-3).[54] Christ's immediate answer is to remind her of his Passion, the 'gloriouse asethe', and in one of the extended speeches she gives to Christ Julian interprets this one great deed as a proof whereby we can trust his ability to perform other great deeds (XIV.5-14, xiii.29.5-14). Christ's perfect knightly character is reinforced at this moment by the courtly *mansuetudo* of his manner, as he answers 'fulle mekelye and with fulle lovelye chere' (XIV.5-6, xiii.29.5-6). The 'asethe' is kept in the arena of honour and shame, with the 'harm' caused by Adam's sin countered by God's rejoicing and our honour (XIV.9-12, xiii.29.10-12). The Long Text repeats similar arguments for God's power several times. When Julian is confused how the Church's teaching of hell and damnation can be reconciled with her showing that all shall be well, God responds, "That that is unpossible to the is not unpossible to me. I shalle save my worde in alle thing, and I shalle make althing wele" (xiii.32.39-43). He makes his oath on

[53] '"Sin is Behovely" in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*,' *Modern Theology* 20, no. 3 (2004): 415-416. The range of senses the *MED* gives for 'behoveli (adj)' is the following: '(a) Useful, profitable, beneficial, good (for sth. or sb.); (b) suitable, fit; proper, appropriate; (c) requisite, necessary. . .' The meaning Turner proposes is closer to (b) and (c), although elements of the notion of profit are also relevant; see my section entitled 'Profits of tribulation' below.

[54] The diction, especially the Long Text's 'beholding . . . swemly, and mourningly', links this time of dense confusion to the perplexing showing of the dried blood obscuring Jesus' face.

his honour. And appropriately, he will 'save his word' through great and noble deeds (xiii.32.19, xiii.36.1-2) by which 'shalle alle be brought into rightfullehede' (xiii.35.35). These deeds, like the Passion, are public acts of prowess, earning honour for the knight and so of his household: 'the worshippe and the blisse of that shalle last in heven before God and alle his holy without end' (xiii.36.11-12).[55] This argument is repeated in xiii.36.49-52, where God reminds Julian that his miracles are proofs of his power and so assurances that he can perform the deeds he promises.

God's honourable reputation and the assurance that he will maintain it become central to Julian's theodicy:

> Alle that oure lorde doeth is rightfulle, and alle that he suffereth is wurshipfulle. And in theyse two is comprehended good and eville. For alle that is good oure lorde doeth, and that is evil oure lord suffereth. I say not that eville is wurshipfulle, but I sey the sufferance of oure lorde God is wurshipfulle, wherby his goodnes shalle be known without end. (xiii.35.17-21)

Our proper response to the promise of his deeds is the same as that modelled by Julian in Revelation 5, joy and pride: 'the cause why he shewede it is to make us to enjoy in him and in alle his werkes' (xiii.36.13-14). However, the 'mighty comforthe' (XV.21, xiii.32.17) that God's promise offers depends on our faith, because the nature and timing of his marvellous deeds are kept hidden from us (xiii.32.23-24, xiii.36.13-18); rather than worrying about what form the deeds will take we must concentrate on loving and enjoying in God (xiii.32.23-26, xiii.36.20-21). This incomplete knowledge is appropriate to our relative statuses: we know 'alle that is wurshipfulle and profitable for the time' (xiii.36.22), since our partial knowledge of God's plans coupled with our full sense of his goodness and love means we have to live out the essence of the relationship between lord and servant, which is the servant's trust that the lord will honour his duty to keep the servant.

As explained in Chapter 3, in late-medieval honour culture the lord's honour is his servant's, and vice versa; it is not surprising then that the Long Text makes clear that God is concerned for *our* honour too. In Revelation 2, Julian describes the Incarnation thus: 'he would, for love and *for worshipe of man*, make himselfe as like to man in this deadly life, in our foulhede and in our wretchednes, as man might be without gilt' (ii.10.46-48, my

[55] As Jay Ruud points out, this teaching about the deeds suggest that part of the reason Julian is so bothered by sin is that it challenges God's honour and authority. Through his great deeds – feats of arms – what appears initially to besmirch God's manhood will in the end underscore it; 'Romance Discourse, and the Masculine', 187.

emphasis). Ever since Anselm's *Cur deus homo* the notion of sin as dishonour to ourselves and God had been widespread. Yet Julian argues that sin is 'na shame, bot wirshippe to man' (XVII.15; xiii.38.1). The core of her argument lies in the tableau of the Lord and Servant in Chapter 51 of the Long Text.

The interplay of shame and honour is central to the tableau, in the context of the glamorous chivalric imagery threading through the text. Here in the tableau Christ undergoes an inverted figuring of his saving mission, in which as a servant he is sent from his Lord's presence, first to fall ingloriously in a ditch, and then to sweat at a serf's labour until he can harrow hell and return triumphant with the 'rout' of liberated souls behind him, and take his place enthroned at God's right hand. The lowly status of the Servant at the beginning of the tableau is deliberately contrasted with his ascension to lordly honour at the end, by means of detailed coding of dress and behaviour. This use of the discourse of class status is marked, and in a separate showing nearly twenty years after her illness Julian is directly instructed to use these details to interpret the showing (xiv.51.73-76).

A further class-specific marker is the narrative structure of the tableau, which follows the Servant's fall, travails and final achievement of status and glory. Such a three-stage narrative is one of the most common romance plots, as described by Kathryn Hume: the hero moves from a secure and peacefully ordered existence (the first stage) into a state of challenge and disintegration (the second), to the trials of which he must submit in order to achieve reintegration and happiness (the final stage).[56] Chivalric romance was an aristocratic genre, involved in a citational give-and-take between the lived identity of the secular elite and the texts they read and wrote.[57] The type of romance plot Hume describes is invested in creating and sustaining this class's claim to status and power; James Simpson calls its pattern *comic* because it entails the healing and maintaining of the social body.[58] Julian's version of this plot has an almost mythic tone, as her orchestration of the markers of chivalric status comes to resemble the symbolic inversion that characterises a rite of

[56] This is what Hume calls a 'Type A' romance: the focus is wholly on the hero such that setting and challenges can be swapped out at will without the fundamental structure of the tale changing. Hume finds this pattern in for example *William of Palerne, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Bevis of Hampton* and 'The Wife of Bath's Tale'. While this type of romance is strongly mythic, like a folk tale, its restriction of its protagonists to upper class status, emphasis of social order as positive, and idealising tendency differentiate the romance from the tale; the prominence of the hero separates it from history; 'The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance,' *Philological Quarterly* 53 (1974 Spring): 158-180, 161-163, 169-170.
[57] *Performance of Self*, 2.
[58] *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 270.

passage as described by Arnold van Gennep.[59] The first stage, separation from society and its status order, leads to the liminal phase, where symbols of status are dramatically reversed, through which the initiant passes to the third stage, reintegration into the community with renewed status and honour. The three phases can be traced in the tableau as follows.

The original state of order and integration is hinted at in the image of the Lord, 'oure kinde fader', waiting for 'that time by his grace his deerwurthy sonne had brought againe his citte into the nobil fairhede with his harde traveyle' (xiv.51.128-129). Thus the overall plot for the tableau is the hero winning back his kingdom. The fall of the Servant into the slade is at once the Incarnation, which Christ undertook 'to excuse Adam from blame in heven and in erth' (xiv.51.190-191), and the Passion, his 'hard traveyle' (xiv.51.244). The text returns briefly to the language of Revelation 8, the detailed *Christus patiens* image of Jesus' tortured, abject flesh, and momentarily revisits the most clearly visualised and unusual detail, the morsels of flesh falling from his torn scalp (xiv.51.246-251, referring back to viii.17.12-22). The Servant's pain, the 'walowing and writhing, groning and moning' (xvi.51.13, 250-251), marks his fall into inversion, from which 'he might never rise all mightly fro that time that he was fallen into the maidens wombe, till his body was slaine and dede, he yelding the soule into the faders hand' (xiv.51.250-253). Here the third stage, reintegration, begins: 'And at this point, he beganne furst to show his might, for then he went into helle. And whan he was ther, then he raised uppe the gret root oute of the depe depnesse, which rightfully was knit to him in hey heven' (xiv.51.254-256). Through this act of *might*, the social body is reknit, and the Son takes on his rightful place again. The tableau ends with an explicit rhetorical flourish, contrasting the Servant's now-glorious status with the symbols of inversion that marked his liminality (xiv.51.265-280): Lord and Servant are on 'riche and nobil' thrones, rather than the bare earth, and the Son replaces the torn, indecently short kirtle and lowly position of a labourer for robes of 'blissefull largenesse', a crown, and the heir's position at the Father's right hand.[60] His reintegration

[59] *The Rites of Passage* (1909); further developed in Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

[60] The mention of his clothing is particularly telling, since dress, as the frontier between the individual person and society, had in late fourteenth century England unprecedented importance as an indicator of status and social identity; it was a charged subject, with moral, legal and class significance. Technological and economic advances, such as the establishment of a silk industry in Italy, trade in exotic materials like fur and oriental fabrics, and improved weaving techniques allowing the development of precise tailoring, contributed to the central role of clothing as

into the structure of authority and status is given the traditional finishing touch of a noble bride, whose title recalls the Belle Dames and Lady Blanches of romance: with the addition of a few capital letters she might appear as 'the Fair Maiden of Endlesse Joy' (xiv.51.277-278). All in all, in the same way as Revelation 5 staged the Passion as a chivalric combat in the arena of honour and shame, now the tableau in Revelation 14 widens the plot to include Christ's entire saving mission, from Incarnation to Ascension, as a romance quest or 'assay' (Julian uses this terms in xvi.70.33).

As Julian expands on her initial description of the tableau, the images used to evoke the Servant's status inversion become even more strongly marked. Not only is his appearance characterised by classic signs of poverty, humility and nakedness, but also he comes into contact with social roles considered most shameful in late-medieval courtly society: he labours in the garden, and prepares and serves its produce to his lord. On one level, the image recalls the *Noli me tangere* scene of John 20, where Mary Magdalene takes the resurrected Christ for a gardener.[61] At the ritual level, however, Stephanie Trigg notes that symbolic humiliations for knights in the late medieval period often involved cooks and kitchens, for example Havelok who works as a kitchen boy before his status is discovered.[62] The power of the shame thus invoked arises from the contrast between the knight's public, visible status and authority on the one hand, and the cook's association with the hidden, baser material needs of life on the other. As Lynn Staley points out, too, the historical context of the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, very public scenes of which were played out in Norwich, makes Julian's depiction of the Servant particularly shocking. His clothes show him to be a 'contynuant laborer' and a 'hard traveler'; the hint at 'traveller' as well as 'travailer' is startling, since after the Revolt there was a crack-down on the mobility of agricultural workers particularly.[63] Thus humiliation through contact with everything

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symbolic capital, even within the conspicuous consumption so much a part of aristocratic self-definition; Crane, *Performance of Self*, 13-15.

[61] The York Cycle's *Wynedrawers' Play*, which depicts this scene, shows Jesus as both gardener and courtly knight, but does not invoke the status difference between these roles as Julian does; see 'The Wynedrawers: Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene After the Resurrection', in *York Plays*, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, 421-425 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963).

[62] *Shame and Honor*, 127, 136-137. Fifteenth-century examples include Malory's Gareth; see also the provision in Writhe's late fifteenth-century *Garter Book* that a newly instituted knight have his spurs struck off by the Master Cook with a warning that this will be his punishment if he betrays his sovereign lord; *Medieval Pageant: Writhe's Garter Book and the Earldom of Salisbury Roll*, eds Anthony Wagner, Nicolas Barker and Ann Payne (London: Roxburghe Club, 1993), 74.

[63] Staley, 'Julian of Norwich and the Crisis of Authority', 167.

other to knighthood's claim to glamour and public status is precisely the humiliation that Julian's Servant figure undergoes.

James Simpson argues that the brush with contamination is the core dynamic of this kind of romance plot. Such narrative structures, he notes, arise out of clear oppositions, for example between merchants and nobles, women and men, sons and fathers, or wild and cultivated, and the trials the hero undergoes consist of '[s]hameful contact with all that is other to the noble order'.[64] Simpson's exemplar is *Sir Amadace*, a tail-rhyme romance written between 1350 and 1400. The plot begins with Amadace, whose chivalric *largesse* has impoverished him, deciding to retreat to the wilderness until he can repay his debts. He comes upon a lady mourning over the body of her dead husband, a merchant who also lost his money through over-much *largesse* and whose debtors will not allow him to be buried. Amadace spends his last money settling with these debtors and paying for a magnificent funeral for the merchant. Now destitute, Amadace is rescued by a mysterious knight who promises to supply his chivalric needs in return for half his future gains. Amadace is then able to win a tournament in a nearby kingdom and marry the king's daughter, with whom he has a son. The knight reappears and demands half of Amadace's most precious winnings: his wife and son, rather than his money or lands. Amadace's wife persuades her husband to honour his promise, but just as he is about to cut her in two the knight stops him, revealing that he is in fact the merchant, come from the grave to show his gratitude. Amadace buys back his original land, recalls his household, and later becomes king of his father-in-law's land.[65]

On the surface, *Sir Amadace* upholds the ideology of chivalric honour, since the hero has to do nothing but consistently behave as a good knight should (distributing *largesse*, helping women in distress, winning tournaments, keeping his word), to ensure his eventual happiness and success. However, on another level Amadace and the merchant are shamefully similar. Amadace shows no more *largesse* than does the merchant, and in the end is forced to commodify his own wife and son. He only wins the tournament because he is supplied by the merchant, who can perfectly convincingly impersonate a knight. Similarly, Amadace's final position also depends on a woman, because only by marrying a princess does he become king. As Simpson summarizes his reading, the deeper structures

[64] *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 272.
[65] *Ibid*., 266-267. See p.271 n.35 for a list of the romances that can be grouped as following this plot structure.

of the romance teach that 'the civilized order survives only by entering into, and having commerce with, all that threatens it, even to the point of the barbarism of almost killing one's own family'. The plots tend to extravagance because the challenges a romance hero faces necessitate the 'near transgression of fundamental taboos', revealing the inadequacy of ethical systems and other resources of civilised order. Romance plots operate at a level deeper than this order. They express and contain 'gentil' shame.[66]

Simpson does not note the strong similarity between this romance plot dynamic and the rite of passage. Yet the resemblance is not surprising, since as Caroline Walker Bynum reminds us, the three-stage rite of passage structure tends to characterise the stories of those of high status; only those in power experience liminality as the *suspension* of social and normative structures, characterised by images of inversion. The 'dichotomy of structure and chaos', for which liminality is a release, is only an issue for elites, who *are* the structures.[67] Such ritualised performances of status inversion were also part of late fourteenth-century English royal practice; kings from Edward II to James II, for example, consciously invoked the ritual trajectory of Christ's *kenosis* by washing the feet of the poor on Holy Thursday, as an act of *imitatio* that 'accrues symbolic capital for the monarch'.[68] The class definition of the nobility stressed 'an active role in the bringing of order to a disordinate world',[69] and so this kind of romance expressed some of the tensions integral to this definition with enormous, sometimes even mythic power.

This depth of ritual symbolism is what Julian harnesses, through her use of romance tropes of status and inversion, to increase the 'symbolic resonance' and 'mythic capital'[70] of the salvation narrative. In Revelation 5, the Passion is framed as chivalric combat in which Christ wins worship, and here in the tableau he is shown encountering and overcoming shame. This shame has haunted Julian's understanding of Christ's death, as a contrast to his royal and honourable status: 'No tonge maye telle, ne herte fully thinke, the paines that oure savioure sufferde for us, haffande rewarde to the worthines of the hyest, worshipfulle kinge and to the shamefulle, dispittous, and painfulle dede. For he that was hieste and

[66] *Ibid.*, 272, 273.
[67] Caroline Walker Bynum points out that Turner's dramatic pattern is usually confined to men's stories in medieval culture; 'Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality,' *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, 27-52 (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 32-34, 36-37, 49-50.
[68] Trigg, *Shame and Honor*, 79.
[69] Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 23.
[70] To borrow terms that Trigg applies to the Garter myth, *Shame and Honor*, 75.

worthiest was fulliest noghthede and witterliest dispiside' (XI.10-13, viii.20.5-8; see also XII.18-19, ix.22.19-20). Shame is a central weakness of the warrior Christ trope, since Christ only conquers his enemy by submitting to defeat by death. The notion of crucifixion as a shameful way to die is traditional;[71] in Julian's version, Christ's momentary loss of 'worshipfulle' status becomes the finishing touch of his utter *kenosis*. The traditional reading of this self-emptying is that Christ's humility lies in his deigning to take on human nature. But as discussed in Chapter 2, Julian insists that this is no humiliation. The tableau suggests an alternative: the Servant's fall in the tableau represents both Jesus's fall into our world and Adam's fall into sin. Characteristically of Julian's important images, this fall's two interpretations exist side-by-side, neither superseding the other. The juxtaposition suggests how though Jesus remains sinless, his incarnation brings him into contact somehow with sin. Julian stresses that sin is *unnatural*; it is called variously 'wurse, viler, and painfuller than hell', 'unclene' and 'horrible' (xiv.63.11-13), 'unkind' and so 'contrare' to holiness that it cannot occupy the same space with it (xvi.72.3). Sin is utterly *other* to being, and so to God. It is the enormity of Christ's act in stepping so near to this otherness that Julian conveys by means of her romance narrative of status inversion. In the context of this narrative, we can explore more how sin is behovely.

Profits of tribulation

Julian's argument ultimately falls within the popular notion of the profits of tribulation, that is, that we gain overall through our experience of suffering. She uses the term several times (e.g.xiv.56.31-32). In the same vein, Margery Kempe begins her book by telling of her tribulations and counting up how they added to her spiritual profit, and the *Prickynge of Love*'s translator frequently expands his original's discussion of self-loathing to explain that tribulation is beneficial precisely because it drives one inward.[72]

At the beginning of the discussion of sin as 'behovely', both texts agree in the standard teaching that with Christ we have to be humbled by suffering until 'we be fulle purgede:

[71] For example, Clare of Assisi, in a final letter composed from her deathbed in 1253, encourages Agnes of Prague to 'contemplate the ineffable love with which he was willing to suffer on the tree of the cross and to die there a kind of death that is more shameful than any other'. *Clare's Letters to Agnes: Texts and Sources*, ed. and trans. Joan Mueller (St Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 2001), 95.

[72] *Book of Margery Kempe*, 43-44. *The Prickynge of Love*, ed. Harold Kane. Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies 92:10. 2 vols (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1983), 96. Literature of tribulation forms something of a genre in its own right; see the manuscripts listed under this category in Peter S. Joliffe, *A Check-list of Middle English Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974).

that is to say, to we be fully noghted of oure awne dedely fleshe, and of alle oure inwarde affections whilke ere nought goode' (XIII.50-51, xiii.27.15-17). In this way we learn to know our weakness and 'aske mercy' (XIII.57, xiii.27.25). Julian includes sin in this purgative suffering; in Section 17 of the Short Text and Revelation 13.39 of the Long, she turns to the recognisable language of penitential literature (as discussed in Chapter 2) to discuss how through the affective programme of contrition, compassion and longing for God, and the sacrament of penance, sin can teach us meekness (XVII.22-31, xiii.39.1-23 see also xiv.61.12-15). We must take 'comfort' (XIII.53, 57, 59, xiii.27.21, 25, 27), because God has compassion on our pain and focuses on the beneficial effects of sin, not on our guilt.

Julian's argument does not stop here, however. Her insight into God's compassion for us becomes performative, and she joins, as far as she is able to, in this infinite compassion as she considers her frail 'evencristene' (XIII.65-67, xiii.28.1-3). In the Long Text, her compassion expands to become a broad sorrowful awareness of being a member of the struggling, fallible church, 'shaked in sorow and anguish and tribulation in this worlde as men shaketh a cloth in the winde' (xiii.28.5-6). To this sense of the human condition as tragic Christ then speaks, *delighting* over our tribulations: "A, a gret thing shalle I make herof in heven of endlesse wurshippe and of everlasting joye" (xiii.28.7-8, also xiii.28.9-10). Thus the first suggestion is made that somehow sin can *increase* our worship, rather than debase it.

The two keys to how sin can contribute to our honour, how it is 'behovely' in the story of human nobility, are firstly that, as discussed above, not only our perfect substance but also our fallible sensuality and its sinfullness provide opportunities for imitating Christ, and secondly that Julian makes this argument using her ritualised romance narrative of salvation history. Speaking of the Lord in the tableau as he watches his Servant fall, Julian says, 'mightely he enjoyeth in the falling, for the hye raising and fulhed of blisse that mankinde is come to, overpassing that we shuld have had if he had not fallen. And thus to se this overpassing noblete was my understonding led into God in the same time that I saw the servant falle' (xiv.52.38-41). This falling symbolises *both* Christ's saving mission via the *kenosis* of his Incarnation and Passion, and our weakness and sin. A little earlier in Revelation 14, Julian spells out how our 'failing' imitates Christ's *kenosis*: 'in as moch as we faile, in so mekille we falle, and in as mekille we falle, in so mekille we die. For us behoveth nedes to die in as moch as we faile sighte and feling of God that is oure life. Oure failing is

dredfulle, oure falling is shamful, and oure dying is sorowful' (xiv.48.17-21). This last sentence describes our experience of sin, formed of a combination of fear ('dred') arising out of our powerlessness to avoid it, shame at dishonouring God and ourselves, and pure suffering ('sorow') in being separated from God. This pattern mirrors Christ's *kenosis* very closely, from his introduction to finitude and fear when he was incarnated, through his shameful execution as a criminal, to his actual physical death. It is fairly straightforward to understand how bearing suffering is an *imitatio Christi*; as discussed in Chapter 3, this is the logic on which affective devotion is based. However, how sin can be a following in Christ's footsteps seems baffling.

The answer begins to appear in Julian's discussion of our inability to forgive ourselves for our fallibility and 'contrariousnes', in which grace is revealed as that which turns our shame into honour:

> For grace werketh oure dredful failing into plentuouse and endlesse solace, and grace werketh oure shameful falling into hye, wurshippeful rising, and grace werketh oure sorowful dying into holy, blisseful life.
>
> For I saw full sekerly that ever as oure contrariousnes werketh to us here in erth paine, shame, and sorow, right so, on the contrary wise, grace werketh to us in heven solace, wurship, and blisse overpassing . . . (xiv.48.30-35)

The courtly context links back to Revelation 6, heaven as a spectacular courtly feast where our fame is broadcast publicly by God himself.[73] God's grace and 'keping' ensures that sin, rather than being a permanent descent into guilt and shame, has the capacity to instead work like a knightly 'assay', a three-stage journey like Christ's saving mission sketched in the tableau's romance plot. Through sinning and then realising that we can repent, that we desire to do so, and that our desire for God is never slaked, we come to know the truth about our substance: our 'kind [is] assayde in the fyer of tribulation, and therin founde no lack nor no defaute. Thus is kind and grace of one accorde' (xiv.63.6-7). The inference is that if we did not risk sin, we would not be able to imitate Christ fully: 'by his suffrance throw gostely enmite we are asayde in the faith and made mighty. For if oure faith had not enmite it shulde deserve no mede' (xvi.70.32-34). Just as a knight has to undergo 'assays' where he comes into contact with his other, though actually his fundamental nobility is never in doubt, so we have to encounter what is 'unkind' while remaining perfect in our

[73] Watson and Jenkins read the 'wurship' of line 35 as God's honour, which he saves by keeping his word to make 'all well'. This is compatible with my reading, because the honour of a patron and that of his clients are mutually reinforcing.

substantial union with God. In both our perfection and our encounters with shame, we imitate Christ. Julian takes the unpleasant reality of sin and manages its shame by converting it into a chivalric ritual, simultaneously making conversion and repentance into symbolic capital in her interpretive community.[74]

This increase in status is then integrated into Julian's Augustinian model of the soul, discussed in the first section of this chapter. God is goodness, which expresses itself in creation as being (or 'kindhede'), mercy and grace; these three are 'oure groundes, in which we have oure being, oure encrese, and oure fulfilling'. Our task in life is 'to have knowing of [these grounds], ever more and more . . . . For fully to know them and clerely to se them is not elles but endles joy and blisse that we shall have in heven' (xiv.56.33-44). In and of himself, God is utter 'rightfullhede', as Julian learns in the Long Text version of the showing of God 'in a pointe' (iii.11.1, 20-25), in which righteousness we share in our perfect substance. But unless through our weakness and sin we give him an opportunity to show them, we would never know his mercy and grace.[75] For this reason, 'wickednesse hath been suffered to rise contrary to [God's] goodnesse' (xiv.59.1-6). Mercy only operates in time, until all is made well; as such it is a secondary quality as opposed to God's goodness and righteousness[76] but nonetheless it is an expression of his abundance and perfection. The finite, fallible part of our nature, our sensuality, is thus just as necessary in revealing God to us as is our perfect substance, which is why we were made 'doubil' (xiv.56.51).

This argument immediately raises other problems, however. How can all be 'welle' if we have to risk the effects of evil and sin, which include terrible suffering and even damnation (xiii.33.6-22, 39.1-4)? Julian insists that God guarantees our safety, in a sustained and double-sided image of 'keeping': as a lord maintains his servants, and a mother ensures

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[74] McCord Adams makes an argument also from shame, but without the courtly context. God and creatures are ontologically incommensurate, and so sin is not a moral category, since morality implies a framework of obligations between commensurate agents. Julian sees sin not as rebellion, which would produce guilt, but incompetence, which threatens autonomy and produces shame. He is not angry with us, and so does not "forgive" us in the economic sense of debt, but instead overcomes our shame with his courtesy. Our worst punishment is enduring our weakened condition. 'Theologically, sin is an impropriety in the relation between God and created persons … a two-tiered understanding, where sin is to be identified, at both levels, with uncleanness rooted in incompetence, and seen as a problem for Divine-human relations to which Divine love is an indispensable solution'. 'Sin as Uncleanness,' *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991), 16-17, 20.

[75] As noted by many scholars e.g. Hide, *Gifted Origins*, 97; Van Engen, 'Sin and Salvation in Julian,' 8-9.

[76] Watson and Jenkins sidenotes.

that her adventurous children come to no permanent harm, so God 'keeps' us. Both the relationship between feudal lord and retainer and that between mother and child are, in Julian's formulation of them, deeply rooted in 'kinde'. As Andrew Galloway shows, 'kyndenesse' was the Middle English translation of the scholastic term *gratitudo*, meaning the ethic of personal dependence, an inborn duty grounded in our natural affinity with each other, that was held to underlie all interpersonal ties from fear of God, to family and social loyalties, and down to more transient obligations. 'Kyndely' has various connotations of 'natural', 'cohering by affinity' and 'reciprocal'.[77] Both images, of mother and lord, firmly insist on love as a duty, a demand: the moment we are created, we are in God's debt, because our sensuality, 'failing' and falling short of the substance, chooses ill.[78] But correspondingly then, they also imply certainty of care.[79] A keyword in both texts is *comfort*: 'Alle this homely shewinge of oure curteyse lorde, it is a lovely lesson and a swete gracious teching of himselfe in comforthing of oure soule' (xvi.79.19-20; see e.g. XX.31). In section XVII of the Short Text (retained in Revelation 13 of the Long), as Julian struggles with the idea that sin is inescapable, she says she experiences 'a softe drede' (XVII.2). She

[77] Galloway, 'From *Gratitudo* to 'Kyndenesse,' 369, 372, 382. Galloway suggests that kyndenesse became a 'keyword' which late medieval 'preachers, chroniclers, noblemen, and poets used to think about and indeed to give structure to social and religious ties', because its lexical possibilities suited 'the many distinctive late-medieval forms of community or corporate identity in which reciprocation and close affinity or ideas of such affinity cohere', such as monasteries, guilds, family chantries, and the 'system of noble household affinities' signalled by the wearing of livery; *ibid*., 374. Julian's idealised image of such a feudal affinity, which she uses to explore the Trinity and our place in its joy, is thus just as much an image of kinship as it is of hierarchy.

[78] For a similar argument on love as debt, see McGinn's discussion of Hadewijch of Antwerp; *Flowering of Mysticism*, 206-207. Marguerite Porete also defines sin broadly as any act in which the soul does not will the best, so that sin is our constant condition until the will is annihilated. We only possess God's full goodness when we realise that he overcomes our utter wretchedness; in other words, we have to descend from (preexisting) perfection into imperfection so that we can attain higher perfection, full union with God in his divine goodness. This is why she calls God the *Loingprés*, the FarNigh, because he is best understood as a dialectical relationship 'both infinitely distant and unknown and for that very reason more "here" in its absence'; McGinn, *Flowering of Mysticism*, 255-256.

[79] In this Julian's noble subject is again unlike the courtly lover self of *mystique courtoise* and closer to the bride self of Cistercian *Brautmystik*. As Barbara Newman traces, the bride is characterized by *certainty*; though she lives out a rhythm of desire alternating with fulfillment, she always knows that she is beloved, and projects her future as the fruitful mother of virtues and spiritual children. Though she yearns and languishes in the times of her lover's absence, her posture is one of waiting for an arrival she knows will come. Her work in these times of waiting (prayer and charity) is constructed as pastoral, caring for the bridegroom's property. In contrast, the courtly lover self of *Minnemystik* is unfulfilled and tormented by desire; the beloved is idealized as one vastly superior, unapproachable and unobtainable, whose answering love is always doubted and who must be courted by long, anxious and abject service. The works of charity are depicted as a means of earning love, and ensuring a place for the lover among the courtly few who are capable of the high service of love. *From Virile Woman*, 144-145.

has been taught over and over in the course of the revelation about God's love, yet she still finds the reality of sin so awful that it prevents her from feeling the peace and joy God offers. The fear she describes is quite unlike the emotive awareness of sinfullness promoted by affective meditation; it is more a kind of paralyzing existential block. Christ's answer to her dread is to say, "I kepe the fulle sekerly" (XVII.2-3; xiii.37.8-9). His words offer comfort at this same deep level, that of Julian's fundamental sense of security. The existential power of the assurance lies in the verb 'kepe', which has many connotations in Middle English, suggesting not only 'protect', 'preserve' and 'defend', but also 'take care of / support' and 'honour a commitment to / adhere to'.[80] In the context of God's dual character as knight and lord, 'keep' comes to have distinctly feudal connotations.

God's motherhood and lordship operate in our lives as his mercy and grace: 'Mercy is a pitteful properte, which longeth to moderhode in tender love. And grace is a wurshipful properte, which longeth to ryal lordshippe in the same love' (xiv.48.23-25). Both of these images of interpersonal relationships explore the choreography of the space between humankind and God, created by our hierarchical but eternally loving relation. We have seen above that God's being, mercy and grace are the foundations of 'oure being, oure encrese, and oure fulfilling'. Julian's word order suggests a reading of her distinction between mercy and grace in terms of the difference between *increase* and *fulfilling*. God's mercy, to which belong the maternal properties of 'keping, suffering, quicking, and heling' (xiv.48.26), achieves our 'encrese', that is, makes good the suffering and damage caused by sin and allows us to grow in knowledge of our frailty and need for our mother's loving care. This is the context of the repeated image, mentioned in this chapter's second section, of Christ our mother pregnant with us and with all virtue (xiv.57.32-39, see also 42-43); the whole course of our earthly existence, body and soul developing together, is our growing up 'into stature' (xiv.55.26-31). God's grace, in contrast, is responsible for the patron's duties of 'raising, rewarding (endlesly overpassing that oure loving and our traveyle deserveth), spreding abrode, and shewing the hye, plentuouse largesse of Goddes ryal lordshippe in his mervelous curtesy' (xiv.48.26-29) in other words, of our 'fulfilling'.

This fulfilling is in excess of what we have earned by suffering; later, in xiv.58, Julian expands on the actions of 'our good lord': 'He werketh, rewarding and geving. Rewarding is large geving of treth that the lorde doth to them that hath traveyled, and geving is a

[80] *MED* 'kepen' (v.) senses 11a) and b), 13, 14a) and b), 15b) and 22a).

curtesse werking which he doth frely of grace, fulfilling and *overpassing* alle that is deserved of creatures' (xiv.58.43-46; my emphasis). Here the Spirit fulfils his patronly duty of rewarding his men for services rendered, which in late medieval England could take the form of retaining fees and or annuities.[81] He seems to be a particularly generous lord, because he gives more than he is duty-bound to give; this is a further characterisation of God's perfect lordly virtue, a sign that he has proper courtly *largesse*.[82] This leads Julian into a meditation on *largesse* – which she calls 'the properte of a gladde gever' (ix.23.29ff). God's deeds perform his words, because she notes that this teaching is shown 'plentuously and fully' (ix.23.34).[83]

The Long Text explains the mechanism of this argument: each sin leads to proportionate pain, and each of these pains will be rewarded with proportionate joy in heaven, so that overall sinners will receive *more* bliss than if they had not 'sinned or fallen', that is, failed through sin or weakness (xiii.38.1-6, 27-28; see also xiv.49.38-45). The logic lies in God's nature:

> For the soule that shalle come to heven is so precious to God, and the place so wurshipfulle, that the goodnes of God suffereth never that soule to sinne that shalle come ther but which sinne shal be rewarded. And it is made knowen without end and blissefully restored by overpassing worshipes. (xiii.38.6-9)

In the context of the sustained lordship imagery, God's character makes sense here as so good a lord, to whom his servants are so 'precious', that it is not fitting to the honour of his house that he let any of their hardship or labour go unrewarded with fame and 'overpassing' honour. In the tableau of the Lord and Servant, the Lord performs this defining aspect of his role and identity, in his speech "Lo, my beloved servant":

> "Lo, my beloved servant, what harme and disses he hath had and taken in my servis for my love – yea, and for his good wille! It is not skille that I reward him his frey and his drede, his hurt and his maime, and alle his wo? And not only this, but

[81] Barratt, 'Julian of Norwich and the Holy Spirit', 81.
[82] Largesse was a sign of the conspicuous consumption held to be inherent to noble nature, though in actual practice it was a carefully planned rather than spontaneous expression of nobility; Mertes, 'Aristocracy,' 51.
[83] Julian does not seem to worry, as does the dreamer in *Pearl*, about the logistics of heaven where all are equally honoured, even those who like the Pearl maiden died young before they could serve God in any signal way (*Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, stanzas 36ff). The *Pearl* maiden's response, however, is similar to Julian's in its logic of courtly *largesse*. She cites the parable of the workers in the vineyard from Matthew 20:1-16. Christ the 'gentyl Cheuentayn is no chyche', but rather his gifts run freely like water and his 'franchyse is large' enough to reward every baptised soul splendidly (lines 605-612). The comparison of the gentil chieftain's largesse and the implied parsimony of a churl is drawn directly from courtly ideology.

> falleth it not to me to geve him a gifte that be better to him and more wurshipful than his owne hele shuld have bene? And els me thinketh I did him no grace." (xiv.51.40-45)

Here the lord image becomes most fully realised; as Watson and Jenkins note, the term *grace* takes on a clearly feudal sense.

This knightly imagery suggests a reading of Julian's enigmatic notion of the 'token' of sin which the holy sinners like Mary Magdalene and John of Beverly wear in heaven (XVII.15-20, xiii.38.10-17). The word 'token' combines the senses of a symbol or reminder, a trace or scar, and a badge or design for a banner.[84] Julian insists that the scars of victorious battle with sin will not disappear; both 'domes' 'shalle be knowen, in heven without ende' (xiv.45.9-10), and the 'token' of sin is no longer shame but worship to man (XVII.15, xiii.38.1). As Watson and Jenkins note, here Julian goes considerably further than the traditional argument from Anselm, seen for example in the *Pricke* (ll.8297-8264), that the saved remember their sins in heaven without shame.[85] The role of the body in chivalric honour is always ambivalent; on the one hand, in such a public economy the body's ability to display is central to the symbolic capital of honour, and yet on the other what displays honour can equally advertise shame. To prove prowess the chivalric warrior has to risk physical annihilation. As Louise Fradenburg remarks, battle scars on a chivalric warrior's body are 'marks of risk . . . proud signs of the capacity of the surface to reconstitute itself'.[86] The 'tokens' born by repentant sinners are witnesses to the power of God's mercy and grace to rewrite signs of shame into signs of honour. These signs, like heraldic livery and badges, are also powerful means of constituting a community. These sinners have gone through the same trial as their lord Jesus, and the marks of the Passion and the marks of sin become one. Julian calls John of Beverley 'a hende neighbur' (xiii.38.19), one of a community of repentant sinners that we can all join. Susan Crane remarks that liveries, while they suppressed identity in marking the wearer as owing loyalty to someone else, simultaneously empowered the individual wearer as part of a corporate identity; the wearers sustained each other as well as their lord.[87] What matters is our ability to read the 'tokens' correctly, as signs of honour rather than shame. Julian models this skill along the

[84] Senses 1, 3, 6 and 7 in the *MED*. Hilton uses the term 'tokens' to refer to the psychological and affective signs by which one can tell a contemplative who is reformed in feeling (*Scale* II.41.3022).
[85] Watson and Jenkins sidenotes to xiii.38.1.
[86] Louise Olga Fradenburg, *City, Marriage, Tournament: Arts of Rule in Late Medieval Scotland* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 189.
[87] Crane, *Performance of Self*, 40.

lines of courtly knowledge of heraldry – the ability to *read* heraldic representations. Such knowledge, like the technical jargon of hunting, was 'the scholarship of the aristocracy', according to John of Salisbury, and functioned as a 'private technical vocabulary' marking off an elite.[88] This adds another strand to the heuristic fantasy Julian evokes by means of her courtly imagery. The picture of the famous sinners in heaven is shown 'merily', she says, 'to make us glad and mery in love' (xiii.38.11, 29-30). This is the same merriment, *debonair* joy, in which Julian sees the Crucifixion in Revelation 5.

Julian's claim, quoted in the introduction to this chapter, that God wants us to live 'gladly and merely for his love' now makes sense. Our on-going experience of fallibility and partiality, as well as of sin, is the continuation of Christ's Passion (viii.20.20-22), and proper to our human nature. Julian has her Christ say explicitly, "For I telle thee, howsoever thou do, thou shalle have wo. And therfore I wille that thou wisely know thy penance, which thou arte in continually, and that thou mekely take it for thy penance" (xvi.77.29-32). No particular asceticism or self-abnegation is needed as *imitatio Christi*. At the end of Revelation 8 the properness of this penance is expressed by means of the knight imagery: in order for us to be 'eyers with [Christ] in his blisse', sharing in his 'worshippe . . . in his kingdom', we have to 'be in disees and traveyle with him' now (viii.21.21-26). By having known the instability and 'contrariousnes' of our divided nature, we will take greater joy when God makes us as 'unchaungeable as he is' (xiv.49.38, 44-45); by 'fail[ing] oftimes of the sight of him, and . . . fall[ing] into oureselfe' and consequently being 'traveyled and tempested with feling of sinne and of paine in many diverse maner', we increase 'his owne wurshippe and . . . oure endlesse joy' (xiv.48.32-38). The notion of ordinary life as penance is a classic of eremitic literature, including the English anchoritic tradition, with the warrior's power an enduring metaphor of spiritual strength against temptation.[89] Barbara Newman notes that this notion of being a soldier fighting for God by resisting the world, the flesh and the devil was gender neutral, available to both men and

[88] Davies, *Lords and Lordship*, 31.

[89] The eremitic tradition, through texts like Hugh of St Victor's *De Arrha Animae* and the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century, retained the notion of Christian life as heroic struggle after the example of Christ; see Le May, *Allegory of the Christ-Knight*; Savage and Watson, *Anchoritic Spirituality*, notes 399. As Nicholas Watson demonstrates, anchoritic texts like the *Ancrene Wisse*, the *Wooing* group and the *Katherine* group give the anchoritic life the 'status of a heroic battle against spiritual opponents and as a witness to the world'; 'Methods and Objectives of Thirteenth-century Anchoritic Devotion,' 141.

women.[90] The imagery's association with authority, power, fame and status would be tremendously attractive, particularly so for women and for recluses, excluded as they were from direct participation in this area of public life. The inbuilt capability of chivalry to function as a personal ideal, a model for 'mental self-realisation',[91] made it particularly suited to the intimate, one-on-one style of spirituality characteristic of the late medieval period. Julian's remarks on how to cope with the penance that is ordinary life reveal that this kind of mental self-realisation, this performance of self, is what she means to teach:

> But this was shewde specially and highly and with fulle lovely chere: that we shulde mekely and patiently bere and suffer that penance that God himself geveth us, with minde of his blessed passion. For whan we have minde of his blessed passion, with pitte and love, then we suffer with him, like as his frendes did that saw it. . . . This place is prison, this life is penance, and in the remedy he wille that we enjoy. The remedy is that oure lorde is with us, keping us and leding us into fulhed of joy. (xvi.77.22-34)

The mention of the privileged 'frendes' who stood under the cross links back to Julian's original youthful desire for *imitatio Christi*. The joy of sharing in Christ's warrior glory, of his constant 'keping', is the result of the particular heuristic fantasy the text has built up.

How successful this fantasy would be, of course, would very much depend on audience. To a member of the chivalric classes, familiar as Julian seems to be with courtly literature, the imagery of courtliness would not be merely intellectual, but also behavioural, emotional, political and imaginative, encompassing the varied rituals, practices and symbols of dress, word and gesture that mark the relative statuses of the lord and servant, and choreograph the simultaneous presence to and distance from each other that is their feudal relationship. Yet for all its beauty, this imagery is rooted in class ideology. The danger of forgetting this fact can be seen in one of the earliest scholarly studies of Julian's courtesy imagery, by Anna Maria Reynolds. She reads courtesy quite unreflectively at face value, as the aesthetic expression of the superior status of the aristocracy and the justness of the

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[90] Newman, *From Virile Woman*, 21. In the wider European context, McNamer notes about the earliest Italian version of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* shares several features with the romance genre, for example, sentence constructions such 'as "*hora torniamo a miser Iesu Cristo*" (f. 46r) ("now let's return to lord Jesus Christ")' that 'are frequently found in romance (e.g., "now let us leave Tristan and turn to Isolde")'; *Affective Meditation*, 114. In the Middle English tradition, *The xii Frutes of the Holy Goost* likens its female reader to 'a famous and worthy knight who would be glad when he has a chance to prove his knightly prowess with another worthy knight like himself'; *A Devout Treatyse Called the Tree and the xii Frutes of the Holy Goost*, ed. J.J. Vaissier (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1960) 81, see also 99. Similarly *The Pore Caitif* describes how St Catherine 'did not lose spirit in hardship, rather she devoted the power of knighthood to her lord'; *The Pore Caitif: Edited from MS Harley 2336*, ed. Mary Teresa Brady (New York: Fordham University Press, 1954), 195.

[91] Brewer, 'Courtesy and the *Gawain*-poet,' 85.

chivalric violence on which this status is based.[92] The question must be considered, as I briefly suggested in Chapter 3, whether courtly imagery can ever be used in a manner that frees it of the violence and inequality inherent to late medieval class structures.

Julian's politics

Romance imagery is politically problematic, since it depends on the assumption that the knight's right to wield violence in the interests of honour, and the lord's right to authority, status and wealth based on this violence, are simply facts of reality. Romances champion earthly self-realisation and social success. In the organic imaginary that underpins the feudal system, earthly courtesy as marker of courtly status is seen as an extension of the heavenly courtesy of God, which governs the life of heaven.[93] God underwrites the lord's authority. The *Gawain*-poet, for example, in *Cleanness* stresses how Christ, who was born 'clanly' and remained 'ful cortays þerafter, / Þat alle þat longed to luþer ful lodly He hated, / By nobleye of His norture He nolde neuer towche / O3t þat watz vngoderly oþer ordure watz inne' (lines 1089-1092). It makes sense then that Christ's courtesy leads him to want to heal and help those filthy in body and soul e.g. lepers, the lame, the blind, the dropsical,

> Alle called on þat Cortayse and claymed His grace
> He heled hem wyth hynde speche of þat þay ask after,
> For whatso He towched also tyd tourned to hele,
> Wel clanner þen any crafte cowþe devyse.
> So clene watz His hondelyng vche ordure hit schonied. (lines 1097-1101)

In his human appearance he is the epitome of courtesy, with courtesy and heavenly grace blended into 'a single ideal of existence'.[94] The poet sees clearly that courtly riches, splendour and power can be misused, for example by Belshazzar in the same poem (*Cleanness* 1365-1528), but in themselves he sees nothing wrong.[95]

This problematic association of courtly status with worldly wealth and sophistication is highlighted in reverse by another common trope, which employs status and wealth to symbolise the world that must be sacrificed for love of God. *The Wohunge of Ure Lauerd*, for example, uses courtly imagery to express spiritual inequality and imbalance, with Christ a homeless exile and the 'I' persona negatively marked by economic wealth and

[92] Reynolds, '"Courtesy" and "Homeliness",' 13.
[93] W.O. Evans, '"Courtaysye" in Middle English Literature,' *Medieval Studies* 29 (1967): 161-183.
[94] A similar use of courtesy as 'a partial synonym for heavenly grace' is common in *Pearl*; Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, 8-9.
[95] Brewer, 'Courtesy and the *Gawain*-Poet,' 59-60.

social benefits and position.[96] Alternately, the courtly imagery can be redirected towards individual and spiritual transcendence rather than 'social integration and earthly apotheosis'.[97] Sometimes, however, this transposition from worldly to heavenly is not wholly complete. An example is the carol 'Owt of Your Slepe Aryse and Wake':[98]

> Now man is brighter than the sonne; 11
> Now man in heven an hye shal wone;
> Blessyd be God this game is begonne,
> And his moder emperesse of helle.
> …
> Now, blessyd brother, graunte us grace, 26
> A domesday to se thy face
> And in thy courte to have a place,
> That we mow there synge nowel.

When linked with the affective idea of Christ as our 'brother', the literary markers of the *Christus triumphans* (the cosmic symbol of the sun, and the mention of Mary as empress) and of the warrior knight trope (the 'game' of battle and the 'court' of heaven) work to symbolise Christian ideals of transcendence, not to comment on temporal political realities. However, the carol's tone is distinctly triumphalist.[99]

It is very clear, however, that whatever pride Julian would have us take is an interior, spiritual pride, not *earthly* honour and status. In language unusually strong for the text, in fact a pastiche from *contemptus mundi* literature, Jesus vows to 'tobreke' us from 'the pompe and . . . the pride and the vaineglorye of this wreched life' (xiii.28.13-15). This is the Jesus who takes heed not only to 'nobille thinges and to gret, but also to litille and to small, to lowe and to simple, and to one and to other' xiii.32.4-5. Julian's nobility imagery here clearly works on the level of spiritual transcendence, not earthly authority or accomplishment. And as already mentioned, in Julian's model the ordinary person is a site of grandeur, not just the spiritual elite. Significant in the text is the widening of knightly associations to include Julian's entire audience – she calls them alternately her 'even-Christians' and 'God's lovers', both of which make no distinctions as to class. Her intended

[96] Denis Renevey, '1215-1349: Texts,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie, 91-112 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 98.
[97] Crane, *Insular Romance*, 103.
[98] In the fifteenth-century Bodleian MS Arch. Seldan B.26, f.14^{v}; No.9 in *English Religious Lyrics*, 7-8.
[99] Thomas of Hale's *Love Rune* falls into a similar trap, when it presents Christ as an eternally faithful, engagingly handsome and enormously wealthy lover so as to encourage religious fervour; the wealth of Christ the lover is of course figurative, standing for the spiritual wealth of grace and holiness he can bestow on those who love him, yet the literal meaning of the divine suitor's wealth could also have been strongly attractive. See Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*, 78-79.

audience (insofar as she had one) presumably could include people from a wide social range. Rather than a social class, 'nobility' is in the text explicitly linked to our shared human nature.

So Julian balances and undercuts the claims of courtly ideology in various ways. First, as suggested, she makes both the combat and the honour radically internal. Second, as mentioned above, she provides an alternative discourse surrounding this behoveliness, that of a caring mother bringing up her children. And finally, in her idealized version of the feudal bond she insists on a 'ground of love' (xiv.51.147) that unites lord and servant, rather than ties of self-interest or fear. This foundation in love gives to Julian's knight his air of compassion and gentleness, which appears distinctly when compared to other contemporary examples of the warrior trope. A poem by William Herebert, which like Julian's text depicts Christ saying 'I it am', is particularly telling:[100]

'What ys he, thys lordling, that cometh vrom the vyht
Wyth blod-rede wede so grysliche ydyht,
So vayre ycoyntised, so semlich in syht,
So styflyche yongeth, so douhti a knyht?'
'Ich hyt am, ich hyt am, that ne speke bote ryht,
Chaunpyon to helen monkunde in vyht.' ...

The dialogue structure gives an immediacy of staging very similar to Julian's text. Christ's boast, however, takes on an almost vengeful strictness:

Ich hoem habbe ytrodded in wrethe and in grome,
And al my wede ys byspreynd with hoere blod ysome,
And al my robe yvuled to hoere grete shome . . .
Ich loked al aboute som helpynge mon,
Ich souhte al the route, bote help nas ther non.
Hyt was myn oune strengthe that thys bote wrouhte,
Myn owe douhtynesse that help ther me brouhte.
Ich habbe ytrodded the volk in wrethe and in grome,
Adreynt al wyth shennesse, ydrawe doun with shome'.

This proud warrior seems to look down on the poor weak creatures he has had to save, who in return now owe him unquestioning obedience. The warrior image functions to make Christ seem separated from the rest of humankind, immeasurably superior in his divine power and courage. This model of aristocratic warrior authority had political currency in Julian's day, as mentioned in Chapter 3, being actively performed by Richard

[100] From MS Additional 46919, f.210[r]; no.40 in *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, 38 and notes.

II's father and grandfather, and by nobles such as Bishop Despenser of Norwich.[101] Julian's Christ, in contrast, is motivated by love: 'For the paine was a noble, precious, and wurshipfulle dede done in a time by the working of love' (ix22.38-40, see also ix.22.21-23). And as we all take part in the battle, each of us is the site of his victory. Within Julian's parable, the Servant, whose description places him fairly exactly as someone from the margins of contemporary society, reveals things about Christ's nature that the securely central warrior knight cannot, namely his humble joining with us in our weakness and fallibility. This chapter has read the space between knight and servant as a ritual marker of shame, but on another level it has quite literal meaning: as a parable of the social body, the farm labourer or cook imitates Julian's Christ as surely as does the knight.

This juxtaposition of knight and peasant also had immediate political significance, as Lynn Staley points out, since the language of class could hardly be used in the period of anxiety about social stability that followed the Peasant's Revolt without constituting a form of social criticism.[102] The text's insistence on the beauty and nobility of the Servant, despite his poor appearance, and his unchanging love for his lord when memories of the Peasants' Revolt were still fresh, must on one level have been a powerful parable to contemporary readers, teaching them to see in even the lowliest 'evencristen' the face of God. Julian in effect implies that contemporary ideas of lordship are unfaithful to Christ's example, and that contemporary vilification of marginal figures like peasants forgets the essential nobility of all human beings made in God's image. She blurs the lines between lordship and service, at a time when 'there was a pervasive effort to sharpen the boundaries between the two as a way of buttressing the notion of dominion and thereby of preserving the ideal of a hierarchically ordered society'.[103] Yet as a microcosm, as Staley acknowledges, the parable does not try to abolish social degrees.[104] As a romance acknowledges those "other" social strata, desires and practices on which the elite and its ideology ultimately depend, so the tableau keeps lord and servant in their mutual roles. Julian finds within the structures of the idealised version of feudal society she develops in her texts a deeply moving and theologically powerful field of imagery.

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[101] Staley says of the Bishop that he 'publically enacted a quality of "lordship" at the time when lordship appeared under attack'; 'Crisis of Authority,' 157.
[102] *Ibid.*, 164-165 167.
[103] *Ibid.*, 164-165.
[104] *Ibid.*, 168.

The splendour of chivalric status and accomplishment is thus recruited and, to a degree at least, rehabilitated by Julian, to enrich her showings' message of comfort. Courtly honour identity, due to its public, performative character, offers readers an imaginary within which to experience themselves before God as perfect in substance, despite the shame of sin. The site of courtly identity in the public space of reputation, existing between the self and another or others, also makes this identity suitable as an image for mystical subjectivity, the site of the mystic utterance. The imagery a mystical discourse uses for the site of the mystical utterance has to be capable of representing firstly, the initial dialogue (made up of divine hailing and the mystic's answering *volo*), secondly the soul as the space opened up by the untranscribable oral utterance the mystic feels he or she has received, and finally the discourse, the treatise or text, in which these 'operations of the soul' can be opened to others.[105] This chapter explored two superimposed images Julian uses that offer such a framework, those of soul as womb and as courtly city. These images are alike in that at their core they harbour the other who is yet infinitely close to the self: the courtly lord Christ in relation to whom we have identity and worth as courtly retainers, and the mother Christ who nurtures us within his body. The next chapter explores how Julian develops a pair of images from the imagistic field of courtliness – courtesy and its opposite, homeliness – to further script the subjectivity her text offers its readers. These images continue the double framework set up by the figures of womb and city; the intimacy of homeliness, associated with Christ our mother, is balanced by the distance of courtesy, associated with God our lord. The heuristic fantasy of the soul as noble is taken a stage deeper, as we learn to delight in our status as creatures before the infinite Creator.

[105] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 189.

Chapter 5: Courtesy, homeliness and beauty

Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.
W.B. Yeats 'A Prayer for my Daughter'[1]

Quick now, here, now, always –
T.S. Eliot 'Little Gidding'[2]

This final chapter discusses the more clearly mystical aspects of Julian's network of courtly imagery, compared to the theological and pastoral effects of her knight and lord metaphors, which were the focus of the preceding two chapters. We have seen that the imagery is central to the subjectivity Julian develops, and its resources for coping with practical questions of doctrine, such as how to manage the experiences of sin and forgiveness. Now I will examine how Julian extends this language of subjectivity which her text offers its readers, to encompass the mystical encounter itself.

Julian's model of intimacy with God must be understood in its context of contemporary thought and practice. Medieval contemplative theory saw the summit of the soul's progress to God as some kind of union with him. In the thirteenth century, a new conception of mystical union appeared as a 'union of indistinction' (*unitas indistinctionis*), in which both God and the soul are envisioned as abysses of bottomless love. Hadewijk of Antwerp was among the earliest proponents of this notion, although Meister Eckhart is more well-known. Bernard McGinn calls this development 'a major turning point in Western mysticism', a shift from the twelfth-century understanding of contemplation's pinnacle as 'loving union of finite spirit with Infinite Spirit (*unitas spiritus*)'.[3] As I noted above, when discussing Julian's concept of our substance as an exemplary part of our nature kept eternally in God,[4] her theology in this aspect owes more to the monastery than to the beguinage. Her exemplarist model of our perfection, in which sensuality is raised to wholeness with substance and we become 'like to himselfe in condetion as we be in kinde (xiv.41.32-33), seems to reference thirteenth-century developments. She yearns for union: 'for till I am substantially oned to him I may never have full reste ne very blisse: that is to

[1] Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy (eds), *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 1196-1198, lines 77-80.
[2] T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991), 181.
[3] *Flowering of Mysticism*, 217.
[4] See Chapter 4 p.109.

say, that I be so fastned to him that ther be right nought that is made betweene my God and me' (i.5.16-18). But she makes no suggestion of abysmal dissolution of the self or melting into God; rather, Julian's language of ecstasy is of a more stately order. The courtly imagery remains at the centre of this language, ensuring that a sense of distinction or status difference between the soul and God is not lost; union for Julian is always closeness in distance. This chapter is concerned with the ways of acting that Julian's texts offer God's lovers as they live out the slow process of perfection, the gradual acceptance of the fact of our substance: '[s]odenly is the soule oned to God when it is truly peesed in the self' (xiv.49.36). She chooses *courtesy* and its complementary term, *homeliness*, to plot the space between the soul and God, the endpoint of her desire, in the day-to-day subjective life of a lover of God.

What these two styles of social interaction, courtesy and homeliness, have in common is their dependence on a logic of decorum: homeliness is behaviour proper to the intimate sphere of the home, and courtesy to the public interaction of persons of different roles or statuses. Julian is alive to the aesthetic aspect of this properness. She finds 'behoveliness' deeply satisfying, even pleasurable, and expects her readers to do the same. This delight in properness is characteristic of major currents in medieval philosophy, which experience creation as a perfect creation ordered by the intention of God, and endlessly revealing his truth, love and beauty. To conclude, I will suggest that Julian recruits the 'seemly' pleasure we take in beauty, both the delight readers can find in the loveliness of her style, and that they learn to take in performing themselves as noble, courteous servants of God, into her mystical discourse.

Choreographing union: courtesy as a way of acting

The 'open example' of the king and his servant in Revelation 1 of the Long Text makes clear the interplay of courtesy and homeliness. As I noted above, at the beginning of my exploration of courtliness,[5] the status difference between the two figures in the *exemplum* is central to its meaning: the lord's willingness to be 'homely' with the servant does that servant 'wurship' only because the social gap between them is not overcome thereby. The servant thinks, "Lo, what might this noble lord do more wurshippe and joy to me than to shew to me, that am so litille, this marvelous homelyhede?" (i.7.30-32). The wonder depends on the inequality between them, rather than negating it. Julian signals the

[5] See Chapter 3 p.73.

importance of this image of union with God by grouping the terms 'comfort', 'liking' and 'sekerness', which are three of her text's key terms,: 'Of alle that I sawe, this was the maste comforthe to me: that oure lorde es so hamlye and so curtayse. And this maste filled me with likinge and syekernes in saule' (VII.11-13; i.7.24-26). The little allegory is so powerful that the joy of it prompts Julian to her only use of the word 'ravished', when she says, 'This bodely exsample was shewde so high that this mannes hart might be ravished and almost forget himselfe for joy of this grete homelyhede' (i.7.34-35). The comfort lies not just in God's intimacy with us, however; Julian explicitly says that the reassurance lies in the *combination* of homeliness and courtesy. It is to express the perfectly balanced interplay of closeness and distance between us and God that Julian develops the image of *courtesy* as a discourse and social dynamic.

Julian takes this socio-political language of the body, the choreography of interpersonal space and interaction by means of the discourses and practices of courtesy, and translates it into the spiritual register. As we have seen, courtesy can be thought of as a code of behaviour that works to manage relationships between those of unequal status while sustaining status difference. As a status-marking behaviour, aristocratic courtesy is a form of embodied cultural capital, which the aristocrat acquires in the course of family life and education.[6] Its behaviours become part of the person, part of his or her *habitus*. Because they are so deeply laid and insensibly acquired, these behaviours often go unrecognized as embodiments of capital, yet they require 'a labor of inculcation and assimilation', the investment of personal time and resources in incorporating these behaviours into a person's sense and performance of self. What Bourdieu calls the 'specifically symbolic logic of distinction'[7] operates in courtly behaviour's difference from the conduct and reactions of lesser social classes, a distinction that still lingers in modern English words like 'churlish'. Yet in fact the proper behaviour of the lesser party in an interaction between lord and retainer, the servant's answering courtesy, is just as necessary to the interaction. As summarized by D.S. Brewer, the lord shows nobility, power, gentleness, graciousness and mercy, and the servant takes on a complementary posture of modesty, restraint, quietness, receptivity and self-negation.[8] Julian's depiction of courtesy explores both of these postures. The courtesy imagery thus has a dual role in her texts: it contributes to the

[6] See Given-Wilson, *English Nobility*, 3-5, as cited in Chapter 3 p.78.
[7] Bourdieu, 'Forms of Capital,' 47-49, quotes from 48 and 49.
[8] Brewer, 'Courtesy and the *Gawain*-Poet', 58, 63, quote from 64.

heuristic model of human nature that aims to make the truth of our substance real to her readers, and gives a framework and set of concepts and practices that through repeated performance as an interior, spiritualized courtesy, can become a flexible mystical subjectivity. To this second end, Julian develops her performative language of courtesy in tandem with that of homeliness.

Scholarly interpretations of Julian's terms *homely* and *courteous* have varied; Riehle for example finds them to be synonyms, with homeliness basically equalling *mansuetudo*,[9] while Reynolds argues that this pairing is a stunning paradox, because nothing is further from knightly courtesy than the intimacy and informality associated with the home.[10] I argue that, as Julian uses them, the terms are opposites, one signifying presence and the other distance, yet paradoxically both are characteristics of our relationship with God. In Julian's presentation, both homeliness and courtesy are embodied states, and understanding them requires consideration of the body as the site of personal presentation and self-conception, and also the site and limit of interpersonal contact. The immediacy of physical presence was exploited by contemplative tradition, with the most common late-medieval image for the beatific vision that of seeing God 'face to face', derived ultimately from the Hebrew scriptures via Paul's famous verse in 1 Corinthians 13.[11] The Cistercian tradition takes the image of a face-to-face meeting with God in mystical union further, into nuptial metaphors of ineffability like kisses and embraces, and explores interpersonal relationships and roles, such as the bride, to navigate the soul's approach to God.[12] These images also allow for discussion of absence; William of St Thierry in his *Meditativae orationes*, for example, uses the term 'face of God' with a double meaning, referring both to our knowledge of him in this life and our ignorance of all that will be revealed of him in heaven.[13] Rolle makes a different use of the body in his imagery of *fervor* and *dulcor*, which are modelled on individual awareness of physical stimuli; he sacrifices the interpersonal focus of the face-to-face image to express a radical self-awareness concordant with his project of claiming authority for personal contemplative experience. In his third metaphor,

[9] *The Middle English Mystics*, 99.
[10] '"Courtesy" and "Homeliness",' 15-16.
[11] Renevey, *Language, Self, and Love*, 41.
[12] See *ibid*., 46-59 for William of St Thierry's bridal imagery, particularly 50.
[13] See for example *Oraisons méditatives*, Sources chrétiennes 324, ed. Jacques Hourlier (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985), 72-75; translated in *The Works of William of St Thierry*, volume 1, *On Contemplating God, Prayer, Meditations*, trans. Sister Penelope (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 107.

canor, Rolle reintroduces a relational dimension. This mystical song is mediated by the angelic choir, and so references this choir's earthly instantiation, the central body of the institutional church's 'monastic and collegiate communities'.[14] Julian similarly exploits both the personal immediacy of embodiment, and its role as site of social interaction; as I will show, she does draw on Cistercian bridal imagery, but also on more heterogeneous[15] sources, among them discourses of courtesy.

Homeliness

Paradoxically, the term 'homeliness' with all its connotations of plainness and informality is used to signify what in contemplative tradition is the most exalted and esoteric state, the experience of 'perfect' contemplation or ecstasy which theologians like Bernard describe using the biblical phrase *excessus mentis*, in which 'the inner self transcends the bounds of reason and is rapt above itself'.[16] Once in each text (XIX.48-51; xiv.43.15-21), Julian refers directly to moments of special closeness with God, when discursive modes of prayer fade away and the soul simply beholds him. Already in the Short Text her treatment of these times reveals how deeply contemplative theory informs her identity and practice as a lover of God. In lines XIX.47-50 Julian says that while she was having her vision she was not 'stirred to praye'; this comment references the well-known notion that in times of union with God a soul does not need to pray, an idea which equally informs Julian's personal experience and is supported by it. Similarly traditional is the use of the term 'homely' to signify accustomed association; Hilton for example speaks of 'the custom and the hoomlynesse that [one] hath had bifore with synne of the world, and fleschli affecciones and ertheli thynges' that holds one back from desiring God (*Scale* II.24.1407-1409). When Julian describes these moments of union as being 'hamelye with God' (XIX.48), however, she draws on the particular set of associations the Short Text has built up, which reserves the word for our approach to the divine.

[14] 'Perils of Canor,' 139.

[15] De Certeau, speaking more particularly about the early modern mystical tradition, notes that mystic language tends to be a 'linguistic melting pot', 'a workshop', 'fundamentally "translational", the creation of 'a whole by unceasing operations upon foreign words', 'a permanent exercise in transposition', giving 'precedence to word usage rather than received definitions. . . . [M]ystics' manners of speaking are the product of a drifting operativity that has no domain proper'; *Mystic Fable*, 118-119.

[16] Bernard, *Sermones de diuersis* sermon 115, line 11: '*Sed aliquando homo interior rationem excedit et supra se rapitur, et dicitur excessus mentis*'. Translation Newman, 'What Did It Mean To Say "I Saw"?' 9. For the original scriptural use, see Psalms 30: 23 and 67: 28.

'Homely' first appears to describe her reaction to the miraculous bleeding of Christ's head, which is wonder that God has taken the trouble to be 'so homlye' with a sinful, mortal creature like her (III.16-17; i.4.15-16). Reynolds is surely correct that the connotations of 'homeliness' suggest the ease and informality of the home;[17] the *MED* lists senses implying associations with the home e.g. sense 1 '(a) Used at home; characteristic of a home; . . . (b) pertaining or belonging to a household, domestic;' and also the extended idea of informality or even crudeness, in sense 4 '(a) Simple, common; unassuming; (b) ugly, not comely, unattractive; unrefined, crude'. A few lines later Julian has a 'gastelye sight of hamly lovinge', and expands the image using a metaphor of clothing or swaddling bands: 'He es oure clethinge, that for love wappes us and windes us, halses us and alle becloses us, hinges aboute us for tender love' (IV.3-4; i.5.3-4). All of these connotations are reactivated by the description of moments of 'homeliness' with God in section XIX. The intimacy of 'homeliness' is a state of 'comforthe' and peace, in which all desires are fulfilled (XIX.50-51). Yet Julian also notes a paradoxical sense of distance at the heart of this closeness, saying that the soul need do nothing but behold God 'reverentlye' (XIX.48-49), a word that implies a distinction in status. Julian's emotion here is an example of the medieval instantiation of wonder, as traced by Caroline Walker Bynum. To the medieval person, wonder was an emotion often associated with 'events or phenomena in which ontological and moral boundaries are crossed, confused, or erased',[18] and it is precisely the fact that God reaches across the infinite distance between humankind and the divine that astonishes Julian.

In the Long Text's much expanded version of this passage (xiv.43.15-43), though the term 'homeliness' falls away, the imagery of intimacy is heightened. As in the Short Text, moments of union (in xv.64.41 she calls them 'contemplation') are located at the intersection point of the bountiful self-revelation of God, who is 'ever alike in love', and our openness and desire for him, when 'all oure entent with alle oure mightes is set hole into the beholding of him' (xiv.43.26-27, 17-18). The space of encounter is momentarily opened up by these complementary wills. That paradoxical quality of combined closeness and distance mentioned in the Short Text is developed, as Julian describes this prayer as compound of both creaturely awe and mystical joy ('mervelously enjoyeng with reverent drede and so gret swetnesse and delighte' xiv.43.20). The language of 'enjoyeng' (repeated

[17] '"Courtesy" and "Homeliness",' 15-16.
[18] 'Wonder,' *The American Historical Review* vol. 102, no. 1 (1997), 6.

in xiv.43.34-35) reminds us that union is *fruitio*, which is proper delight in God as the ultimate and only source and destination of all being. Significantly, he is described as 'oure curtesse lorde' who 'of his special grace sheweth himselfe to oure soule' (xix.43.15), which as in the first showing's *exemplum* uses the difference of social status between lord and servant to highlight the marvel of God's intimacy with us. Terms like 'beholding' and 'shew[ing] himselfe' maintain the imagery of a face-to-face meeting, of two persons looking at each other. Though Julian's language of gathering our 'entent' and cultivating 'an high, mighty desire' for union with God recalls the monastic practice of *recollectio*, she insists that moments of union are gratuitous gifts rather than the fruits of our own efforts. As such, these moments will be interspersed with times of painful spiritual obtuseness (see also xv.64.37-49) which our 'simpilhed' makes unavoidable (xiv.43.38). The Long Text, like the Short, maintains a distinction between God's status and ours. God has to 'strengthe[n] the creature aboven the selfe' to bear these instances of fuller revelation (xiv.43.46). The rest of the time, the truth of God's constant love is a matter of faith: we have to be willing to wager all on God. Our desire thus remains in tension with intimations of the fuller sight of him we will have in heaven (xix.43.21-22).

Moving on to describe the heavenly fulfilment to which these passing moments point (xix.43.40-47), Julian makes a rare foray into the register of Cistercian bridal mysticism, including an explicit mention of seeing God face-to-face. She combines two well-established traditions of contemplative writing, the language of the 'spiritual senses',[19] often used by theologians to talk about that knowing that occurs during the *excessus mentis*, and the kind of semantic overloading that turns descriptive language into apophatic discourse.[20] Moments of homeliness are 'prevy touchinges of swete, gostly sightes and felinges' that presage the time after death when we

> come into oure lorde, oureselfe clerely knowing and God fulsomly having: and we endlesly be alle had in God, him verely seyeng and fulsomly feling, and him gostely

[19] As Thomas Gallus put it, '*Ideo Io. 1: "Deum nemo vidit unquam"; Exo.33: "non videbit me homo et vivet", et non dicit: non gustabit, vel non gustabimus*'; 'John 1:18 [says], "No one [has seen] God [at any time]," and Exodus 33:20 "man will not see me and live", but it does not say, he will not taste or we will not taste'; though the soul may have lost its mental eyes, its *oculos mentis*, which are reason and understanding, it can still smell, taste and touch the beloved. *Commentaires*, II chapter 1, section C, 124; translation Taylor Coolman, 'Medieval Affective Dionysian Tradition,' 625, with emendations.

[20] Another contemporary example of these two rhetorical techniques appearing together comes from Hilton, when he merges categories of sensation to describe how the soul 'feeleth thorugh gosteli sight of the Godhede' (*Scale* II.30.1986).

> hering, and him delectably smelling, and him swetly swelwing. And than shall we se God face to face, homely and fulsomly. The creature that is made shall see and endlesly beholde God which is the maker. (xiv.43.37-44)

The nuptial imagery is striking almost to the degree of pastiche; it is by far the most sensual language of physical intimacy to appear in either of Julian's texts. The lack of rhetorical fit with the wider context of the text calls attention to the passage, and so to what Julian is doing with this traditional discourse. An illuminating comparison is Bonaventure's version of the trope, when he writes that by means of the spiritual senses

> the supreme beauty of Christ the Bridegroom is seen as Splendor; his supreme harmony is heard as the Word; his supreme sweetness is tasted as Wisdom, comprehending both the Word and the Splendor; his supreme fragrance is smelled as the inspired Word in the heart; his supreme tenderness is embraced as the incarnate Word, dwelling among us in the body and making himself present to our touch, our kiss, and our embrace through the most ardent charity, which causes our mind to pass in ecstasy and rapture from this world to the Father.[21]

Newman drily notes that 'the patristic concept of "spiritual senses" offered a useful compromise between the abstraction demanded by apophatic theology and the sensuality required for rhetorical brilliance',[22] and both Bonaventure and Julian certainly intend to convey something of the sweetness of contemplative experience. However, where Bonaventure explicitly spells out how the material is figurative for the spiritual, and the human Jesus a bridge to the divine Father, Julian leaves the erotic metaphors standing alone. She is consistent in her teaching that the material and fleshly are also revelations of God's fullness. Yet at the same time she ends the passage with an explicit reminder of the metaphysical size-gap (xiv.43.44). This draws attention to a connotation of physical intimacy that is rarely emphasized, namely that bodies remain physically distinct even when they try to express union through gestures like kissing or embracing. The properness of God's status relative to ours, as those of 'maker' and 'creature' respectively, is always maintained. Even in those instances when we are closest to God, Julian holds, he is infinitely above us and beyond us, and any experience we have of him is granted on his terms. We are given just enough glimpses of the truth, just enough 'gracious touching of

[21] '*quibus videtur Christi sponsi summa pulcritudo sub ratione Splendoris; auditur summa harmonia sub ratione Verbi; gustatur summa dulcedo sub ratione Sapientiae comprehendentis utrumque, Verbum scilicet et Splendorem; odoratur summa fragrantia sub ratione Verbi inspirad in corde; astringitur summa suavitas sub ratione Verbi incarnati, inter nos habitantis corporaliter et reddentis se nobis palpabile, osculabile, amplexabile per ardentissimam caritatem, quae mentem nostram per ecstasim et raptum transir? facit ex hoc mundo ad Patrem*'. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* vol. 5 La grâce du Saint-Esprit, ed. Jean-Pierre Rezette (Paris: Éd. Franciscaines, 1967), 72-74. Translation by Barbara Newman, 'What Did It Mean To Say "I Saw"?' 13-14.

[22] 'What Did It Mean To Say "I Saw"?' 13.

swete lightening of gostly life', to keep us 'in seker faith, hope, and charite, with contrition and devotion, and also with contemplation and alle manner of tru solace and swete comfortes' until we reach heaven (xvi.71.18-21). This language of 'touching' is still in the same semantic field as the bridal imagery, but Julian's version highlights the transience of physical contact.

Even at its most sensual, therefore, Julian's placeholding language for the encounter that exceeds all language is not as dramatic as for example the impassioned poetry of the Low Country Beguines. Her tone is warmer and gentler. She uses traditional courtly and spiritual discourses in a rhetorically deliberate manner, to create a profoundly inclusive register. Her evocation of seeing God face-to-face remains, like so much of her writing, in the first-person plural, rather than the more personal *I-Thou* format of Mechtild of Magdeburg's dialogues or Margery's visions.[23] The repeated 'we' situates the invoked reader within the human community, all of whom carry the image of God within them. At the same time, the category mistake of Julian's nuptial language, which erases the difference between physical and spiritual sensation, vividly engages each reader's individual experience and locates the text's meaning within it. Intimacy and inclusiveness are also the core impressions animating the homeliness imagery. At once evocative and non-descriptive, the repeated words 'homely' and 'homeliness' calls to each reader's individual experience of being at home in a safe, private, domestic setting.

This sense of 'homeliness' links to the motherhood group of images that becomes so marked in the Long Text, evoking a God who meets us at 'the lowest party of our need' (i.6.26). Julian references an image from Neoplatonic Wisdom theology, of the Second Person of the Trinity as a womb containing the Forms of all things; Bonaventure for example says that 'all the exemplary reasons are conceived from eternity in the womb of

[23] For an example from Mechtild, see where the soul says to God, 'O Du schmelzender Gott, so Du Dich Deiner Lieben vereinest! O Du ruhender Gott an meinen Brüsten, ohne den ich nicht sein kann!' ('O you melting God in the union with your beloved! / O you resting God on my breasts! / Without you I cannot exist') and God answers, 'O Du schöne Rose in dem Dorne! O Du summende Biene in dem Honige!' ('O you beautiful rose among the thorns! / O you fluttering bee in the honey!); *Das Fliessende Licht der Gottheit*, ed. Sigmund Simon (Berlin: Oesterheld, 1907), 188-189; translated as stanzas 17 and 18 of book I of *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. Frank Tobin (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1998), 48. For an example from Margery, see *Boke of Margery Kempe*, 192 line 2853, where God the Father makes a marriage vow to Margery, addressing her by her name: 'I take the, Margery, for my weddyd wyfe'.

Eternal Wisdom' and brought forth at the proper time.[24] Julian explicitly links the motherhood of Christ with a group of Neoplatonic terms, 'wisdom', 'ground' and 'kind':

> I saw and understode that the high might of the trinite is oure fader, and the depe wisdom of the trinite is oure moder, and the grete love of the trinite is oure lorde. And alle these have we in kinde and in oure substantial making. . . . And the second person of the trinite is oure moder in kind in oure substantial making, in whom we be grounded and roted, and he is oure moder of mercy in oure sensualite taking. (xiv.58.27-29, 34-36)

The Middle English word 'kind', with its multiple senses of form or essential nature, family ('kin'), generosity, kindness and love,[25] lends itself particularly to Julian's conception of the nature we share in love with God, who as the source of all being is also kind – loving – in his very nature.[26] Christ on the cross is our mother of mercy (xiv.63.25-26), and again a superposition of space happens, as the wound in his side, 'a fair, delectable place, and large inow for alle mankinde that shalle be saved' (x.24.3-4) is also the womb of mankind, 'in whom we be endlesly borne and never shall come out of him' (xiv.57.42-43). The images of crucifixion and child-carrying are united by the shared experience of physical pain; as in the passage describing heaven using the spiritual senses, here too Julian exploits the inarticulate but immediately self-present quality of physical experience, to gesture towards the nature of mystical knowing. As de Certeau explains, a bodily sensation like pain or pleasure can express the mystical encounter as 'a mark of the other, the wound of his passage. It is an illegible writing, because it does not become separated from the one who feels it, but a writing that certifies by [sensation] the alteration in which ex-istence consists'.[27] Julian's notion of homeliness with God strives to suggest this characteristic of the mystical encounter, and the kind of knowledge it brings. Characteristic of the heterogeneity of Julian's mystical discourse is this strand of imagery's combination of influences as diverse as Neoplatonic philosophical tradition, the intimacy of the domestic sphere, and the human experience of embodiment.

These moments of homeliness may be ultimately natural to us, but they are fleeting. Julian thus does not suggest a step-wise ascent through stages of prayer, unlike so many other

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[24] '*Omnes enim rationes exemplares concipiuntur ab aeterno in vulva aeternae sapientiae seu utero, et maxime praedestinationis*'; *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 20.5, in *Opera Omnia* vol. 5 (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1891), 426. Translation Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 229.
[25] See *MED* 'kinde' (adj.) and (n.); for discussion of the pun's Neoplatonic allusions, see Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 229.
[26] Xiv.49.14-18 again connects God's nature as being and as nurturing, sustaining love.
[27] *Mystic Fable*, 198-199.

late-medieval contemplative writers. An illustrative contrast comes from Hilton's *Scale*. In chapter 28 of *Scale* II, Hilton describes the stages of ascent as 'callynge, rightynge, magnifyyng, and glorifyynge', which basically correspond to conversion, purification, contemplation and beatification (this last in heaven). In chapter 29 he distinguishes between those who are not yet perfect, and only feel 'touchynges' of the Spirit coming and going, and those who are truly reformed in feeling and have the full gift of contemplation; these perfected contemplatives have 'hoomlynesse' with such touchings, because they are 'lordes of hemsilf bi stabilnesse of thought and lastynge desire to Jhesu' and 'the iye of here soule is . . . opened to behooldynge of goostli thynges' (*Scale* II.29.1920-1931). Chapter 41 of the *Scale* dwells on how the fading of grace and consequent experience of dryness and weakness is due to 'corrupcioun of mannes freelté' (3025-3026) and is a lessening of perfection (3070-3071). Julian explicitly denies a distinction such as Hilton proposes, arguing that everyone experiences times of homeliness and times of barrenness for which sin is never the cause (IX.38; vii.15.21).[28]

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, Julian only rarely explicitly addresses moments of union. She spends more time evolving ways of talking and acting that give expression to the mystical subjectivity in the in-between times that make up the majority of daily life in this world. Unlike her younger contemporary Margery Kempe or continental mystics like Brigit of Sweden, Julian only had one major visionary experience, but this experience, with its central insight of our perfect substance, casts the light in which the rest of her life is lived. With the image of courtesy, as a form of bodily and behavioural intelligence, as cultural capital, the Long Text continues its attempt to demonstrate the nature of mystical knowing, and to provide a language in which the identity of one who has been hailed can be lived out in the space of commingled trust and desire that lies between the soul and God.

Courtesy

One reason humankind is separated from God is because of sin, and Julian takes this seriously. In the context of the imagery of Christ as a knight, which reappears throughout the text, the depiction of Christ in Revelation 16 as a lonely lover recalls one version of the

[28] Hilton does agree with Julian that a 'wise lovere is he, and wel taught, that sadli and reverentli hath him in His presence, and loveli biholdeth Him withoute dissolute lightnesse, and pacientli and esili beereth him in His absence withouten venemous dispeir and over peynful bittirnesse' (41.3065-3068). Compare Julian's IX.44-45; vii.15.26-27.

lover-knight trope: 'For he stondeth alle alone, and abideth us continually, swemefully, and moningly, tille whan we come. And he hath haste to have us to him, for we are his joy and his delight, and he is oure salve and oure life' (xvi.79.31-33). A similar trope, although with a more explicit courtly framework patterned after *chansons d'aventure,* is found in the lyric 'In the vaile of restles mynd',[29] which features Christ saying of his recalcitrant lady, 'I will abide till she be redy' (line 65). In Julian's text, humankind then takes over the role of the pining lover, where we mourn 'in contrition and in compassion, and alle sweming and moning for we are not oned with oure lorde' (xvi.80.23-24). The knight's solitude is an image of the separation we create between us and God when we sin; we fail of our lover's duty of faithfullness, but he never does (xvi.80.27-35). However, this is not the form of distance from God in which Julian is primarily concerned, in her language of courtesy. Rather, the space between two persons engaged in courteous interaction comes to symbolise a separation that is inherent in our nature as created beings. Even in moments of union, as shown by the passage that describes heaven using the spiritual senses (xiv.43.37-44), the distinction between God and the human soul is maintained, as is proper according to Julian's understanding of our ultimate union with God: we will be held so close that there is nothing in between us and God (IV.16-18; i.5.16-18), but we will always remain creatures before God the Creator (xiv.54.15). This is the separateness that the text explores using the semantic field of courtesy. Like her term 'homeliness', Julian's term 'courtesy' is inclusive and suggestive rather than bound to the details of a code of behaviour; as this chapter explores, sometimes the term evokes the relationship between lord and servant, at others those between king and subject, courtly lover and beloved, or mother and child.

The first aspect of this separation is the incompleteness of our knowledge of God. Unlike teachings often offered to aspiring contemplatives, that can suggest that particular lifestyles and practices carried out by the spiritual elite (like solitude and silence) will gain access to divine revelations,[30] Julian has a clear notion of God's right to keep secrets. Especially in the Long Text, she promises over and over again that full knowledge will be ours, only not yet: there is a reason that God allowed sin to be, but we cannot know it now

[29] *English Medieval Religious Lyrics*, ed. Gray, no.43. The printed version is from the late fifteenth-century Cambridge University Library MS Hh 4.12, but another version is found in MS Lambeth 853, from the early fifteenth century.

[30] See for example Rolle, who in the *Form of Living* promises his reader that the state in which she lives 'þat es solitude, es maste abyll of all othyr til revelation of þe Haly Gaste' (ch.2 lines 23-24); in *English Writings of Richard Rolle,* 90.

(xiii.27.33-36); God will do two great and marvellous deeds that will make up for all the harm caused by sin, but the details remain hidden (xiii.32.20-21, 48-50, xiii.36.18); God is always with us, but often we cannot see it, so that all we can do is believe we see him continually, trusting in him and waiting for him (ii.10.22-24). A secret 'organizes a social network' by marking out a territory of 'strategic relations' between the seekers and possessors of the desired knowledge.[31] In Julian's case, courtesy, in the sense of a mannered, attentive interaction between persons, is the network that best fits the contours of the space between partial earthly knowledge and the fulfilment she desires. One of Julian's most explicit uses of a relationship of feudal courtesy is evoked to explain God's reticence, when she distinguishes between 'twa parties': on the one hand is the story of our saviour and our salvation, which we can know, and on the other 'alle that is beside', which is God's secret (XIV.15-35, xiii.30.1-21). The knowledge kept from us 'is oure lordes prive consayles, and it langes to the ryalle lordeship of God for to have his prive consayles in pees, and it langes to his servantes for obedience and reverence nought to wille witte his councelle' (XIV.25-27; xiii.30.11-13). As the superior party in the relationship, God has the right to withhold what he chooses. His reticence is not arbitrary, however, but instantiates the deeper logic of the relationship of courtesy, namely the lord's duty to care for his retainers, as I mentioned above when discussing how Julian depicts God as a lord.[32] He shows us only as much as will enable us to 'live medfully with traveyle, deserving the wurshipful thanke of God' (xvi.84.3-4). Julian's description of understanding being 'mesured discretly' according to our need (xvi.83.13) encapsulates the mannered care characterising our encounter with God. In both texts, this combined self-revelation and reticence of God's is explicitly called his 'curtaysy' (XVI.15-17; xiii.35.5-7). We have to match it with our own courtesy as his 'servantes', fulfilling our role in respecting his status and honour,[33] which respectfullness pleases him (XIV.29; xiii.30.15).

The imagery of homeliness exploits the physical intimacy to convey a sense of union with God. Here Julian exploits a different side to embodiment, which is the body's capacity both to reveal and to hide a person's interior self. Early on in the Long Text, she explains that Christ in the Incarnation made 'himselfe as like to man in this deadly life, in our foulhede and in our wretchednes, as man might be without gilt' (ii.10.47-48), and interprets this

[31] *Mystic Fable*, 97.
[32] See Chapter 3 p.98.
[33] In the *MED*'s sense 3 for 'courteis' (adj. and n.): 'Respectful, deferential, meek'.

'likeness' as a mask or disguise: 'Whereof it meneth . . . "It was the image and the liknes of our foule, blacke, dede hame," wherein oure fair, bright, blessed lorde hid his godhede' (ii.10.48-50). The notion of 'hiding' refers to the theological idea, originally part of 'devil's rights' soteriology, that Christ takes on human nature to disguise himself.[34] In a further sequence of associations Julian cites another traditional idea, of Christ the man's surpassing beauty before the Passion,[35] and then mentions the ravaged appearance of his face as she sees it in Revelation 8, and as it is portrayed on the vernicle (ii.10.50-56). The link between all these ideas is the paradoxical nature of the body's surface appearance: it is changeable, sometimes accurately reflecting one aspect of the person's inner intention and sometimes another, and yet it does convey meaning and constitutes at least a trace of a person's unique presence. In chapter 71 the Long Text uses the changeableness of a person's 'chere' to express the three attitudes with which God beholds us (xvi.71.6-12), the expression he shows to us altering depending on our need. But this variability of surface also has the capacity to hide or confuse, which is the teaching of Revelation 2. Murky images of scenes from the Passion start to flicker over Christ's face as it is gradually occluded by dried blood, producing confusion rather than the radiant certainty that the first revelation caused, where Julian 'conceived truly and mightly' that God showed it to her 'withouten any meen' (III.13-14; i.4.4-5). In fact, Julian worries that this second revelation is 'so lowe and so little and so simple' that it is not actually a showing at all (ii.10.25-27); her unease is understandable, since opacity was commonly held to characterise false visions.[36] Julian labours intellectually to extract more from the showing, her 'spirites' (her faculties) 'in great traveyle in the beholding: morning, dredful, and longing' (ii.10.25-27). What she learns is that these very emotions, mourning at the withdrawal of the immediacy of God, dread of his absence, and unslaked longing for presence and favour, are part of the showing's meaning; they teach that 'the continual seking of the soule pleseth God full mekille. For it may do no more than seke, suffer, and trust' (ii.10.57-59). Considering the metaphysical size-gap between Creator and created, all we can do is wait for his gift, and thus our openness is what counts.

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[34] See the passage from *Piers Plowman* quoted in Chapter 3 p.88.

[35] Based on Psalm 45.2 (Vulgate 44.3): '*speciosus forma prae filiis hominum*'.

[36] As Watson and Jenkins note, *The Chastising* for example teaches that one of the features by which a true vision can be discerned from a false one is lucidity, that is, 'whanne al the undirstonding of the matier that [the visionary] seeth is verily shewid him in soule and clierly is opene to him'. In *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, ed. Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 179. Watson and Jenkins sidenotes to line 27.

The darkness and obscurity of Christ's face is a version of the apophatic trope of the 'cloud of unknowing', the acknowledgement that God is beyond words.[37] Julian's version of the trope uses the body as a sign of our human finitude, to which Christ condescended at the Incarnation and through which he saved us from sin and remade us again perfectly in his image (ii.10.43-45). The fact of human embodiment means that no two persons can ever know each other wholly, yet the body is the means by which they can know each other truly, through touch, facial expression, words. In the same way, the experience of finitude and the absence of God that it renders inevitable are as much part of our service and progress towards God as are the moments when we experience his presence: 'For his working is prevy, and he wille be perceived, and his apering shalle be swithe sodeyn. And he wille be trowed, for he is fulle hende, homely and curteise' (ii.10.80-82).[38] Julian does not say 'his working is prevy *but* he wille be perceived', implying that we have to strive to uncover what is kept 'prevy'; rather, both absence *and* presence are characteristic of God. This lesson is reaffirmed in Revelation 7, where Julian learns that we need to be sometimes in 'comforthe' and sometimes 'to faile and be lefte' to ourselves, and that this failing is never due to sin (IX.35-39; vii.15.18-21). The waiting in times of confusion and barrenness is an acknowledgement of God as both hidden from and present to us, of his courtesy and his homeliness.

Julian thus moves away from an understanding of the contemplative soul as a knowing subject reaching towards an object (however august) of beholding. She insists that 'seking is as good as beholding' (ii.10.62-63), here using 'beholding' to refer to full contemplation, that is, grasping the truth of God's nature. This acceptance of God's distance from us is the answering courtesy we owe to his willingness to be homely with us. The Pearl maiden evokes a similar understanding of the trust and humility required of us before God, when she calls the dreamer 'vncortayse' for lacking faith in God's promises; he wants to believe only what he can see or reason out for himself, and she tells him this is mistaken.[39] Julian's seeker has a radically open stance, waiting on God to reveal himself when he will. The

[37] In contrast, Hilton uses the 'night' to mean 'a foreberynge and a withdraynge of the affeccioun and the thought of the soule from ertheli thynges' that one undergoes when turning from the fickle light of the world to Jesus the true light; thus it is a 'gode nyght and a lighti merkenesse' (*Scale* II.24.1381-1384, 1393).

[38] The difficulties of distinguishing within Julian's network of courtesy imagery appears here; the reading 'hende, homely, and curteise' comes from W, while P has 'homely, curteyse' and S 'hend and homley'. If S's 'hend' is read as a synonym for 'courteous', then all three versions convey a sense of balanced distance and presence.

[39] *Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, 69, line 303.

'knowledge' gained in this stance is what de Certeau describes as the 'conjunction of a passion (which desires and suffers the other) with a meaning (which is offered or refused)'.[40] Such knowledge is more an experienced state of being-in-relationship, than any kind of conceptual grasp. In all the various manifestations of this relationship – moments of homeliness and barrenness, of illumination and longing – what is constant is the sense of being *one who has been hailed*. What matters is the alignment of wills, as Julian surrenders hers to God's, and is confirmed in the identity of a lover of God, *one who hears*. God's secrecy maintains us in desire; as Julian says, 'I saw him and sought him, and I had him and wanted him' (ii.10.14).

The imagery of courtesy thus has a theological function, establishing the nature and limits of our relationship with God, and of mystical knowing. A complementary pastoral function is to provide readers with a performative vocabulary by means of which to live out this understanding. The respectful distance Julian learns from her visions, and which she hopes to teach, is certainly the opposite attitude to the 'delving', 'colonizing'[41] movement of speculative logic or scholarly interpretation. She therefore deploys a veritable arsenal of rhetoric to tempt, flatter, plead with and command her readers to restrict their desire for knowledge to what God wants to show (XIV.16-23; xiii.30.4-9):

> Hereto ere we bidden {bounde} of God and drawen and consayled and lered inwardlye be the haly gaste and outwarde by haly kyrke by the same grace. In this wille oure lorde that we be occupied, enjoyande in him for he enjoyes in us. And the mare plentyouslye that we take of this, with reverence and mekenesse, the mare we deserve thanke of him and the mare spede to oureselfe.

The language of mutual enjoying suggests a hermeneutic of simple, courteous being-with, a stance which Julian does not describe so much as demonstrate. The reader gains a detailed impression of the courtly interaction Julian has with God from the text's re-enactment of their encounter. From the opening of the first showing, and Julian's words 'Benedicite dominus', discussed above as a phrase of ritual greeting, she and God are shown to interact attentively, gently and graciously. The end of the first cluster of showings is marked by a summary of Julian's open yet reverent stance, and of God's patience with her capacity: 'And alle this oure lorde shewed me in the first sight, and gafe me space and time to behalde it. . . . And I abade with reverente drede, joyande in that I sawe, and desirande as I durste for to see mare, if it ware his wille, or the same langer time'

[40] *Mystic Fable*, 98.
[41] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 50.

(V.18-21; i.8.18-21). As the revelations proceed, God several times repeats this act of giving Julian the 'space and time' she needs when she begins to feel overwhelmed; for example, when she struggles with the thought that she cannot avoid sinning, God then 'fulle curtayslye' gives her a moment to get used to it (XVI.23-24; in the Long Text, this is 'fulle marcifully' xiii.37.1-3). Julian explicitly questions her showing, asking for 'sum mare open declaringe' to explain how all can be well when sin causes such pain and damage (XIV.4-5; xiii.29.4), and God meets her doubt with loving courtesy, answering 'fulle mekelye and with fulle lovelye chere'. At the same time, however, he keeps his secrets and refuses to tell her anything beyond the familiar church teaching that the Passion overcame evil once and for all (XIV.5-14; xiii.29.5-14). God's courtesy towards us is rooted in care for our finitude and weakness, as is revealed when Julian says he 'of his curtesy' only shows us a portion of our sin's foulness, so as to protect us from despair (xvi.78.1-3).

This performed courtly interaction is reinforced by Julian's metaphors of lordship and motherhood. God's graciousness, shown in his friendly, intelligent and gentle speech and mien, comes together with his reputation for prowess to form a reassuring portrait of caring lordship. The answering stance we must take up is the retainer's courtesy to his or her lord, a mixture of awe at the lord's status and power, and certainty that he will 'keep' his client as he should. The text juxtaposes the lord image with that of Jesus our mother to evoke both of these feelings powerfully, by offering its audience a rapid succession of paradoxical subject positions: first Julian says it 'longeth to us that are his servantes and his children to drede him for his lordshippe and faderhed, as it longeth to us to love him for goodhed' (xvi.74.21-23), and then a few lines later, she explains that this dread can be discerned from false worries because it 'maketh us hastely to fle fro alle that is not goode and falle into oure lordes brest, as the childe into the moders barme' (xvi.74.29-30). Both courtesy and homeliness take their essence from the nature of God, who is 'kindeness' itself (xiv.62.10-12):

> Flee we to oure lorde, and we shall be comforted. Touch we him, and we shalle be made clene. Cleve we to him, and we shalle be seker and safe from alle manner of perilles. For oure curtese lorde wille that we be as homely with him as hart may thinke or soule may desyer. But be we ware that we take not so rechelously this homelyhed for to leve curtesye. For our lorde himselfe is sovereyn homelyhed, and so homely as he is, as curtesse he is. For he is very curteyse. (xvi.77.40-45)

With characteristic elegance, Julian suggests both the eager motion of our love towards God in the parallel imperatives of the first three sentences, and the cautiousness of our

respect in the 'But' that suddenly breaks this flow. Julian's notion that we must not be reckless in our approach to God references the apophatic tradition, but she is at pains to prevent her audience from thinking that their desire for union is presumptuous, because desire is the driving force of mysticism. What matters is not uncovering the secret, fathoming God's nature, but enacting desire beautifully. The imagery of courtesy in its various manifestations gives the reader an imaginative script for this enactment.

The balanced impulses of courtesy as a behaviour, namely desire for contact and respect for difference, make it a powerful vehicle for conveying Julian's understanding of the proper style of this enactment. Symbolised by the space between the two persons engaged in an interaction of courtesy, desire is for Julian the teleological drive of all creation back towards God its creator. She depicts both God and humanity as longing for the final fulfilment of the promise implicit in our substance. The restless love that drives Christ is symbolised in the showings by a traditional image, his thirst on the cross. Julian depicts this 'gastely thirst' as 'luff-langinge' felt by a lover separated from his beloved. In heaven we will be 'Christes joye and his blisse', and so his thirst is 'the falinge of his blisse, that he has us nought in him als hamelye as he shalle thane haffe' (XV.11-16; xiii.31.11-16). The Long Text expansion of this passage states that 'the same thurst and longing that he had uppe on the rode tre – which desire, longing and thirste … was in him from without beginning – the same hath he yet, and shalle into the time that the last soule that shalle be saved is come uppe to his blisse' (xiii.31.30-33). Chapter 75 expands this thirst into God's 'thre manner of longing': to teach us to know and love him, to take us to the safety of heaven, and to 'fulfille us of blisse' (xvi.75.7-14). In the tableau of the Lord and Servant, this divine desire is symbolised by literal, physical separation. On some level, the space between the Lord and the Servant represents Christ's desire to enter history at the Incarnation, and begin his saving work, a desire Julian puts into a direct speech made by Christ to his 'dere fader' (xiv.51.211-214, 218-224).

> And thus I saw the sonne stande, seing in his mening: "Lo, my dere fader, I stonde before the in Adams kirtel, alle redy to sterte and to runne. I wolde be in the erth to don thy worshippe, whan it is thy will to send me. How long shall I desyer it?" …
>
> For he is the heed, and we be his membris, to which membris the day and the time is unknowen whan every passing wo and sorow shall have an ende and the everlasting joy and blisse shall be fulfilled. Which day and time for to see, all the company of heven longeth or desireth. And all that be under heven which shall come theder, ther way is by longing and desyering; which desyering and longing

> was shewed in the servant stonding before the lorde – or elles thus, in the son stonding afore the fader in Adam kirtel.

The text picks up the son's 'desyer', amplifying it into the doublet 'desire and longing', and then allows the force of this desire to spill out into the salvation narrative, gathering all those lovers and beloveds of God back into Him by the strength of Christ's longing. The desire is first the Son's eagerness to begin his work (xiv.51.211-214), then his longing for its completion and the gathering of all believers into 'the everlasting joy and blisse' of heaven (xiv.51.216-220), then the desire of 'all the company of heven' for this same completion (xiv.51.221), and finally the 'longing and desyering' – note the sense of on-going action implied by the verbal nouns – of all the faithful still on earth, by which they will reach heaven (xiv.51.221-224). The text's choreography of the word 'desire' accomplishes the 'oneing' of substance and sensuality in Christ for which the multivalent symbol of the Servant stands. This desire will have an end: when he has drawn us all to himself, 'God wille be closed in reste and in pees' (XV.11; xiii.31.10), or, in the terms of a love story, will live happily ever after.

The distance of courtesy does not disappear, however, though our longing for God will finally be satisfied: 'For the kinde properte of drede which we have in this life by the gracious werking of the holy gost, the same shall be in heven afore God: gentille, curteyse, fulle delectabile (…) For this reverent dred is the fair curtesy that is in heven before Goddes face' (xvi.74.36-38; 75.35-36).[42] As the marriage that ends a romance marks the beginning of the shared life of the knight and his lady, this image of God 'closed' is not an image of completion leading to stagnation, but rather of new life beginning. In the revelations' final image, the 'closure' is refigured as God 'enclosed' forever in the soul of man, like a lord enthroned at the heart of a city. The metaphor implies continual, productive relationship, the lord gaining his identity by virtue of the people he rules over, and they gaining theirs by being his servants. The scene has returned to the heavenly feast in our lord's house, encountered in Revelation 6. Once again, Mary is the epitome of the soul's proper stance. Chapter 75 describes God's creatures in heaven 'dredfully tremeling and quaking for mekehede of joy, endlesly merveyling of the greatness of God the maker, and of the litilhede of alle that is made' (xvi.75.27-29), and these lines link back to the vision of Mary in the first showing. The Virgin is described as

[42] See also xvi.75.36-38.

> . . . marvayling with great reverence that [God] would be borne of her that was a simple creature of his making. For this was her marvayling: that he that was her maker would be borne of her that was made. And this wisdome and truth, knowing the greatnes of her maker and the littlehead of herselfe that is made, made her say full meekely to Gabriel: "Lo me here, Gods handmaiden." (i.4.28-33)

Mary's insight is the heart of the dynamic of courtesy, mediating the interaction of superior and inferior. The distance between us and God will never disappear wholly, because our human identity is relational, just as the identity of the three divine Persons is relational: the Son eternally proceeds from the Father, and from the love between them eternally proceeds the Spirit. The space of courtesy ultimately reflects the 'distance-as-gift' that is the life of the Trinity.[43]

The existential posture Julian calls reverent dread is thus *proper* to us at a fundamental level, as an acknowledgement of the structure of reality. This dread is an entirely different kind of fear to that featured prominently in conventional devotional literature, for example the *Pricke of Conscience*, where dread remains largely motivated by fear of God's power to damn the soul to hell (though dread is described as the 'brother' of love, since 'wha-swa lufes God on ryght manere / He has grete drede to wrethe him here').[44] Julian agrees that 'he that luffes, he dredes, though he fele bot litille' (XXV.18; xvi.74.25-26), but in her understanding this dread has a different psychological cause. Reverent dread is no small matter; it is so enormous that 'the pillours of heven shulle tremelle and quake' (xvi.75.24-25), but at the same time it is not painful, but rather 'full softe, for the more it is had, the lesse it is felte, for swetnesse of love' (xvi.74.16-17). Love entails 'dread' because love entails an identity dependent on another, an identity that is vulnerable, based on trust, and relational or even in a sense *public*, existing in the space between two persons. A repeated image in the Long Text is the mutual gaze, in which two persons are present to each other, given being in relation to each other. The lord 'full tenderly beholdeth' the servant, while the servant suffers because he cannot see his lord (xiv.51.15-17, 33). The mother and child meet in the space produced by their looks: 'Fair and swete is our hevenly moder in the sight of oure soule. Precious and lovely be the gracious children in the sight

[43] Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 168. See Bauerschmidt's entire section (162-173) for a compelling reading of these spaces, and that between the substance and sensuality, in terms of Balthasar's notion of 'theo-drama'.

[44] ll.9493-9500; see also ll.9556-9558. Hilton's notion of how the soul 'dredeth God in man as soothfastnesse, wondreth Him as myght, loveth Him as goodnesse' (*Scale* II.2175-2176) is closer to Julian's combination of dread and love, but her imagery of courtesy and homeliness more unusual and rhetorically effective.

of oure hevenly moder' (xiv.63.29-30). Julian's encounter with the devil, in which he seizes her by the throat and thrusts his face up against hers (xvi.67.1-3), is a parody of this face-to-face presentness of one person to another, in which the mutual awareness and respect of courtesy are transgressed. The truly courteous identity founded on mutual love, which is the fulfilment of our human nature and will continue in heaven, is the courtly subjectivity Julian's text offers to those attentive readers who respond to its hailing and make their own mystical *volo*.

Just as the courtly imagery of a knightly self gives readers a narrative with which to approach and make peace with their sinfullness, so this complex network of courtesy imagery offers a range of performative attitudes making up the subjectivity of 'God's lovers': the stances of subject before king, servant before lord, child before loving mother. Each of these subject positions models the experience of life as a 'mervelous medelur both of wele and of wo' (xiv.52.6-7), with moments when we are homely with God but many more hours spent struggling with the challenges and confusions of human life in the remembered light of that intimacy. By experiencing the self as 'precious', 'lovely' and 'gracious', and daily life as gallant service performed before the gaze of our loving and protective lord, the lover of God, irrespective of actual worldly station, can achieve the *style* of subjectivity Julian evokes, doing God 'the most wurshippe . . . of ony thing that we may do' by living 'gladly and merely for his love' (xvi.81.13-14). What is a social code of behaviour enacted in public is appropriated as a language of interiority, and made available to everyone irrespective of class status.

The courtly imagery has a final, specifically mystical effect, however, which is an extension of the pleasure that this kind of life offers. As can now be explored, the courtly imagery is rooted in a particularly medieval understanding of properness, or 'behoveliness' in Julian's term, and instrumental in inviting her readers to delight in this properness, as she does.

Properness and prayer

As Abbott points out, the final image of Jesus enthroned in the city of the soul is one of *order*: a world, within it a kingdom, within it a city, within it a throne. This world is described as 'endless', which links back to God the source of all order who in chapter 5 is called 'the endleshede' (i.5.36). No longer is this the barren, featureless desert of the

tableau in xiv.51.103-104.[45] As we have seen, the world for Julian is a cosmos that as an *allegoria in factis* reveals divine nature.[46] Significantly, what delights her is not only the content of this allegory, but also the fact of its meaningfullness: the proportionality of creation. When Julian asks to know the fate of a particular friend, she is taught that 'it is mare worshippe to God to behalde him in alle than in any specialle thinge' (XVI.17-18; xiii.35.6-7); the Long Text also adds 'the fulhed of joy is to beholde God in alle. For by the same blissed might, wisdom, and love that he made alle thing, to the same end oure good lorde ledeth it continually, and therto himselfe shalle bring it' (xiii.35.12-14). A cross link is also drawn (xiii.35.15-16) back to the first revelation, where God is maker, lover and keeper of all that is made, and the third, where he is 'in a point', the mover of all. In our 'fulhed of joy' we share in God's delight in his creation:

> Rightfulhed is that thing that is so good that may not be better than it is. For God himselfe is very rightfulhed . . . . And right as he ordained it to the best, right so he werketh continually, and ledeth it to the same ende. And he is ever fulle plesed with himselfe and with alle his workes. And the beholding of this blissful acord is full swete to the soule that seeth it by grace. (xiii.35.23-29)

We rejoice in the goodness of creation, yes, but even more so in its properness, its 'acord' in being proportional in its (eventual) rightness and fullness to God's 'rightfulhed'. It is no surprise, then, that the terms 'behovely', 'seemly', '[be]longeth' and 'proper' form another of Julian's sets of keywords; indicating a sense of structure, of meaningful proportion underlying reality, they appear throughout her texts and mark the logic of *properness* that organizes her model of the world.[47]

An absolute faith that things are as they should be – that all will be well – is required if the serene courtly subjectivity that Julian models is to be lived successfully. In Chapter 42 of the Long Text, speaking of times of God's apparent silence and absence in prayer, Julian says: 'He wille that we have true knowing in himselfe that he is being. And in this knowing, he wille that oure understanding be grounded with alle oure mightes, and alle oure intent, and alle our mening. And in this grounde, he wille that we take oure stede and oure wonning' (xiv.42.22-25). The notion that God 'is being' comforts us in times of doubt

[45] Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 67, 155.
[46] Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 50.
[47] A striking example of this logic is the Long Text's construction of the relationship between mother and child as instinctive: 'ever . . . he fedeth us and fordreth us, right as the hye, sovereyne kindnesse of moderhed wille, and as the kindly nede of childhed asketh. . . . For kindly the childe dispaireth not of the moders love, kindely the childe presumeth not of itselfe, kindely the childe loveth the moder, and eche one of them other' (xiv.63.27-34).

only if it follows that all beings are exactly as they should be, sharing in his perfect goodness, even though we cannot see this yet. Julian offers similar comfort a chapter earlier, in the language of popular devotional practices: when in our finitude and fallibility we struggle with dryness or temptation, we should remind ourselves of God's perfect lordly reputation, by 'rehersing his blessed passion and his gret goodnes' (xiv.41.49-52), in the context of the entire story of salvation from our 'noble and excelent making', through our saving, and now our earthly journey 'to his blisse' (xiv.42.26-35). All this is God's 'dede that is now in doing: and that is that he ruwle us and gyde us to his wurshippe' (xiv.42.33-34). As noted in Chapter 3, honour lies in behaviour proper to one's role and status; thus God's honour is maintained in that all creation expresses his goodness. In this context, the bare fact that we exist is proof of God's power. Christ invites us to contemplate this fact's simple properness: "Beholde and se that I have done alle this before thy prayer. And now thou art, and prayest me" (xiv.42.30-31). A philosophical idea, that history is a meaningful narrative in which our being has an apportioned place, becomes in Christ's mouth a speech of reassurance. Julian's choice of phrasing like 'take oure stede and oure woning' and 'beholde and se' suggests that the stance her readers are to learn is performative, a chosen attitude. The subjectivity we are to live out is a kind of existential posture we take up towards God, ourselves and the rest of creation, based on our understanding of the truth of our respective natures. It is in the labour of incorporating this posture, of learning the correct stances of courtesy, that Julian's courtesy imagery is so useful to her readers. The aesthetic quality of courtliness, discussed in Chapter 3, comes to have both rhetorical and theological significance.

In her particular idealized version of courtly identity and interaction, Julian highlights the *propriety* that rules the bond between lord and retainer. Both behave as is proper to their stations and roles. The Long Text has many examples, but among the most striking is the discussion of prayer, which is coloured throughout by a sense of the beauty of properness. Prayer is described as the duty that is proper to us: to pray always to be one with God and to trust that he will make it so 'is our det, and his goodnes may no lesse assine in us *that longeth us*, to do oure diligence thereto. And when we do it, yet shall us thinke that it is nought' (xiv.42.50-52, my emphasis). We deserve no reward because the duty is simply expected of us. By 'prayer' Julian seems to mean the programme of devotion that was the work of religious and anchorites, and practiced as far as possible by devout lay people. She concentrates on the existential posture such a programme must lead to, a stance that

includes two components: first that 'we reverently marveyle' and second that we 'meekly suffer, ever enjoyeng in God' (xiv.47.1-2). What this comes down to is a wholehearted, conscious acceptance of both weal and woe, the aligning of the will with the unfolding teleology of creation:[48]

> For prayer is a rightwis understanding of that fulhed of joy that is for to come, with tru longing and seker trust. Failing of oure blisse that we be ordained to kindely maketh us to longe. Trew understonding and love, with swete mind in oure savioure, graciously maketh us to trust. And thus we have of kinde to long and of grace to trust. (xiv.42.45-49)

Just as our ontological closeness with God, the fact that our soul 'wonneth in God in substance' (xiv.54.11-12), leads to existential feelings of homeliness, so our ontological status as finite created beings is experienced as distance, expressed in a fine mixture of joy and longing born of a deep understanding and acceptance of God's ultimate goodness in all things. This work of ours delights God: 'God shewed me so grete plesance and so grete likinge as if he ware mekille behaldene to us for ilke goode dede that we do, alle if {And yet} it es he that does it' (XIX.43-44; xiv.43.10-11).

The question is why God requires our prayers, since he does everything he ordained to do anyway, of 'his proper goodnesse' (xiv.41.20). The answer is precisely this *properness*; as God expresses his being by doing all in love, we express ours in acknowledging our dependence on him. The earthly analogy is the mutually constituting relationship between patron lord and client servant. Significantly, at this point in the argument Julian repeats the gift-giving scene, in this case with 'oure lorde himselfe' personally receiving our prayer 'full thankefully', and sending it up to heaven 'highly enjoyeng' as an imperishable treasure where it remains 'before God with all his holy, continually received' (xiv.41.25-29). The trope places the relationship staged during prayer within the public arena of status and honour. God delights in our prayers, to the extent that he 'is covetous to have us prayeng continually' so that he can reward us with 'mede and . . . endelesse thanke' (xiv.41.31, 38-40); in other words, he desires our petitions so that he can publically express his nature, generous goodness, and (in terms of the lord analogy) increase his worship (xiv.42.40-41). Our corresponding stance is 'thanking', which Julian defines as 'a true, inward knowing,

[48] For the *Gawain*-poet too, courtesy towards God is accepting the way things are. E.g. the Pearl maiden says to the dreamer, 'For þo3 þou daunce as any do, / Braundysch and bray þy braþe3 breme, / When þou no fyrre may, to ne fro, / Þou moste abyde þat he schal deme' (*Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, 70-71, lines 345-348). When he admits that he 'manere3 mysse' (72, line 382), and begins to address the maiden in the formal second person, she softens.

with gret reverence and lovely drede, turning ourselfe with alle oure mightes into the werking that oure lorde stereth us to, enjoyeng and thanking inwardly' (xiv.41.45-47). If the servant doubts the lord's willingness to do his duty, he implies that the lord lacks honour; thus Julian says our prayer and our trust must 'be both alike large' or else we 'do not fulle worshippe to oure lorde' (xiv.42.11-13). The lord and servant, one who grants and one who petitions, both express their natures in true enjoyment, and the distance between them is plotted by the servant's 'gret reverence and lovely drede' and the lord's 'mede and endelesse thanke'. The prayer is unnecessary except as a behovely act of mutual acknowledgement and celebration; the beauty and honour arise in the making visible of the loving bond by the rite of asking and rewarding, such that both parties can take pleasure and rejoice in it.

At this level of delight in the decorum of our being, what I have called the heuristic fantasy achieved by Julian's courtly imagery arrives at its most abstract form. As discussed above,[49] *pleasure* is one of those 'illegible writings' through which the mystical utterance can be inscribed on the soul, by making the self alive to the present moment in which God is encountered. Thinking of one's self as *noble* and *courtly* brings into action the varied ideas and images associated with this semantic field, many of which I have explored in Julian's imagery, like bravery, renown, elegance of life-style, generosity and erotic love. Ultimately all these bring *delight* to the lover of God who experiences him- or herself in these terms. This pleasure is meant to be evoked in the reader also, by the beauty of the argument, and the decorum of the imagery. Beauty and decorum belong together in many strands of medieval philosophy, with pleasure defined as a response to proportion. This is why all true knowledge is delightful, as Bonaventure explains, since knowing involves the various faculties of the mind receiving correct and proportionate images ('species') of the thing known. The proportion of species to the object that emits it calls attention to the perfect proportion between Father and Son, the first and most perfect Species: 'The species which delights because it is beautiful, sweet, and wholesome leads one to realize that there exists a first beauty, sweetness, and wholesomeness in that first Species, in which there is the utmost proportion to and equality with the One generating'.[50] Julian implies a similar

[49] See Introduction p.2, 16; Chapter 4 p.155.

[50] *Secundum hunc modum species* delectans *ut* speciosa, suavis *et* salubris *insinuat, quod in illa prima specie est prima* speciositas, suavitas *et* salubritas, *in qua est summa* proportionalitas *et aequalitas ad generantem*; *Itinerarium*, II.8. *Opera omnia* 5:301. Trans. Boehner, *Journey of the Mind to God*, 14. See

understanding of the cosmos as *pleasurable* in its perfect meaningfullness, which ultimately reflects God's perfect beauty.[51]

This is the final use to which she puts her courtly imagery: at the level most far removed from the conceptual, the imagery contributes to Julian's text simply by being beautiful, and giving the reader pleasure. In this rhetorical function the courtly imagery joins the many other excellences of Julian's justly famous prose style. Beauty is of particular usefullness to a mystical author, since the beautiful, like the ethical, is of a different order to the true. Beautiful 'is what being does not authorize, what is valid without being accredited by the real'.[52] Julian's text not only uses beauty in its rhetoric, but also draws attention to the non-conceptual nature of such a technique. The final section of this chapter traces a moment in Julian's text where she draws her readers' attention to the dissolving of meaning into pleasure.

Beauty as mystical discourse

My example comes from the heart of Julian's experience, and of her text, the tableau from Chapter 51. Julian's descriptions of the lord and, later, of the glorified servant seem to run into a particular kind of aesthetic limit. Her description of the lord reads as follows:

> His clothing was wide and side and full semely, as falleth to a lorde. The colour of the clothing was blew as asure, most sad and fair. His chere was merciful. The colour of his face was fair brown, with full semely countenance. His eyen were blake, most fair and semely, shewing full of lovely pitte, and within him an hey ward, long and brode, all full of endlesse hevens. And the lovely loking that he loked on his servant continually – and namely in his falling – methought it might melt oure hartes for love and brest them on two for joy.
>
> This fair loking shewed of a semely medelur, which was marvelous to beholde. That one was rewth and pitte, that other joy and blisse. The joy and blisse passeth as farre the rewth and the pitte as heven is above erth. (. . .)
>
> The blewhed of the [Servant's] clothing betokeneth his stedfastnesse. The brownhed of his fair face, with the semely blackhede of the eyen, was most according to she his holy sobernesse. The largehede of his clothing, which was fair, flamming about, betokeneth that he hath beclosed in him all hevens and all endlesse joy and blisse. (xiv.51.104-113, 130-133)

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the discussion of delight and judgement in Bonaventure's cognitive mysticism in Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition*, 100-104.

[51] This strand of Julian's thought reflects what Walker Bynum identifies as a philosophical understanding of wonder as a 'non-appropriative . . . and intensely cognitive response' not only to unusual or miraculous things, but to the very regularity of nature; see 'Wonder,' 6, 10 n.38.

[52] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 197.

The visual details given are so particular that they seem to promise specific allegorical meanings. Wolfgang Riehle traces as many of these as he can in the English and wider continental mystical traditions, but cannot find much. The interpretation of the blue of the lord's garment as signifying 'stedfastnesse' is common in medieval iconography, which often associates blue with God and fidelity. But traditionally red and green would also be expected, as they were extremely common in contemporary mystical descriptions of God in concrete terms. The brown and black of Jesus's face are confusing, since these colours usually had negative associations in the wider contemporary tradition, often signifying the lower powers of the soul;[53] Julian may be thinking of the *Song of Songs*, where the lover is 'dark but comely' (1:5), but the erotic connotations of this scriptural link hardly matches the Long Text's 'holy sobernesse'. Apart from these confusing details, the clothes worn by the Lord and the Servant, who first wears the short smock of a laborer and then at the end of the story a long full robe similar to that of the Lord, are simply conventional, proper for men of their stations in late medieval England. Their postures too, with the servant first standing respectfully to the left of the throne, facing the Lord, and then in his glory seated at the Lord's right hand, enact the proper courtesy that governed fourteenth-century feudal relationships. In the end, the most that can be said seems to be that the appearance of the Lord and the Servant in their glory is ordinary – they would not be remarkable for any wealthy late-fourteenth century men of the knightly class.

In addition to these confusions, the most common descriptive words used in these sections actually have very little direct descriptive content at all: 'fair', 'semely', 'full' and 'lovely'. This mode of depiction either requires readers to visualise their own interpretation of noble manly beauty, or simply conjures the sense, powerful because of its indistinctness, of a beauty that entirely satisfies the senses and so does not need to be enumerated. The two moves of comparison the passage evokes – 'methought it might melt our hartes for love and brest them on two for joy' and 'passeth as farre . . . as heven is above erth' – similarly draw their power from the readers' own imaginative and emotional appropriation of something that exceeds these faculties. In an *exemplum*, the divine submits itself to the limitation of human symbol; the text shows the strain of this submission in the progression of language towards the margins of sayability. The term 'semely' is situated at the dynamic centre of this tension, establishing the *beauty* the text wants to convey as a function of our human systems of judgement: as the perfect earthly lord is supposed to

[53] Riehle, *Middle English Mystics*, 79.

look, so appears this lord, and as sober and attentive such a lord's eye should be, so his eyes are. The text does not try to make metaphysical statements, but rather by drawing attention to the created, artificial nature of all language and cultural systems of meaning, suggests the fullness beyond these systems that can never be said.

De Certeau describes something similar happening in Hieronymous Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, painted a century after Julian's Long Text. The fecundity of the *Garden*, its extraordinarily exuberant imagery, simultaneously promises a hidden meaning waiting to be understood and frustrates all attempts to speak this meaning. The painting awakes our desire to read, to narrativize, but then leads into an endless dissemination of interpretive stories that end at no definitive conclusion; it gives rise to discourse and then leads it astray. In this way the painting shields itself, 'outwitting interpretive colonizations and . . . keeping, preserved from meaning, the pleasure of seeing'.[54] The picture remains a closed space, and the pleasure of seeing exterior, in contrast to the delving, dissipating movement of interpretation.[55]

Julian's use of surfaces, though not identical to Bosch's, works to much the same end. Like the *Garden*, her tableau with its elaborate images calls for narrativizing. Yet unlike the closed system of an allegory, where only one path runs from each sign to its meaning, the conflicting and shifting details of the tableau disseminate meaning into an array of interpretive stories. The only overarching story has to be introduced from the tableau's context, the single great story of mankind's salvation, which is the frame for Julian's whole experience and text. The tableau's surface image retains a richness of detail that convinces on another level; the two figures are simply and powerfully immediate to a contemporary audience, in their accurately described clothing. This ordinariness casts into higher relief what is so striking and beautiful about the tableau, namely the relationship of love, forgiveness and celebration between the Lord and Servant, which is definitely not characteristic of the often businesslike arrangement between lord and retainer in real-world practice.[56] Apart from the theology Julian derives from this image of love, the image convinces simply because of its beauty. The reader is supposed to long to be part of this relationship. This kind of writing convinces because of the intensity of the 'aesthetic

[54] *Mystic Fable*, 51.
[55] *Ibid.*, 50, talking of Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Delights*.
[56] Barratt, 'Lordship, Service and Worship,' 185.

satisfaction' it brings with it, rather than its logical argument.[57] As an *exemplum* the tableau shows, or inscribes, asks to be read – all of these verbs aim at meaning[58] – but at the same time through its betrayal of allegory's conventions, and its reliance on a nondescriptive surface of beauty, the text diverts any such aim. Instead, the tableau invites the reader or viewer to revisit it again and again, evoking each time the instantaneous experience of pleasure in its beauty, which experience invites openness to the mystical utterance itself.[59] Beauty and pleasure thus take their places within the text's repertoire of hailing techniques.

By a similar logic, the *delight* readers learn to take in their nobility, and in their daily lives as courteous service of God, can infuse the everyday with a sense of divine immanence. Julian does not try to establish courtesy as an authoritative allegory for our relationship with God. As we have seen, she keeps other imagery active alongside the courtesy imagery, such as her language of homeliness, as well as balancing imagery of various types of courtesy, such as feudal and maternal courtesy. She also does not let her pleasure in the aesthetic quality of courtly behaviour blind her to some of the ideological problems underlying the chivalric class's power and status. Once again, the overall effect is to highlight the contingent, artificial nature of courtesy as a style of behaviour, while celebrating and enjoying its beauty.

◊ ◊ ◊

In the final assessment, Julian's incarnational theology and her mystical practice are mutually supporting. Part of Julian's revelation is the refusal to pass over material things on a trajectory of ascent to a purely spiritual encounter with divine truth. Instead, both the material world and human language, in their finitude and mutability, are part of the continually unfolding, abundant revelation of God's fullness. In fact, it is by acknowledging and celebrating their finitude that we allow them to gesture towards what

[57] Charles Winquist, *Desiring Theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 87, quoted in Burrows, 'Raiding the Inarticulate,' 178.
[58] De Certeau, *Mystic Fable*, 55.
[59] Or as de Certeau puts it, with characteristic lushness, one 'must constantly go back through the story . . . analyzed by the (supposed) commentary in order to accede to the sonorous garden of the one and only . . . [the text] never ceases opening up new fields for history to walk through on its way to the prose of the world'. *Ibid*., 198.

transcends them. Rainer Maria Rilke explains how this is so, in his 'Ninth Elegy' (lines 1-6):[60]

> Praise this world to the angel, not the unsayable one,
> you can't impress *him* with glorious emotion; in the universe
> where he feels more powerfully, you are a novice. So show him
> something simple which, formed over generations,
> lives as our own, near our hand and within our gaze.
> Tell him of Things.

The surface of 'Things' is the shore on which the accumulated debris of the currents of becoming collect into patterns visible to the eye. The things we make and build, the objects and ideas that outlive their makers and 'over generations' take on layer upon layer of gradually shifting meanings and uses, bear the traces of that transcendence that gave birth to them and at once passed on. Things bear witness to the becoming that is always beyond them. The visibility of things, their created surface, reminds us of the 'physics of our creatureliness':[61] in awareness of what we have brought to being, and are capable of producing, we acknowledge what remains beyond. To surrender to the pleasure of seeing, to celebrate the beauty of artifice, is to rejoice in transcendence, to acknowledge the Other without objectifying it. Julian embodies this insight in both her theology and her writing practice, and it is the core technique of her mystical discourse. Its logic underlies the various mechanisms of hailing discussed in Chapter 2, including Julian's method of placing different images, spiritual practices, and contemplative and devotional theories side by side, neither wholly rejecting nor fully depending on any of them. Like the decorative surface of the tableau, and the marked awareness Julian shows of how powerful beautiful prose can be, these hailing mechanisms locate the meaning of the text in the *event* of reading, by means of which the reader passes through the text itself into the mystical encounter.

The artefacts of culture, the things we have created over time in our shaping of our world, are equally 'Things' in Rilke's sense. The artifical quality of courtly culture is easy to see,

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[60] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Selected Poetry*, ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage International, 1989) 200-201. From 'Die Neunte Elegie':

> Preise dem Engel die Welt, nicht die unsägliche, *ihm*
> kannst du nicht großtun mit herrlich Erfültem; im Weltall,
> wo er fühlender fühlt, bist du ein Neuling. Drum zeig
> ihm das Einfache, das, von Geschlecht zu Geschlechtern gestaltet,
> als ein Unsriges lebt, neben der Hand und im Blick.
> Sag ihm die Dinge.

[61] To use a phrase from Burrows; 'Raiding the Inarticulate,' 185.

due to its nature as a form of cultural capital that manufactures signs of distinction that mark one social stratum off from another. In Julian's idealised presentation she accentuates and delights in the aesthetic character of courtliness. Her text does not shy away from the made quality of courtliness, but rather exploits it by plotting a language of courtly selfhood, translated onto the interior, spiritual plane, that her readers can internalise and habituate themselves to. The fact that this courtly identity is lived out privately, within the consciousness of each reader irrespective of their status, maintains the sense of a performance, the fantasy aspect of which is part of its appeal. By taking pleasure in the formality and artificiality of courtly identity, Julian makes it a means of bearing witness to the mystical encounter, as a style of living out the desire that is the core of mystical subjectivity. The metaphor of courtly interaction with God our lord is inadequte, as is that of homely interaction with God our mother, or any other metaphor, but this fact *if embraced* makes these images acceptable and pleasurable ways of performing our openness to the trancendent.

Returning to the three aims of this thesis, described in the introduction, we can see that the second and third are interlinked: Julian's courtly imagery is an integral component of her mystical discourse, because by offering a style of mystical subjectivity it enables her readers to pursue their own encounters with the divine beyond the confines of the text, and into their wider lives. This leaves the first aim, evolving an approach to mysticism that is suited to the medieval context, to consider. Focusing on the practices Julian evolves to do justice to the nature of an encounter with the divine Other avoids an anachronistic focus on some kind of "mystical experience". The only traces a mystical encounter leaves are indirect, in the form of its effects on already existing discourses and practices. Julian's deep acquaintance with a range of scholarly, devotional, literary and secular traditions makes the texture of her writing a complex surface over which these traces can be mapped. Her texts do reflect the changing philosophical and theological climate in which she lived; for example, she is willing to balance traditional trinitarian models of the soul with her own structures and images, suggesting the influence of waning faith in the allegorical reading of reality. Yet overall she remains a woman of the late medieval period, committed to a view of the world as a gracious and 'behovely' utterance spoken into reality by God, a faith which underlies and gives her mystical practice its characteristic *style* that is 'gentille, curteyse, fulle delectabile'.

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