

The potentiality of "nought:"
Julian of Norwich's understanding of the deity
and the self through the apophatic matrices of
love and dread

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Abstract

The potentiality of "nought:" Julian of Norwich's understanding of the deity and the self through the apophatic matrices of love and dread

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This thesis explores Julian of Norwich's poetics of understanding, situated on the continuum from cataphatic representation to apophatic symbolism, through a focus on her *modi amandi et timendi*. This methodological dualism bridges the chasm in current scholarship between her *theologia negativa*, affectivity, and contemplative insight.

I argue that Julian's correlational modalities of love and dread foster an intuited *participatory sapience* based on the unmediated joy of apprehending the transcendent and immanent *mysterium*. Until now, the significance of the apophatic concept of "nought" in her theology has not been generally acknowledged. In contrast, I contend that the reciprocal love knot with the divinity and both parties' kenotic surrender culminate in several varieties of "nought." These include the impossibility of attaining certain knowledge about the godhead or the self, the fundamental difference and enclosing of created and uncreated "nought," and the hermeneutics of fragmentation and abundance that these aporias foster.

Expanding on these coincidences of opposites, the introduction and the first chapter explore the dynamics of the divine absence/presence dyad, proving that Julian's partaking in the deity's creative impulses initially fosters a literal and linear engagement with him but peters out into a receptive stillness that silences the discursive mind. Her theology of becoming invariably uses her human means to gesture to the beyond, and it is predicated on a profound sense of wonder, as well as on its analogue, humility.

The second chapter focuses on the anchoress's conceptualisations of dread and their organic relationship to grace and spiritual security. Starting with an analysis of the paradox of *reverent dread* as an expression of love, I demonstrate that the Parable of the Lord and the Servant functions as an interpretive prism that tactically misleads any propensities towards narrative totality, instead privileging the *sensus mysticus*. Intricate processes of "noughting" also dominate Julian's encounters with the devil and her treatment of sin. She balances both on the cusp of existent absence, and thus dissolves all forms of non-theocentric dread.

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This thesis is dedicated to my family and to the dear memory of my father.

Abbreviations

- DCD *Anselm of Canterbury. De casu diaboli. In S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia. Ad fidem codicum recensuit Franciscus Selesius Schmitt. Vol. 1, edited by Franciscus Selesius Schmitt. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946.*
- DM *Aquinas, Thomas. Quaestiones disputatae de malo. In Sancti Thomae de Aquino, opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita. Vol. 23. Rome: Commissio Lenonina, 1982.*
- EETS o.s. Early English Text Society, original series.
- MED Hans Kurath et al. (eds.) *The Middle English Dictionary. Middle English Compendium. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2018.*
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>.
- SCG *Aquinas, Thomas. Summa contra gentiles. In Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita. Vol. 13. Rome: Typis Riccardi Garroni, 1918.*
- ST *Aquinas, Thomas. Summa theologiae. In Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita. Vol. 4. Rome: S.C. De Propaganda Fide, 1888.*

Introduction

Two paradoxes stand at the heart of the *unio mystica*: the apprehension of divine abundance through inevitably constrictive postlapsarian human means, and the subsequent dissemination of the *verbum Dei* through the finite processes of linguistic referentiality. This fundamental tension between the immeasurability of the transcendent Other and the conceptualisation of humanity as image of God who long for their creator throughout their lives in the realm of dissimilitude gives rise to contrapuntal layers of near- and farness, and to their situatedness between the coordinates of spiritual blindness and *participatory sapience*.

Julian of Norwich, the contemplative who received a series of sixteen revelations at the age of thirty in May 1373, textualises her grappling with the interpretive aporia of the *deus absconditus et praesens* through a process of incremental, associative, and sophisticated anagogical abstraction. By examining her poetics through microscopic analyses, this study has three aims: first, it builds upon and contributes to scholarship that has elucidated Julian's significance as a theologian who straddles the continuum from cataphatic representation to apophatic symbolism.¹ Correspondingly, it argues that the recurring patterns of ever-increasing emblematic and kenotic complexity initially foster intellectual cognition but strategically peter out into absolute stillness in front of the *mysterium tremendum*. Expanding on this premise, the first chapter of this thesis asserts that these hermeneutics foster a *jouissance* in the divinity's apprehended presence and a human partaking in his creative impulses in the world. This intuited understanding is based on various constructs of created and uncreated *nought*,

¹ See footnote 6.

communicated through finely carved out neuralgic points of *coincidentia oppositorum* that connect the godhead to the human and the divinely inspired author to her text and its reception, while at the same time retaining the awe of God's otherness.² Further essential glimpses into the deity's beyond include Julian's self-effacing analogies; the concepts of *oneing* and *kynde*; the topos of the individual's apophatic knitting to the Infinite, and the discussion of *substance* and *sensualite*.

However multi-layered Julian's vectors of meaning-making may be, they are simultaneously minimalistic and stripped-down to the modality that is most closely connected to the godhead's ontology: love. Indeed, understanding of the divinity "and love are reciprocally defining as they are interpenetrating or 'perichoretic.'"³ Hence, a further aim of this study is to examine Julian's theology through the subtle dynamics between her *modi amandi et timendi*. The second chapter explores these matrices of love and dread—in diverse manifestations such as the love of God and the self, reverential awe, or the dread of the self's destructive tendencies—which all have the omnibenevolent deity as their midpoint. A series of paradoxes, from sin's ontological *noughting* to *reverent dread*, which exists only through its expression as love, correlate with the peripeteia of the Resurrection that transfigures abjectness into redemption. The joy that Julian's *sapientia amoris* brings about erupts in her *risus paschalis*, a marker of ultimate reversal. Her Boethian reading of these *poyns* of *soden* inverse, and the split perspective she repeatedly invokes, colours her interpretation of the devil as linguistically and theologically dissolved *nought* and informs the intended interpretation of her Parable of the Lord and the Servant, whose initial iconographic certainty vanishes into hermeneutical incompleteness and the emblematic proliferation of wonder. While

² On God as "caché" ("hidden") and "le Tout-Autre" ("the entirely Other"), see Charles André Bernard, *Le Dieu des mystiques. Les voies de l'intériorité*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2012), 76-7.

³ Aaron T. Smith, "Knowledge of God," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, eds. Glen G. Scorgie, Gordon T. Smith, and James D. Smith III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 563.

Julian's language is thus firmly rooted in the basic note of love, and always ends up with this starting tone, she repeatedly introduces keys of dread that are seemingly dissonant but essentially create three-dimensional moments that merge the wounded world with the infinite.

The methodological synergy between Julian's *theologia negativa* and the vortices of love and dread that it progressively stimulates seeks to bridge the gap in current scholarship between her apophatic tendencies of absorption, affectivity, and understanding.⁴ In addition, the focus on her hermeneutics through the prisms of love and dread offers profound insight into the apprehension of the divinity through decidedly human means, which are not ends in themselves but mediators of immanent transcendence that elevate the text and the audience towards the anagogical plane to which Julian gestures. These trajectories invariably prioritise the bond with the godhead via the divine *scintilla* in the soul, both of which remain eternally beyond comprehension. However, instead of provoking a destabilising *horror vacui*, the absence of taxonomic certainty coupled with the self-perception as an ignorant though illuminated child is a hallmark of Julian's spiritual reality of becoming. Her poetics nurture potential and possibility: the unknown and the intuited unknowable are relational but not correlative concepts.

⁴ My work builds on recent research on the role of the *affectus* in medieval English literature by Ayoush Lazikani, Daniel McCann, and Sarah McNamer. Late-medieval affectivity has also been the subject of longstanding research by Vincent Gillespie, Jeffrey Hamburger, Alastair Minnis, William F. Pollard, Denis Renevey, Barbara Rosenwein, and Annie Sutherland. Jennifer Bryan, Cristina Cervone, and Michelle Karnes' works further inform this study (see bibliography).

PART I: Love

Certain Knowledge, and How it Cannot be Obtained

The first part of this chapter discusses the nature of divine and human love and its relationship to understanding, interpretation, and self-knowledge through the textual means of silence, fragmentation/austerity, and abundance/excess in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*.⁵ These are essentially abstracting and apophatic devices gesturing towards the threshold of contemplative absorption that de-structure, defamiliarise and reference the threshold that lies between discursive consciousness and contemplative apprehension.⁶ Working against a straightforward line of interpretation,

⁵ It is important to note that this methodology allows for the discussion of form *and* effect. Several studies examine Julian in the context of hermeneutics, but some of them centre on form alone. Three recent ones are: Michelle Karnes, who focuses on disparity as the main hermeneutic tool and thematic and formal device, which I would argue contradicts with Julian's theology of universality: "Julian of Norwich's Art of Interpretation," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 2 (2012): 334. Ena Jenkins offers a new classification of Julian's interpretive process but focusses on form rather than on function: "Julian's *A Revelation of Love*: A Web of Metaphor," in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), 182. Elizabeth N. Evasdaughter interprets Julian not in her own right but with reference to Aquinas and Duns Scotus: "Julian of Norwich," in *A History of Women Philosophers. Vol 2. Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment Women Philosophers A.D. 500-1600*, ed. Mary Ellen Waithe (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 191-219. Perceptive studies on Julian's hermeneutics include Paul Molinari, who discusses the categorisation of her revelations: *Julian of Norwich. The Teaching of a 14th Century Mystic* (London and New York: Arden Library, 1958); Barry Windeatt, "Julian of Norwich and Her Audience," *The Review of English Studies* 28 (1977): 1-17; Edmund Colledge and James Walsh's introduction to their edition: *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), particularly 67-71; Brad Peters, "A Genre Approach to Julian of Norwich's Epistemology," in *Julian of Norwich. A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Routledge, 2012), 115-152; Nicholas Watson, "The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V, Papers read at the Devon Centre, Dartington Hall, July 1992*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), 79-100. I agree that the Augustinian triad of "bodily sight," "word formyd in [...] [her] understanding," and "gostly sight" (Chapter 9) is a schematisation far too rigid and constricting to make sense of Julian's endlessly open and multiplex hermeneutics. For this reason, the textual strategies in her increasingly symbolic text invite her audience to leave behind all forms of taxonomic certainty to move towards the threshold of transcendence.

⁶ Studies on apophatic language and discourse will be quoted throughout the text. I am especially indebted to Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross, "The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V, Papers Read at Devon Centre, Dartington Hall, July 1992*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 53-77 and Vincent Gillespie, "Postcards from the Edge," in *Looking in Holy Books. Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 307-337. Ross' work on silence has been highly influential in shaping my argument: Maggie Ross, *Silence: A User's Guide, Volume 1: Process* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2014) and Maggie Ross, *Silence: A User's*

they nonetheless offer peripheral and partial viewpoints into the inner workings of contemplative hermeneutics and divine communion and bring their influence to bear on most, if not all, aspects of Julian's theology as well as her text's production and reception.

In their significance as pivotal formal features by which her God is presented and as mere stepping stones into his greater mystery, these apophatic linguistic devices ultimately contribute to unfolding the unfathomable layers of the *mysterium tremendum* and probe further into the deity—the source of all her understanding and interpretation. I argue that the relationship between love and understanding in *The Revelations* is more complex than has previously been recognised, and that the aporetic cornerstones of textualised love function as the hermeneutic key to unlock Julian's theology of salvation as manifested in the contemplative event and afterwards, throughout years of her rumination on her visions.

These enigmatic and reciprocated manifestations of divine love and enveloped apprehension calibrate the engagement with the text by opening up multiple revelatory vectors, while never fully pursuing them to their end. In this view, apophatic abstraction and its linguistic artefacts allow Julian to communicate contemplative events and meditations in a form that requires her reader's resilient and malleable engagement in the face of linguistic alienation. As I shall show, the affective intentionality of divine love and its textualisation by Julian, when they are discerned, take hold of both feeling and knowing, thus creating an intuitive *participatory sapience* that is in its essence

Guide, Volume 2: Application (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2014); Further authoritative studies on Julian in the context of apophatic theology include Denys Turner's works *The Darkness of God. Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and *Julian of Norwich, Theologian* (Yale and London: Yale University Press, 2011). See also Cynthea Masson, "The Point of Coincidence: Rhetoric and the Apophatic in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*," in *Julian of Norwich. A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Routledge, 2012), 153-181.

without beginning or end and beyond taxonomic certainty.⁷ The dictum *amor ipse intellectus est* could have been added as a conclusion to her text.⁸

Julian's *Long Text* ends with a meditation on love as the stimulus for and effect of attaining understanding in this life. Far from a definite conclusion, the apprehension of divine love is circumscribed as the endpoint of an interpretive process as well as its beginning:

And fro that time that it was shewid I desired oftentimes to witten what was our lords mening. And xv yer after and more I was answerid in gostly vnderstanding, seyand thus: 'Woldst thou wetten thi lords mening in this thing? Wete it wele: love was his mening. Who shewid it the? Love. What shewid he the? Love. Wherefore shewid it he? For love. Hold the therin and thou shalt witten and knowen more in the same; but thou shalt never knowen ne witten therein other thing without end.' Thus was I lerid that love was our lords mening. (Ch. 86)⁹

As the passage recapitulates the modalities in which love is articulated and carefully calibrated throughout the text, it summarises the properties of sheer incomprehensibility as well as otherness that divine love has come to imply. This is achieved by positioning it as the outcome of years of rumination and the answer to every question that could possibly be asked. In Julian's discursive consciousness, she struggles for understanding

⁷ On endlessness in Julian, see Barry Windeatt, "The Art of Mystical Loving: Julian of Norwich," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England. Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1980), 60.

⁸ "Love itself is understanding," an adage that is already in use by twelfth-century Cistercians, see Jean Déchanet, "Amor ipse intellectus est: La doctrine de l'amour-intellection chez Guillaume de Saint-Thierry," *Revue du Moyen Âge latin* 1 (1945): 249-274. See also Bernard McGinn, "Love, Knowledge, and Mystical Union in Western Christianity: Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries," *Church History* 56, no. 1 (1987): 7-42 as well as McGinn's, "The Language of Inner Experience in Christian Mysticism," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 1, no. 2 (2001): 156 on affective intentionality and the properties of "modes of symbolic discourse."

⁹ All quotations from the *Long Text* are taken from London, British Library, MS Sloane 2499 in Marion Glasscoe's edition: Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993). All references to the *Short Text* (London, British Library, MS Additional 37790, the "Amherst Manuscript") and the Paris manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Anglais 40) are to Colledge and Walsh's edition: *A Book of Showings to the anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978). Preference for Sloane over Paris is based on "its greater theological subtlety and complexity, and a feeling that Paris consistently avoids the theological *lectio difficilior*, preferring the orthodox to the audacious" (Gillespie and Ross, "Apophatic Image," 59, footnote 19).

throughout a period of fifteen years, but the transition from “I desired” to the principal insight in “I was answeryd” happens without any spectacular flourish, in order to signal the ready availability of communion with her God and his closeness to creation.¹⁰

The distinction between living in the world and apprehending what goes beyond is further suspended because the probing into divine meaning that Julian has been attempting is not merely met with straightforward responses once she enters her “gostly vndirstonding.” Crucially, the key strategy does not involve following an arbitrary type of inquiry, but rather succinctly formulating the right kind of question in the first place. “Gostly vndirstonding” is a place where central questions are formulated for Julian, and she has to keep herself in a receptive mode only. The difference between this and discursive reasoning does not only lie in who provides the answers, but in the textual strategy that lets categorical questions succinctly fold into themselves.

At the same time, love offers *accessus* categories,¹¹ and the thrice mentioning of “witten/wetten/wete” at the opening of this passage foreshadows the “understand[ing],” “certain or first-hand knowledge,” “reveal[ing]” and “truth” that are about to follow.¹² This range of meaning excavates the divine viewpoint, while subsets of “weten” also offer multimodal insight into Julian’s psychology: the semantic fields of “expectation,” “penetrat[ing] to the true nature of something,” and “inquir[ing]”¹³ meet Julian at the threshold between cognition and apophatic regress and reference the profound *already/not yet* chasm that she expresses throughout her text. Significantly, when she is

¹⁰ Julian employs this type of switch from human modes of thought to the divine perspective frequently.

¹¹ On the proliferation of Cicero’s *septem circumstantiae*—quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando/ who, what, where, by what means, why, how, when—among medieval rhetoricians and exegetes, see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 3.

¹² witen v. (1), senses 2-4, 8, 11 in: Hans Kurath et al. (eds.) *The Middle English Dictionary*. Middle English Compendium (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2018), URL <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>>. Henceforth abbreviated as MED.

¹³ MED, witen v. (1), senses 7, 9, 13.

about to receive the response, it is collocated as “wete it wele,” an imperative that harks back to *beholding* “with avisement”¹⁴ but takes the latter’s rumination a stage further, away from reflection after the contemplative act and into the state of sapiential understanding that is given and not attained.

The abstracting aporia of reduction, where the four letters of “love” encompass the apex of contemplation and a life’s worth of wisdom, while merely leading to the threshold of apprehension, alludes to the fragmentation/abundance dichotomy that apophatic love engenders. Through the strategic repetition of “love” as the universal answer, Julian creates a plane of stillness that puts an end to analytical enquiry and peters out into the void of the unknown. At the end of the passage, the imperative “Hold the therin” diverges in two directions. First, in its meaning as “behold” and “comprehend,”¹⁵ it is a reminder to discover oneself in the godhead’s love and, through that connection, to appreciate mutual indwelling and divine benevolence. Second, in its reference to “continu[ing]” and “remain[ing],”¹⁶ the imperative, as it marks the end of this particular contemplative moment and leads back to this world, urges the reader to

¹⁴ *Beholding* “with avisement” is a spiritual practice that Julian recommends throughout her work. See also Chapters 11, 12, 51, 68 in the *Long Text*. *Beholding* is Julian’s key hermeneutic modality, and “arguably the most important word in the Bible.” Maggie Ross, “Behold Not the Cloud of Experience,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2011, Exeter Symposium VIII*, ed. Eddie Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 30. In the same volume, Vincent Gillespie writes about *beholding* that “It is not a process of analysis and examination, nor is it something that falls under the purview of analytical theology. It is a still, agenda-less, non-discursive, openness to the light of God. Whereas looking at something implies an agenda of assessment and analysis, beholding in Julian usually implies a radical openness (a ‘noughting’ of the self that, in a mathematical paradox, is an absolute requirement for the ‘oneing’ with God”). “The Colours of Contemplation: Less Light on Julian of Norwich,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England VIII*, ed. Eddie Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 23. See also his collaboration with Ross, “The Apophatic Image,” 64; Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1982), 229-47; Roland Maisonneuve, *L’univers visionnaire de Julian of Norwich* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1987), 125-53; Barry Windeatt, “Introduction,” in *Julian of Norwich. Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), XLV.

¹⁵ MED, holden v. (2), sense 1.

¹⁶ MED, holden v. (1), senses 22-24.

return often to this “gostly vndirstanding” and its exposition on divine love, be it by way of reminiscence or further contemplation.

Paradox and regress are the only modalities in which this gesture towards an immeasurable excess of insight can end. This is manifested in a chiasmic inversion that circumscribes the differences between divine and human modes of insight: “Hold the therein and thou shalt witten and knowen more in the same; but thou shalt never knowen ne witten therein other thing without end.” As she contrasts “witten and knowen” with “knowen ne witten,” the return to the plane of contemplation and ensuing meditation is offered as the only method to expand understanding (along the equation love = wisdom), whereas investment in other avenues of knowledge is excluded from any progression in the contemplative mode.

With this assertion, the mutual indwelling peters out, and we return to the subjectivity of the analytic mind that languishes for limitless knowledge. Julian’s own appended interpretation that “Thus was I lerid that love was our lords mening” softens the abrupt semantic turn from the godhead’s meaning to human patterns of thought, and from universality to particularity; in recalling and summarising the core not only of this passage but of her entire text, she paves the way for subsuming hermeneutics under love and thus irrevocably relates divine and human love and understanding.

The anchoress’s approach to language is apophatic and performative here. The brittle boundary between the created and uncreated renders her godhead as the Other who has to be deciphered endlessly, embodying both a tangible and abstract concept of love and grace, which is God’s palpable action in the world towards his creation.¹⁷

¹⁷ On grace as God’s creative energy in the world see Joan M. Nuth, *Wisdom’s Daughter. The Theology of Julian of Norwich* (New York: Crossroads, 1991), 96 and Philip Sheldrake: *Julian of Norwich: In God’s Sight. Her Theology in Context* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2019), 90-91. Nuth and Sheldrake’s interpretation of divine love in Julian’s text differs from mine. See also Roger Haight, *The Experience and Language of Grace* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

Some scholars interpret Julian's theology as centring on the economic Trinity, focusing on her God's works and perichoresis.¹⁸ In contrast, I argue that the modalities in which she discusses the divinity are abstract, excessive, and fragmentary at their core, but interact with embodied immanence precisely to illuminate difference, multiplicity,¹⁹ and, as a coincidence of opposites, unity.

Julian's vision of the Passion forms the contemplative event that, in conjunction with the resultant meditations, allows her to lay the foundations for her sophisticated deployment of the apophatic linguistic devices of silence, fragmentation, abundance and abstraction in order to illuminate divine love and key elements in her theology, namely the mysteries of the divinity's presence, absence, and perichoresis.

When Julian portrays Jesus dying on the cross, the embodied Word of God suffers so severely that the liminality of the *excessus* breaks the mould of fallen language:

sodenly I saw the rede blode treklyn downe fro under the garlande, hote and freisly and ryth plenteously, as it were in the time of his passion that the garlande of thornys was pressid on his blissid hede, ryte so both God and man, the same that sufferd thus for me. (Chapter 4).

Through her potent modus of focusing on the dying Christ, she illuminates the insurmountable linguistic boundary between the language of referentiality and the full understanding of salvific eschatology. Jesus' blood is described in such rich and vivid adjectival and adverbial detail, "hote and freisly and ryth plenteously," that it is

¹⁸ On the economic Trinity, see Elizabeth Dreyer, "The Trinitarian Theology of Julian of Norwich," *Studies in Spirituality* 4 (1994): 79-93 and Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 89-94.

¹⁹ On a German cognate, *überschwenglich*, see Johannes Zachhuber, "Überschwenglich. Ein Begriff der Mystikersprache bei Immanuel Kant," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 42 (2000): 139-154.

identified as the agent of grace—a strategy that imbues it with salvific significance. His redemptive suffering is not set in time, nor is it limited to the physical causes of pain, a fragmentation that emerges in the second glimpse into the Passion, in Chapter 7. Its timeless eschatological implications come to the fore in the subsequent suspension of time and physicality, when Jesus' blood is abstracted from the bodily consequences of his suffering. The passage captures the full force of physical torment, which subsequently vanishes away:

In all the tyme that he shewed this that I have said now in ghostly sight, I saw the bodyly sight lesting of the plentious bledeing of the hede. The grete dropis of blode fel downe from under the garland like pellots semand as it had cum out of the veynis; and in the comeing out it were browne rede, for the blode was full thick; and in the spredeing abrode it were bright rede; and whan it come to the browes, than it vanyshid. (Chapter 7)

Time is unhinged for the duration of seeing the bleeding head, and so is physicality. Irrespective of receiving the vision in “bodyly sight,” Julian traces the abstraction of the cornerstones of visual perception from an initial cataphatically additive engagement with the “pellots semand as it had cum out of the veynis” and their change of colour from reddish-brown to bright red and a preliminary “full thick” stream of blood that is plentiful in its “spreading abrode” to its abrupt disappearance.

Even though the blood vanishes, bleeding continues. This is not only a commentary on divine presence and absence but further illuminates the Passion's implications outside of time and throughout eternity:

notwithstondyng the bleding continuid till many things were seene and understandyn. [...] The plentious hede is like to the dropys of water that fallen of the evys after a greate showre of reyne that fall so thick that no man may numbre them with bodily witte. And for the roundhede, it were like to the scale of heryng in the spredeing on the forehead. These iii come to my [mynde] in the tyme: pellots, for roundhede, in the comynge out of the blode; the scale of heryng, in the spredeing in the forehede, for roundhede; the dropys of evese, for the plentious hede inumberable. (Chapter 7)

Jesus' blood acquires iconic characteristics as it creates a moment of stillness between agency ("bleding continuid") and temporal absence ("till many things were seene and understondyn") that gestures towards eternity. Caught in the moment before it obfuscates Christ's face, it leads to unmediated understanding, its continued abundance referencing never-ending grace.

The profusion and profound apophatic significance of Christ's blood brings to mind Michael Sells' comments on the three hallmarks of apophasis in the western world:

(1) The metaphor of overflowing or "emanation" which is often in creative tension with the language of intentional, demiurgic creation; (2) dis-ontological discursive effort to avoid reifying the transcendent as an "entity" or "being" or "thing"; (3) a distinctive dialectic of transcendence and immanence in which the utterly transcendent is revealed as the utterly immanent.²⁰

Sells goes on to discuss the ways in which writers in the apophatic tradition deploy "metaphors of 'flowing out' or 'flowing over,'" such as a spring brimming with water disseminated abundantly, the sun exuding plentiful warmth, or fire producing copious heat.²¹ Whereas in cataphatic texts these references to emanation erect a firm hierarchical differentiation, in that understanding originates with God and is consecutively distributed among the lower echelons, the paradoxical nature of the *deus absconditus atque praesens* in apophatic theology and discourse puts into question any linear emanation of wisdom.²² Likewise, in *The Revelations*, Julian's *sapientia amoris* is a *donum gratis datum* that is explored in the fusion of the immanent/transcendent divinity with the individual's humble hermeneutic surrender.

²⁰ Michael Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 6.

²¹ Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 6. In the English tradition, Richard Rolle's concepts of *canor*, *caldor*, *dulcor*, or Margery Kempe's "well of tears" exemplify the excess of emanation. About the metaphor "well of tears," see Raphaela Rohrhofer, *Familial Discourses in The Book of Margery Kempe. "Blyssed Be the Wombe That the Bar and the Tetyes That Yaf the Sowkyn"* (Frankfurt et. al.: Peter Lang, 2014), 136-7.

²² Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 7.

Apophatic language attaches itself not only to the absent/present chasm, but also to the enquiry into the ontological impasse:

The initial premise is that the source of emanation is not a supreme being, not a being or entity at all. [...] In the very act of asserting the nothingness (nothingness) of the subject of discourse, apophasis cannot help but posit it as a 'thing', or 'being,' a being it must then unsay, while positing yet more entities that must be unsaid in turn. The result is an open-ended dynamic that strains against its own reifications and ontologies—a language of *dis*-ontology. Ironically, the form of mystical union found in apophatic discourse has been traditionally named 'substantial union', despite the fact that it is the apophatic union that occurs most emphatically *in nihilo* rather than in substance or being. Thus, the hierarchical levels of being that are posited are unsaid from within. At the heart of that unsaying is a radical dialectic of transcendence and immanence. That which is utterly 'beyond' is revealed or reveals itself as most intimately 'within'.²³

Just as the enigmatic tendencies of Christ's blood come to the fore, however, Julian veers off, and towards a more cataphatic classification. She describes Jesus' blood as "like to the dropys of water," "scale of herying," and "dropys of evese" (Chapter 7). These similes suggest parallels between the divine blood and the natural world on the surface only, and neither are they inimical to the apophatic modality. Through their fluid intangibility, they are essentially located in eternity and profusion when they are dissected. Their referential character is immediately unsaid through a reference to abundance after the first simile, so as to elicit the interpretive method of employing language under erasure for the other examples that are yet to come: "dropys of water that fallen of the evys after a greate showre of reyne that fall so thicke that no man may numbre them with bodily witte" (Chapter 7).

The hermeneutical strategy follows the trajectory of consecutively unsaying seeing, classification, and understanding so that presence, plentifulness, the three similes that reference the world ("dropys of water," "scale of herying," and "dropys of

²³ Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 6-7, 212.

evese”), and their ultimate incomprehensibility (“plentious hede inumberable”) are yoked together. They are part of the same circular movement between temporality and eternity, and away from definitive categorisation. Julian thereby acknowledges the compelling, essentially human want to come to a full understanding of God, and the ways in which that desire generates a pull away from all things divine because it does not acknowledge the ineffable mystery that is generated in the wake of the Incarnation. Neither does it honour the fundamental distinction between the created in time and the uncreated endlessness that is without beginning or end. In explaining the works of the godhead in the world through reference to the world itself, and then pursuing this line of argument until its nullification, the text abstracts the immanent divine and sets it up on a level that cannot be deciphered.

Fragmentation dominates the reader’s perspective from the outset of the Passion in Chapter 4, when the gaze is modulated to fixate on Christ’s head in the beginning and in passing only—“as it were in the time of his passion that the garlande of thornys was pressid on his blissid hede”—before zooming in on the profusion of blood. Through this process of abstraction, Jesus’ bodily form acquires compelling significance precisely through its unsaying because the gulf between human and divine suffering is opened and closed simultaneously. The result is the portrayal of Christ as more than a man, without par in the natural world, and clearly marked out on an eschatological plane as the deity *in carne*, who transcends this world.

A paradox ends the glimpse into the Passion in Chapter 7 and articulates the shattering of human comprehension and, by extension, language: “This shewing was quick and lively, and hidouse and dredfull, swete and lovely.” As Julian leads out of this particular Passion sequence, she contraposes these sense impressions, and in this coincidence of opposites provides access to her God’s mystery. The narrational strategy

to offer partial glimpses into particularities of Jesus' pain and subsequently step out of it again augments the mysteries of the incomprehensible divine, which can only be approximated incrementally and incompletely.

Even as Christ is at his most frail and human, Julian's vision of him leads into silence, the abstract, and fragmentation. Her understanding that full accessibility through reason is denied in this life fuels her use of linguistic obstacles, which in their form and function communicate an aporia. The ambiguity of invoking transcendence and immanence as the preceding factors for contact with the godhead in this life builds on the human capacity to project and relate.²⁴ Through hyperbolising and thereby unsaying the human side of the second person of the Trinity, Julian illuminates the inbetween-ness of the human condition and the provisionality of language when trying to describe the divinity.

Julian's sophisticated linguistic choices allow the godhead's apophatic qualities to manifest within the dynamics of silence and abstraction before they are dissolved again. Sapiential understanding of her God vis-à-vis the quest for certain knowledge also forms the nucleus of Chapters 34 and 35 of the *Long Text*,²⁵ which are part of Revelation thirteen, in which Julian surveys sin and the divine deed of making amends without attaching blame. These consecutive chapters revolve around divine love and the nature of sin, while problematising familiarity with the deity in the run-up to the Parable of the Lord and the Servant, which will be discussed in Part II of this thesis.

²⁴ See Stephen C. Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2010), 13 for a discussion of the difficulties in conveying divine properties.

²⁵ Several passages in the *Long Text*'s Chapters 34 and 35 largely correspond with Chapter 16 of the *Short Text*.

Chapters 34 and 35 exemplify what Kevin Hart refers to as the contemplative's received adage that "I know that I know nothing,"²⁶ or what Marion Glasscoe, in the introduction to her edition of the Sloane manuscript, pertinently describes as Julian's epistemology: "absorbed into a process of understanding which leads not to a final intellectual formulation, but to a point where at least the possibility of a mode of knowing in which the *mene* of language has no place is glimpsed."²⁷

The anchoress unfolds her failed attempt to reach and express concrete knowledge in Chapter 35, where the concept of epistemological certainty, as well as the intrinsic human need for it, is called into question and reduced to its constituent parts in order to be reinterpreted. The hermeneutical frame in which the mode of approaching the problem is developed is that of the abundant plenitude of already received grace and Julian's indebted acknowledgement of it: the phrase "And whan God almyty had shewid so plenteuously and so fully of h[y]s godenes" (Chapter 35) intentionally mingles the source of goodness with its efficient cause—divine goodness is the generating force behind Julian's enquiry into him. While the ambiguity inscribed in the single word "of" may open two trajectories of interpretation only ("caused by his goodness," "showing a part of his goodness"), the layers of meaning are ultimately multiple when contemplating the divinity's goodness and its manifestations in and implications for the world.²⁸

For Julian, love emanates from and returns to a deity whose very essence is love, an ontological modality that is both simple and endless, and, therefore, constitutes an open-ended trajectory from the comprehensible to the intangible. When divine love

²⁶ Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology, and Philosophy*, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 202.

²⁷ Marion Glasscoe's introduction to *Julian of Norwich. A Revelation of Love*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1976), xvi.

²⁸ The Paris manuscript reads "of" too.

descends in the form of grace and ensuing revelations, however, the mystifying element of Julian's God remains intact in order to maintain a sense of fundamental difference and impenetrability.

If the deity's universal love is founded on the principle of divine otherness, this implies obfuscated human understanding as well as hidden areas of knowledge, and Julian views her own difficulties in grappling with the homeliness/hiddenness opposition as an initial failure to be content with the amount of insight that is given to her. Hereafter, she "desired to wetyn a certeyn creature that I lovid if it shuld continu in good lyvyng, which I hopid be the grace of God was begonne" (Chapter 35),²⁹ and thereby asks for specificities that stand in contrast to the universality of divine love to which she has been privy.³⁰ By referring to living and dying, and framing both within the gamut of divine providence, beginnings and endings alternatively collapse and reform in her God, the alpha and omega. In raising this question, Julian's failure lies in attempting to transfer a human pattern of thought onto transcendent truths, but through her mode of approach, she in fact breaks down the inquiry's validity before it is answered. The text subsequently develops this conundrum by pausing within Julian's retroactive introspection, through which she communicates the process of kenosis she has undergone in the time between the event and its textualisation:

And in this syngular desire it semyd that I lettyd myselfe, for I was not taught in this tyme. And than was I answerid in my reson, as it were be a freindful mene: 'Take it generally, and behold the curtesy of the lord God as he shewith to the; for it is mor worship to God to behold hym in al than in any special thyng.' I asentid and therewith I leryd that it is more worship to God to knowen al things in general than to lyken in onythyng in special. And if I shuld do wysely after this techyng I shuld not only be glad for nothyng in special, ne gretly disesid for no manner of thyng, for 'Al shal be wele.' (Chapter 35)

²⁹ The female gender of the "creature" in the *Short Text*—"I desyred of a certayne personn that I lovyd howe it schulde be with hire" (Chapter 16)—adds a dimension of specificity that is forfeited in the *Long Text* (Sloane and Paris versions).

³⁰ See also Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt's brief interpretation of this passage in *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame, Ind. and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 117.

“Knowen” and “lyken” raise general and specific taxonomies respectively, contrasting the love of God as its own end with the love of the godhead for the sake of another, which equals Augustine’s *uti/frui* distinction.³¹ Forced to inhabit a penitential mood in the opening of this passage, Julian switches from herself to the deity’s perspective when she acknowledges that she “was not taught in this tyme.” This strategy generates two semantic vectors. First, the stillness of individual failure presents a conceptual void as the outcome of her desire for personal advantage. As she interjects her self-reproof, she tactically illuminates her own awareness and the process of self-scrutiny she has undergone to achieve it. The crux revolves around the word “syngular,” which communicates the human side of this particular failure: “private,” “selfish,” and “specific; not general”³² are cognitive trajectories that run counter to an apprehension of the godhead of abundance, who expects to be discovered in the same way he manifests himself in the world, namely through universality and personal sacrifice.

The second vector created by switching from Julian’s mode of thought to her God’s view leads to a reflection on the meaning of time and centres on its connection to the afterlife and the *visio beatifica*, when full understanding that is not subject to any limitations will be made available. When Julian concedes that “It *semyd*³³ that I lettyd myselfe” (Chapter 35), she acknowledges the caution she has cultivated after her mistaken judgement and hints less at a retrospective analysis than she indicates ratiocinative uncertainty and defeat. She therefore enters this apophatic moment in a careful and explorative manner. In contrast, the divine multitude and silence revealed in the cumulative amplification from “syngular” and “onything in special” to the

³¹ See William O’Connor, “The Uti/Frui Distinction in Augustine’s *Ethics*,” *Augustinian Studies* 14 (1983): 45-62.

³² MED, *singuler(e)*, adj., senses 1a and 2a.

³³ My emphasis.

exhortation to “take it generally” and give “*more* worship to God to knowen *al* things in *general*”³⁴ (Chapter 35) separates Julian as the probing subject from the “certain creature,” the temporally defined object of her inquiry, and instead absorbs and thereby collapses her thinking by opposing it with the unfathomable divinity. The result of this juxtaposition is a silence of possibility *and* regress. From an inchoate image of moderate hubris that is seemingly specific and concrete, Julian develops her theology of unity in multiplicity and union in alterity. As it plays on the notions of absence and presence, the paradoxical energy of negative theology is realised in the alternation between revelation and hiddenness.³⁵

The progression of narrative perspectives that coalesce here is subtle, with the simile *mene* in “And than was I answerid in my reson, as it were be a freindful mene” (Chapter 35) covering a fluid range of connotations that illuminate the fluctuation at the core of the transmission: it could refer to an “agent [or] instrument,” a “go-between,” “Christ as a mediator between God and man,” or an “intermediary state.”³⁶ The phrase “as it were” constitutes another gesture of provisionality. Indeed, the inbetween-ness of Julian’s misjudgement and her *a posteriori* meditation on it come to the fore when they are directly addressed by her God, which means that three vantage points—of Julian then, of her retrospectively and after rumination, and that of the deity—are consecutively voiced and examined to contend with the problem of fragmentary

³⁴ My emphasis.

³⁵ On the play between near and far, see René Tixier, “‘Good gamesumli pley:’ Le jeu de l’amour in *The Cloud of Unknowing*” *Caliban* 24 (1987): 5-25; the English version was published as “‘Good gamesumli pley:’ Games of Love in *The Cloud of Unknowing*,” trans. Victoria Hobson, *Downside Review* 108 (1990): 235-253; Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play*, trans. Brian Battershaw and Edward Quinn (London: Burns & Oats, 1965); Robert Neale, *In Praise of Play: Towards a Psychology of Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Marion Glasscoe, “Means of Showing: An Approach to Reading Julian of Norwich,” in *Spätmittelalterliche Geistliche Literatur in der Nationalsprache I*, ed. James Hogg, *Analecta Cartusiana* 106 (1983), 155-77; Vincent Gillespie, “Strange Images of Death: The Passion in Later Medieval English Devotional and Mystical Writing,” in *Zeit, Tod und Ewigkeit in der Renaissance Literatur 3*, ed. James Hogg, *Analecta Cartusiana* 117 (1987), 141-43; On indwelling and difference, see William Franke, *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts 1: Classic Formulations* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 33.

³⁶ MED, *mene*, n. (3), senses 2 (a, b, and c) and 3 (a).

understanding in time. Julian follows a pastoral strategy here in relaying her struggles, but instead of concentrating on them, she puts the focus on their overcoming. The various stages are integrated in the divine plan when the “freindful mene”—a vague classification that further mystifies the emanating source—advises her to shy away from specificity and to focus on the godhead’s courtesy instead: ““Take it generally, and behold the curtesy of the lord God as he shewith to the; for it is mor worship to God to knowen al things in general than to lyken in onythyng in special”” (Chapter 35).

From an initially misguided attempt to view the deity all at once on her own terms—mistaken because it is wilfully sought instead of lovingly bestowed—to an appreciation of inexhaustible divine properties, the narrative gives expression to the modality with which it wants to be interpreted. The potency of this epistemological stance is then reapplied to Julian in her situation in the world, where wisdom comes to fruition between the poles of “nothyng” and “Al:” “And if I shuld do wysely after this techyng I shuld not only be glad for nothyng in special, ne gretly disesid for no manner of thyng, for ‘Al shal be wele”” (Chapter 35). The next step in the process of unknowing is permanently to ingrain this hermeneutic model by revealing more specifically the delights of expanding the apprehension of God through kenosis. This is achieved by applying the appreciation of “nothing,” as well as the limitations of a timebound existence, to the engagement with “Al:”

for the fulhede of ioy is to beholden God in al; for be the same blissid myte, wisdam and love that he made althyng, to the same end our good lord ledyth it continually, and therto hymse[l]fe shal bryng it; and whan it is tyme we shal sen it. And the gronde of this was shewid in the first, and more openly in the iii wher it seyth, ‘I saw God in a peynte’. (Chapter 35)

This abstracting line of argument has already begun to take shape at the end of the previous chapter, which confers the divinity's never-ending goodness and wisdom through their relation to the Church and the community of believers:

God shewid ful gret plesance that he hath in al men and women that mytyly and mekely and wilfully taken the prechyng and techyng of holy church; for it is his holy church; he is the ground, he is the substance, he is the techyng, he is the techer, he is the leryd, he is the mede wherfor every kynd soule travellith; and this is knowen and shall be knowen to every soule to which the Holy Gost declarith it. (Chapter 34)

Through a series of consimilar, mutually reinforcing, concise analogies—"ground," "substance," "techyng," "techer," "leryd," and "mede"—Julian's incremental understanding of the godhead's properties starts to touch on the cornerstones of his efficacy in the world. The multivalency that these metaphors establish through their additive and circumferential nature runs counter to their initial relational pull and reveals the fissures of any attempt at categorising her God: he is the source ("ground," "substance"), the means ("techyng," "techer," "leryd"), and the way ("mede") to guide those who engage with his word and the history and community that build on it.

This passage works against objectifying and thereby confining the deity into neat categories and instead attributes multiple identities to him, which all converge and find their place in his perichoretic essence. Fundamentally, concepts and classifications already present in the mind, and embodied by the similes quoted before, have to be visualised and subsequently discarded to bring the reader closer to grasping their limits. The segment opens with the promise of love aplenty, only consecutively to dismantle the intellectually and intuitively graspable manifestations and modalities into which the godhead is inscribed. In his immanent embodiment as a learned teacher, he becomes comprehensible, but in his more immaterial roles as "ground," "substance," and "mede"—the subject matter that grounds the Church's teaching, and the spiritual

purpose and goal that he encourages to attain—the text gestures at his ineffability. For the idea of the infinite to enter the corners of the mind, it is crucial to any discussion of the absolute transcendence of Julian’s divinity to appreciate the complexly additive and therefore alienating effect of the designations that are attempting to label him.³⁷ It is important to note, however, that it is not the question of divine presence but the issues of understanding and representation (both fragmented and limited) that the text embraces here. God cannot be theorised about by a theology of relationality, and the distance between the heavenly and the mundane frustrates the probing into his constant essence.

While enumerating the attributes of the *deus desiderans* who wants to “be known,”³⁸ there is no further elaboration on these similes as illustrative fundamentals of the divine nature. The divinity’s great love for humanity constitutes the abstract core that remains after the number of possible identities have been subtracted: when “God shewid ful gret plesance that he hath in al men and women” (Chapter 34), he already discloses everything that can and has to be known. He takes on various forms precisely to communicate his benevolent intention and magnitude but veils the particulars.

The section shows the extent of the deity’s goodwill and the method through which it creates an apophatic stillness that surpasses and shatters any inclinations to probe deeper into the silence of the celestial mystery. Its modus of multiplicity ensures that the godhead remains simultaneously simple, synthetic, and abstract. The contemplative’s attempt to engage with and textualise the unknowable divine leads to the breakdown of linguistic signification:

³⁷ See Maggie Ross, “Apophatic Prayer: Seeking Coordinates in the Ineffable. Notes for a Quantum Theology,” *Literature and Theology* 7, no. 4 (1993): 330–4.

³⁸ On divine yearning and Bernhard of Clairvaux’s conception of God, see Wolfgang Riehle, *Englische Mystik des Mittelalters* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2011), 300.

mystical discourse turns back relentlessly upon its own propositions and generates distinctive paradoxes that include within themselves a large number of radical transformations, particularly in the area of temporal and spatial relationships [...]. The paradoxes, aporias, and coincidences of opposites within apophatic discourse are not merely apparent contradictions. Real contradictions occur when language engages the ineffable transcendent, but these contradictions are not illogical. For the apophatic writer, the logical rule of non-contradiction functions for object entities. When the subject of discourse is a non-object and no-thing, it is not irrational that such a logic be superseded.³⁹

Julian's conceptual movement is circular, which means that there is no upward hermeneutical trajectory along the lines of *purgatio*, *illuminatio*, and *unio* or any other threefold models.⁴⁰ Rather, her theology is presented from a unified and, consequently, endlessly unifying perspective.⁴¹ Abstraction in the form of abundance and fragmentation is merely an avenue that references the "'beyond' of language"⁴² and creates discourse by engaging with the apophatic void. Fundamentally, it is not the deity who changes but human apprehension so that the immanent is integrated into the transcendent and the former rests in in the latter, while being continually unsaid through disintegration and addition. This oscillation between the referent and its absence is part of Julian's protreptic use of language that problematises the human condition and eschews heuristic stasis.

In his discussion on contemplative language, William Alston contrasts the *nothingness* of the *via negativa* with a particularly personal element through which God

³⁹ Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 3-4.

⁴⁰ Within apophatic discourse, the word "upward" proves problematic because it implies a definite place for God. See Turner for other models of ascent, with references to Bernhard of Clairvaux and William of St. Thierry: *Julian*, 136. However, I do not agree with his subsequent remarks that "there is no "trace, in [her] writings of spiritual drama."

⁴¹ This secure authorial persona is precisely the reason why she can present her epistemological difficulties and doubt.

⁴² Franke, *What Cannot Be Said*, 5. See also Michel de Certeau, *La Fable mystique 1: XVIe et XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

can be known.⁴³ Drawing on Evelyn Underhill, his description of divine domesticity clarifies its part in an apophatic text and its interpretation:

Since mystical experience and/or its objects are radically different from anything we encounter in “ordinary” experience, on the basis of which and for application to which most of our conceptual resources and our vocabularies have been constructed, we are forced into stretched or extended uses of language in order to capture, so far as possible, the features of this alien world. Domestic terms are pressed into foreign service by such devices as analogy, metaphor, and symbolism.⁴⁴

There is no such fundamental distinction between the apophatic and cataphatic divine properties in Julian’s text, because she incorporates the godhead’s ineffability into her work’s linguistic texture. Two elements are central to this: first, the essentially irresolvable moments of aporia that the acts of unsaying and the endeavour to communicate visionary content beyond words entails. Second, what Steven Katz refers to as “interpretive structures” that encrypt in them the contemplative’s very own method of epistemology.⁴⁵ The suspension of language and the dissolution of referents constitute Julian’s modality of radical self-consciousness in the face of what cannot be understood.

The form in which Julian modulates her text sets up a parallel between her creative linguistic choices and divine features. In this way, her language acts as a potent

⁴³ He characterises the former as “evoking...a faint echo” through the limited spectrum of language that is put to “special, unusual uses” in William Alston, “Literal and Nonliteral in Reports of Mystical Experience,” in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 82. See also W. T. Stace, *Time and Eternity: An Essay in the Philosophy of Religion* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1952), especially chapter 6.

⁴⁴ Alston, “Literal and Nonliteral,” 81-82; See also Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness*, 14th ed. (London: Methuen, 1944), especially Part One, chapter 6. On the problematics of revealing divine attributes in apophatic texts, see Evans, *Kenotic Christology*, 12-13. In a perceptive argument, Ross considers the concept of *experience* problematic when applied to contemplative discourse because the *unio mystica* takes place in the suspension of analytical consciousness (*Silence 1*, 78-80).

⁴⁵ For this term as tied to contemplative literature’s linguistic manifestations, see Steven T. Katz, “Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning,” in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

catalyst for transgressing the condition of being in this world,⁴⁶ and thereby takes on apotropaic potentiality. By referring to itself as the medium *and* the limit, it annihilates its powers, and thus establishes itself as a surprisingly trustworthy ally that acknowledges its inherent uncertainties. It is a language not of absolutes but of non-descriptive absurdity, whose final referent peters out. In Umberto Eco's words, the "Kabbalistic drift" of "language can be the place where things come authentically to begin: in Heidegger's hermeneutics the word is not 'sign' (Zeichen) but 'to show' (Zeigen).⁴⁷ In this way, a form of language that is under erasure simultaneously gestures towards the hidden divinity and determine the routes of access to it. An intermingling of cataphatic traces (symbols to decipher) and apophatic regress (the end of referentiality) in Chapter 34 and 35 engenders a language of:

saying and unsaying. [...] A purely apophatic language would be an abstract and mechanical turning back on each reference as it is posed. [...] The effort to affirm transcendence leads to a continuing series of retractions, a propositionally unstable and dynamic discourse in which no single statement can rest on its own as true or false, or even as meaningful. In such discourse, a rigorous adherence to initial logical impasse or ineffability exerts a force that transforms normal logical and semantic structures.⁴⁸

Let us now return to Chapter 34 and to the means through which Julian leads the reader out of the aforementioned portentous moment of impasse, after she has conveyed her God's ineffability through a multiplication of his attributes and their collapse. She achieves this with the indication that "this is knowen and shall be knowen to every soule to which the Holy Gost declarith it." This is a reference to the silence of *beholding* that is actualised when resting in the receptive mode. It is also an allusion to those routes

⁴⁶ See also Katz "Mystical Speech," 23 and footnotes 59 and 60, where he elaborates on the "magical and theurgical powers of language" in the Jewish contemplative tradition.

⁴⁷ Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1984), 154. See also Katz, "Mystical Speech," 5-6 and Moshe Idel, "Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 43: "As God was able to create a world by means of letters, man is supposed to rebuild the Temple in his ritual usage of language."

⁴⁸ Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 3.

towards sapiential understanding that are worth treading because they entail a singular bond with an ultimately elusive God. The focus on “knowen” does not resolve the difficulties of grasping the impenetrable godhead’s nature but does lead the way towards divinely sanctioned modalities of understanding that are intended for dissemination. The Holy Ghost, whose creative energy in the world bridges the gap between ignorance and sapience, in this moment self-reveals the deity without being revealed himself. As the most ungraspable part of the hypostasis, his is a vague and fleeting presence, his enigmatic dynamism further accentuating the human will’s total absorption into the kind of *beholding* in stillness through which the godhead wants to be known. He is far from an impersonal force, however, because he apprehends and delivers “to every soule” the knowledge it most desires. It is part of the malleable nature of manuscript transmission that the subsequent sentence, “And hope sothly that al those that seke this he shal spedyn, for they seky God” (Chapter 34), which communicates the Holy Ghost’s efficacy in giving assistance,⁴⁹ is preserved in another sense in the Paris manuscript, in which the meaning of “speden” and its antecedent is changed: “And I hope truly alle tho that seke thus *they* shalle spede, / for they seke god.”⁵⁰ In this case, the verb carries the sense of “achieving one’s goal,” as well as an implication of hastening,⁵¹ and the sentence becomes a suggestion to the faithful, rather than a plea to the Holy Ghost.

Not least because of Chapter 34 and 35’s position in the thirteenth Revelation, which discourses around sin, there remains an association of sin with knowledge derived from exuberant forms of intellectual curiosity acquired for its own sake, without humility and awe in front of the incomprehensible. This would simply conform to the

⁴⁹ MED, speden, v., sense 4a.

⁵⁰ My emphasis.

⁵¹ MED, speden, v., senses 1a and 6c.

scientia ut scientia argument that privileges the rational inquiry of scientific argument. However, Julian's spiritual practice of reverent *beholding* exemplifies a form of theology as *scientia ut sapientia*, whose availability in fullness is beyond reason.⁵² She answers these claims in her exposition that "is comforyng ageyn synne" (Chapter 34) and advocates for a pervading sense of humility in and through (her methods of acquiring) understanding. Consequently, the apophatic ineffability that follows the dissolution of the deity's attributes is reached through interleaved silent coaxing, and not through rigorously absolute didacticism.

Julian frames this particular argument of her God's unity in multiplicity and presence in absence with immediately pre- and ante-ceding chapters that bring into contact the affective extremes in the range of access points and responses towards the apprehension of the godhead. Love and dread are the coordinates in a continuum of affective paths generated *en route* to *participatory sapience*, which integrates the presence/absence chasm.⁵³ The layering and intensity of the divine near and far fundamentally question Julian in her frailty and reinforce a process of radical

⁵² The trajectory from *scientia* to *sapientia*, a primarily affective mode of understanding (though not necessarily excluding reason) is underlined by twelfth- and thirteenth-century theologians such as Bernhard of Clairvaux, who circumscribes *sapientia* as "sapor" ("taste"), and as distinct from, and more pervasive than, epistemological methods based on ratiocinative enquiry. Alexander of Hales in Paris and Robert Kilwardby at Oxford continue in this affective vein, the latter aligning sapience with the internalisation of the eternal good through the cornerstones of love and dread. In the fourteenth century, the *moderni* at Oxford and Cambridge are keenly aware of the position of language as the nexus between the divine and the human, and the translation and wide circulation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, as well as the considerable dissemination of Robert Holcot's commentaries on the biblical sapiential books, speak to an interest within and outside of the schools to participate in the godhead's ontology of love. Janet Coleman, *Piers Plowman and the Moderni* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1981), Chapters 1 and 5, esp. 149-50. Intimately analogous to Julian's *sapientia amoris* are her contemporary William Langland's endeavours to coordinate understanding with the love of God through his *kynde knowyng*. See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God. A Study of Monastic Culture*, transl. Catharine Misrahi, 3rd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982); Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition. From Plato to Denys*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 148-53; Vincent Gillespie, "Mystic's Foot: Rolle and Affectivity," in *Looking in Holy Books. Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England*, ed. Vincent Gillespie (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 246-9. See also Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language. A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge*, rev. ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). On *kynde knowyng*, see pages 79ff. and footnote 152.

⁵³ The dynamics between love and various forms of dread, particularly in the context of sin, are more fully explored in Part II of this thesis.

introspection. Essentially, these struggles of grappling with the thresholds of comprehension expose human fragility and its consequent epistemological efforts and limits, juxtaposing them with the incomprehensibility of the divine Other.

For the same reason, the modalities of accessing understanding in Chapter 34 circulate around place and hierarchy, before those notions are destroyed in the multiplicity of modalities in which the deity can be apprehended: “God shewyth the privities necessarye to his lovers, and how they plesse God mekyl that receive diligently the prechyng of holy church.” This statement veers between encouragement to wilful abiding and subtle exhortation, and between the intimacy of divine self-revelation and the individual’s receiving “diligently,” a mode of openness and humility that is an abbreviated compound yet to be deciphered. A sense of falsely implied precision that would compartmentalise understanding in “necessary” fragments bearing a connection with the Church’s teachings exposes uncertainty vis-à-vis the fundamental need for security and stability. Julian’s God rewards those who love him, and the “privities,” the contents and dimensions of the *donum gratis datum* received through mutual love, do not have to be spelled out here: they are love’s sapiential consequences and are intuitively grasped rather than taxonomised.

Since the insuperable impasse of understanding is intrinsically linked to the difference between the created and the uncreated, fragmentation has to be the defining mark and result of applying the cognitive faculties to revelatory content. Julian’s method brings to mind Sell’s principle that apophatic language creates “a dynamic discourse in which no single statement can rest on its own as true or false, or even as meaningful. In such discourse, a rigorous adherence to the initial logical impasse of

ineffability exerts a force that transforms normal logical and semantic structures.”⁵⁴

Katz concurs:

In that the mechanisms of knowing necessarily impinge on, even create, the substantive knowledge gained in mystical experience no less than in the more mundane epistemological contexts, language is a, if not the, key issue in reforming those structures required for obtaining mystical awareness. Language creates, when used by the mystical adept [...] the operative process through which the essential epistemic channels that permit mystical forms of knowing and being are made accessible.”⁵⁵

The following quotation from Chapter 34 supports a veering between intimacy and hiddenness, and highlights the vulnerability of living in a post-lapsarian world, where comprehension and the language that pertains to it are insufficient and consequently disintegrate:

Our lord God shewid to manner of privities: on is this gret privite with al the prive peynts that longen therto, and these privites he wil we knowen hid into the tyme that he wil clerly shewen hem to us; that other arn the privytes that he wil maken opyn and knowen to us; for he wil we wetyn that it is his wil we knowen hem.

Assiduous references to sacred mysteries and their attainment—the noun “privite” and its adjectival form is repeated five times—involve a process of complex stratification. Within the textual architecture of the revelation, which is already malleable and ineffable, the divine mystery is further obfuscated when “privities” are bifurcated into two, namely into the enigma of revelatory content and additional secrets.⁵⁶ Neither of them can be accessed through intellectual analysis, because they are a matter of revelation. This is a meta-level and self-reflexive elaboration on the form and content in which the communion with the godhead may manifest itself. Several epistemological

⁵⁴ Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 3.

⁵⁵ Katz, “Mystical Speech,” 8.

⁵⁶ See also Nicholas Watson and Jaqueline Jenkins’ line of argument in the comments to their edition in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2006), 226.

layers are at play. First, “privites” exist and are an integral part of an eternal God, whereas humanity is bound to time. Secondly, these “privites” may be made accessible through grace. Thirdly, they are here subdivided into two precise categories, which is where the hierarchy collapses. The breakdown is grasped by way of a paradox because Julian on the one hand embraces the sapiential divine promises and gifts but, on the other, is not able to dissect and divulge them.

Comprehending God presents a cyclical conundrum that may only be entered in the eternal present: love, understanding, and a release of and from *a posteriori* reflection and ratiocination are relational modalities. This is a reminder of the need to give up any systematic attempts fully to understand before any mutual indwelling can take place. Maggie Ross, in her perceptive article on apophatic prayer, draws attention to the paradox of intention as the mediator between everyday consciousness and the silence of contemplation.⁵⁷

Watson and Jenkins argue that Julian “attempt[s] to sort out the complex relation between revelation and ‘previte’”⁵⁸ in Chapter 34, but the core of the matter is the attempt’s tactically constructed failure. In fact, the two variations on the theme of divine revelation falsely construct discursive certainty, something that is desired but shattered in front of the unfathomable. The relocation of the efforts from seeking to *beholding* calls for a recalibration of the dimensions of desire away from security in the world (which lies in false attachment) towards a release of these very desires because they obscure understanding. Reaching a more advanced level means leaving behind the yearning to know the secrets of God, instead holding oneself ready to receive them when shown; Julian achieves this by articulating and subsequently curtailing them. The

⁵⁷ Ross, “Apophatic Prayer,” 327-8. See also Marvin Shaw’s seminal study *The Paradox of Intention: Reaching the Goal by Giving Up the Attempt to Reach It* (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1988).

⁵⁸ See Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, 226.

passage opens and ends with a sense of possibility, communicated through the repeated divine promise to partake in the *sapientia amoris*, but the parameters change. When the connection between promise and its fulfilment exclusively relies on the deity's love and trust in its presence, the central crux ceases to revolve around epistemological certainty and touches on attaining theological security instead.⁵⁹

To achieve this end, a radical alienation from human modes of thought is necessary. By going through the two-pronged process of paradoxically knowing more about her God via humbly accepting the temporal disconnect between the wish to understand and its fruition, Julian enters and sustains the impasse. While the wealth of divine insight is “hid into the tyme,” it will be “*opyn and knowen* to us; for he wil we *wetyn* that it is his wil we *knowen* hem.”⁶⁰ These four references (in italics) to the sapiential consequences of indwelling as well as the repetition that it is the divinity's plan to instil insight construct a virtually unescapable dynamic towards his love. Coupled with the repeated referral to “privites,” it is not only sapiential understanding as the bridge between the mundane and the divine realm, but the godhead as the final object of enquiry, who becomes disassociated from intellectual and experiential participation. He is thus demarcated as the ultimate Other.

At this point in Chapter 34, however, the beginning of apprehending this fundamental difference between immanence and transcendence, and between the created and uncreated, lies in paving the way for grace to work through self-knowledge expressed as self-accusation,⁶¹ and through a setting up of opposites:

It arn privytes to us not only that he wil it ben privytes to us, but it art privytes to us for our blyndnes and our onknowyng; and therof hath he gret ruthe, and therefore he wil hymself maken hem more opyn to us wherby [w]e [m]ay knowen

⁵⁹ On this passage, see also Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 117.

⁶⁰ My emphasis.

⁶¹ On *accusatio sui* as the prerequisite for receiving grace, see Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2014), 151.

hym and loven hym and clevyn to him; for al that is spedeful to us to wetyn and to knowen, ful curtesly our lord will shewen us—and that is this—with al the prechyng and techyng of holy church.

Deplorable personal shortcomings further situate the subject in time since they show their repercussions emanating into the present and future, where past misdemeanour and original sin lead to “blyndnes” (ignorance expressed in physical terms) and “onknowyng” (spiritual illiteracy and failure). “Blyndnes” and “onknowyng” are here presented as equal hindrances, which suggests yet another cyclical progression of argument, namely the mutual resonance of *beholding* and understanding. Blindness and unknowing, in their reference to a broken line of communication with the deity, interpose a moment of shame and guilt amid this elaboration on knowledge, and thereby carefully manipulate the perspective towards deficiency and latent feelings of inadequacy.

So intrinsically human are shame and guilt that they might prevent spiritual unfolding. Here is where these seeming opposites, however, turn into an opportunity. In the never-ceasing endeavour to know oneself and thus accept inherent frailty, the ties of desire and intellectual enquiry become less binding so that the principal focus is put on kenotic humility rather than on executing analytical, dialectic processes. In any case, Julian immediately decreases the forces of self-abasement and counteracts any propensity towards despair by evoking divine love that shows its effects where and when the individual most needs it: of “blyndnes and [...] onknowyng [...] hath [...] [God] gret ruthe” (Chapter 34).

With the acknowledgement of hidden secrets indirectly intensified once more—“he wil it ben privytes to us”—before a merging with the remedial action—“therefore he wil hymself maken hem more opyn”—there arises the prospect of sapiential progress, which is emphasised by the “knowen hym and loven hym” and “wetyn and [...]

known” (Chapter 34) dyads as well as the promise of God’s “curtesly” manner of outpouring. In contrasting the diverse epistemological desiderata with their nullification, and by mentioning them only to let them peter out, Julian opens the mind to apophatic silence. As Vincent Gillespie and Maggie Ross argue:

To enter apophatic consciousness, the seeker must simultaneously desire it intensely and give up all desire. This paradox is deliberately subversive [...]. It is a sign of contradiction, allowing the creative tension between its conflicting significations to generate a precious stillness, a chink in the defensive wall of reason that allows slippage into apophatic consciousness.⁶²

The end of Chapter 34 gestures towards the transcendent void:

Al this that I have now seid, and more that I shall sey after, is comfortyng ageyn synne; for in the thred shewyng when I saw that God doith al that is don, I saw no synne, and than saw I that al is wele. But whan God shewid me for synne, than seid he: ‘Al shal be wele.’

Even though there is no instantaneous transfer of understanding, traces of it envelop fragmentary indications of its richness and veer between “no synne”/nought and “Al shal be wele”/abundance. The word “Al” in “Al this that I have now seid”⁶³ and “Al shal be wele” lacks a categorical referent. Both allusions to plenitude are not only forced into the confines of language but are paradoxically intensified in the brevity of two letters, but this is where their similarities end. The former refers to Julian’s ultimately constrained access to sapience that might be even further reduced through its textualisation—although we cannot estimate the scope of the content she does not or cannot process—while the universality of the latter stems from the reversal of perspective and insight from human to divine.

⁶² Gillespie and Ross, “Apophatic Image,” 56.

⁶³ In the subsequent phrase, “and more that I shall sey after,” the indication of even more shared revealed content has the emotive effect of infinity when unfolding divine attributes.

It is a tonal shift from cognitive restlessness and metaphysical analysis into indefinability and, essentially, a spiral into apophatic stillness that this chapter traces as a *pars pro toto* for recurrent strategies throughout the *Long Text*. For all his textual complexity, Julian's God is as mysterious in his simplicity (according to the equation God = love) as he is in his complexity (the magnitude of love), and Julian is thus able to subsume his essence and effect in the four words "Al shal be wele" that radiate into soteriological certainty and safety. "Al shal be wele" is a wish projected onto the deity that is apprehended and fulfilled before it is uttered.⁶⁴

The "all" of that statement encapsulates the incomprehensible abyss and lies on the other side of the continuum that was begun by understanding God "in a poynte" (Chapter 11).⁶⁵ Fundamentally, "al shal be wele" induces a moment of layered response and nuanced self-discovery within the salvific cosmos. It is where reality is dissolved into the multiplicity of the deity's perspective, into which the receptor is included, but in whose full apprehension they must fall to the ground, recognising both potentiality and the unknowable depth of divine love.

⁶⁴ The phrase "Al shal be wele" is also discussed on page 43 and in Part II of this thesis.

⁶⁵ See my exploration of Julian's apophatic "poynt" on pages 172-178.

The Apophatic Languages of Union

Julian's text requires a radical attentiveness to nuance, tone, and register because its linguistic strategies imaginatively position the reader as the receptor of heavenly mysteries.⁶⁶ Nowhere is this more apparent than in her language of the *unio mystica*, which interweaves and simultaneously dissolves cataphatic as well as apophatic strands. She thus activates the deep mind while stimulating an awareness of abundance,⁶⁷ knitting together the moments of indwelling that do not allow for analytical reflection. At the beginning of the *Long Text*, she relates her three wishes, or gifts, for contrition, compassion, and wilful longing for the godhead. These tokens of divine love and reciprocal love for the deity provide the first glimpses of her spirituality and her protean modalities of textualisation. As the text proceeds, we learn that positive and negative theological strands condition each other, informing the actualisation of her wounds that essentially denote spiritual rather than physical gifts—though a strict separation is often neither entirely possible nor intended. This epistemological strategy is especially prominent when physical illness and near-death experience coincide with profound spiritual insight derived from the loss of the senses.⁶⁸ The loss of sight or the partial absence of the body when Julian is paralysed from the waist down (Chapter 3) locates the divine present-absent dyad within the body (while pointing to the limits of physicality), and the mystery of her instant bodily healing corresponds to the enigma of Christ's transfiguration. Similarly, the strict dissolution of hermeneutic referentiality and all spiritual materiality leaves room for the vindication of the (human/female) flesh

⁶⁶ See also 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 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), 192-207.

⁶⁷ These two concepts are interrelated, but the latter allows for a consideration of the effects that Julian's revelations have on herself, as well as her readers, in between moments of illumination that are beyond reflexive thought.

⁶⁸ For recent works on insight and illness in Julian, see Vincent Gillespie's two articles "Colours of Contemplation," 7-28 and "Seek, Suffer and Trust: Ese and Disese in Julian of Norwich," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 39 (2017): 129-58.

and the declaration of its spiritual significance begotten through the Incarnation, as I shall show.⁶⁹ It is also true of her use of metaphor and analogy, which is connected to her unlimited poetic dynamism in the face of the suspension of epistemological certainty.⁷⁰

Gillespie and Ross have examined the apophatic treatment of the crown of thorns and the bleeding head in the first chapters of the *Long Text*.⁷¹ As Julian's work progresses, her proneness to repeated motifs and circular argumentation in an increasingly symbolic text could at times risk becoming too enigmatic to be deciphered, but her approach to open-endedness feels and stays organic throughout because she integrates her readers' incremental apprehension into her textual strategies. Indeed, a useful framework for engaging with the deep structure of her text is to locate her poetics beyond the mind, in the way that she erases all modes of referentiality by "mis"matching her imagistic and cataphatic strategies with the absence of any physical referents. This form of epistemological frustration forces the reader to step out of any linear, knowledge-deriving mindsets and reject the comfort of creating understanding themselves, whether it pertains to the divinity or to the deepest mysteries of the self. Instead, the love-longing that permeates her text absorbs the reader into a combination of an imaginative and creative consciousness of abundance on one end of the continuum and into kenosis on the other—though their fusion is part of her work's profound originality.

⁶⁹ See also Sandra McEntire's discussion of Eve in "The Likeness of God and the Restoration of Humanity in Julian of Norwich," in *Julian of Norwich. A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Routledge, 2012), 4-9 and Sarah McNamer "The Exploratory Image: God as Mother in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*," *Mystics Quarterly* 15, no. 15 (March 1989): 21-28.

⁷⁰ This argument will be explored more fully below and in Part II of this thesis. See also my previous discussion of "dropys of water," "scale of heryng," and "dropys of evese" on pages 7-11.

⁷¹ Gillespie and Ross, "Apophatic Image," 59-77.

This statement requires further clarification and examination. Julian's form of kenosis is entirely underpinned by her understanding of the indestructible, ever-present, and deeply loving relationship between the deity and herself as well as between him and the totality of his creation (and, by extension, between herself and creation). It does not, therefore, require the destruction of the self, nor does she dwell on excessive self-vilification, because her understanding of humanity is rooted in the divinity's love, as shown below.⁷² What it does necessitate is a radical openness, humility, and an incremental detachment from the world. As a consequence, her incarnational theology is not only based on abstraction and apophatic transcendence but also on positive affirmations and an engagement with her God through human forms of apprehension.⁷³ In the realm of *jouissance*, where the *unio mystica* takes place, her deity remains the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* and therefore beyond definite knowledge, but instead of contenting itself with this absolute otherness, the text employs every human mode of meaning-making, gently holding in awareness the divine mystery in the periods that link the heights of indwelling.

In her efforts to establish the divinity's love and humanity's love-longing as the underpinning structures of her work, Julian incorporates the intrinsic human impulse to know everything there is to know about the beloved into her poetics. Gradually, the reader comes to realise that certain knowledge of the deity and love cannot coincide—which is where intuitive, sapiential understanding and its ensuing creative energies come to the fore. This is not to say that Julian supplies her audience with a construction kit for creating their personalised God, and neither does she espouse a step-by-step guide towards spiritual ascent. But she uses her readers' very humanity—what other,

⁷² On the circularity of divine love, see Sheldrake, *Julian*, 86.

⁷³ See Cervoni on the deity *in carne* providing the potential to study him, as well as the relationship to his creation (*Poetics of the Incarnation*, 2).

more discarnational, authors in the apophatic tradition try to relinquish⁷⁴—in order to engage with and signify the divinity’s presence, which cannot ever be diminished into definite understanding.⁷⁵ This method encompasses all her modes of apprehending and trusting in the ready availability of divine love and uses her incarnational theology as a vehicle for stepping into greater mysteries. These strands come together in her theology of wisdom that inspires personal, spiritual certainty in the face of a transient life, an ineffable godhead, and an epistemological impasse. According to the negative theologian Vladimir Lossky,

It is where knowledge and love are one, in the secret experience, hidden from the eyes of the world, in the life of those who are united to the eternal light of the Holy Trinity, that we rediscover the simplicity of Christian understanding; but this experience is unutterable. ‘The realities of the world to come’, says St. Isaac the Syrian, ‘have no proper and direct nomenclature. One can only have a certain simple knowledge, above all words, elements, images, colour, pictures, or names of whatever sort.’ This is the ignorance which passes all knowledge. [...] instead of the divine darkness there is now light, instead of forgetfulness of self, the full flowering of personal consciousness in grace.”⁷⁶

In Julian’s lived experience, there is a vast amount of work to be undertaken on the self, through internalising Holy Scripture, the teachings of the Church, and critical but loving self-exploration, before revelatory content may become accessible in the stillness of the *unio mystica*. In those extended phases that link the moments of unparalleled insight, sapiential confidence in her God’s love allows the divine energies to take hold of the person and overflow them; as a result, it becomes possible to contemplate the deity with

⁷⁴ Examples include the *Cloud*-author and Meister Eckhart.

⁷⁵ On God’s hyper-essence beyond being, see Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God. Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 50.

⁷⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1991), 231; see also Lossky’s *Vision of God* (London: Faith Press, 1963), 88. According to him, the Eastern Church has “never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology,” *Theology*, 8. It is debatable whether such a generalisation could be made about the Western tradition, where the boundaries between theology and contemplation have not been as porous. The struggle for ecclesiastical authorisation was especially bitter for female contemplatives, who were barred from the theological training that their male counterparts would have been able to acquire. Though Lossky worked on the Eastern tradition, his arguments are highly compatible with Julian’s sophisticated merging of theology and the insight she attains in contemplation.

joy and awe. Based on her understanding of the human condition, the anchoress uses humanity's natural proclivity towards reflection to her advantage, but the vectors she starts to draw never meet their target. Her readers consequently become finely attuned to dealing with the presence of understanding (noting *no-thing*) in the absence of certain knowledge, which is in itself a type of "learned ignorance."⁷⁷ Anselm of Canterbury would have called this process "faith seeking understanding."⁷⁸

Compounding presence with absence and abundance with minimalism, the interrelatedness of God and his creation becomes the stylistic point of reference for Julian's textuality. What this means is that the associative nature of her work, the enmeshment of topoi, and the multiple links among her revelations speak to a God of abundance reflected in her/the reader's interiority that grows in understanding in the face of symbolism and resistance to totalising knowledge—an "imaginative universe" that approximates and continually recreates the freshness and awe of revelation.⁷⁹

In this way, Julian's microcosm-metaphors and -analogies, themselves paradoxical representations of divine abundance in the world that surrounds her—such as the hazelnut (Chapter 5), raindrops (Chapter 7), fish scales (Chapter 7), and clothing-

⁷⁷ Nicholas of Cusa entitles one of his works *De docta ignorantia*, which traces his method of transcending (or rather reconfiguring) *ignorantia* to engage with the conundrum of divine infinity through the *coincidentia oppositorum*. According to Clyde Lee Milles: "Put in the language of the 'maximum,' in God both maximum and minimum coincide in the divine infinite Oneness, for both take the mind beyond the measurable created domain of more and less and end up meaning just the "superlative" or transcendent. The implication, in other words, is that God's reality lies beyond any familiar domain where the principle of contradiction holds sway," in "Cusanus, Nicolaus [Nicolas of Cusa]," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL

<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/cusanus/>>. See also Vladimir Lossky, "Apophysis and Trinitarian Theology," in *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. Vladimir Lossky (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 14 and Aristotle Papanikolaou's discussion in *Being with God*, 22.

⁷⁸ Donald Daniels discusses the importance of Anselm's motto in "The Argument of the *De Trinitate* and Augustine's Theory of Signs," *Augustinian Studies* 8 (1977): 33-54. See also J.F. Worthen, "Augustine's *De Trinitate* and Anselm's *Proslogion*: 'Exercere Lectorem,'" in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, eds. Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske. *Collectanea Augustiniana* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 517-29.

⁷⁹ Williams, *Wound*, 151.

metaphors⁸⁰ (Chapter 51)—take on an analogical thrust, connecting the objects of the world to the inexpressible macrocosm via the medium of language.⁸¹ Instead of fracturing her lived experience by focusing on the fallen world and the imperfect self, her theology of divine love brings about wholeness and integration, continuously permeating the text in an interconnected line of argument. As integral elements of the mystical love knot, these qualities and her use of language accordingly become a part of her self-fashioning and, by extension, the intention she is seeking to instil in her audience. To perform the discourse of divine love, the permanence of the deity’s love, which suffuses Julian’s work, is not necessarily juxtaposed with the contradictoriness of the world but rather incorporates earthly ambivalence and fragmentation into its linguistic strategies and structure. The anchoress has thus created a work that rewards private study, repetition, and rumination as requisites for glimpses of understanding. A *mise-en-abîme* enactment of her text is therefore placed at the centre of her work, which is always beginning, always waiting to be undertaken, and permanently “not yet performid” (Chapter 86).

Her polyrhythms, repeated motifs, slight modifications and impactfully wide-ranging developments create a textually complex dynamic of love that rejects the comforts of static absorption, especially in those instances when she moves into contemplative modes and delves into revelatory content. Included into the discourse, the reader becomes the centre of an interpersonal triangle (between Julian, the reader, and their *even cristen*) and an even more complicated line of contact between humanity and the divinity, an antinomy that compounds supreme distinctness. Positioning the reader at the centre of the loving divine embrace, with no interpretational roads leading apart,

⁸⁰ See also Paul Ricoeur, “Philosophy and Religious Language,” *Journal of Religions* 54 (1974): 71-85 on “what is to be interpreted in a text is a proposed world, a world that I might inhabit, and wherein I might project my ownmost possibilities.”

⁸¹ This notion will be further explored below.

the intricacy and unusual familiarity of this form of contact—the godhead knowing the individual intimately, whereas humans can only marvel at him—nonetheless manages to defamiliarise the deity, achieving a separateness through paradoxical language and form in a remarkably shrewd and perceptive embrace of the mingling subtleties and dissonant voices of indwelling and opacity. For all its intimacy, the relationship never reaches its potential fullness, but only the promise thereof, by foreshadowing the afterlife.

Lossky's view of the Incarnation's reverberations provides insight into Julian's way of thinking as well. The deity *in carne* "forces us to appeal to apophatic theology in order to rid ourselves of concepts proper to human thought, transforming them into steps by which we may ascend to the contemplation of reality which the created intelligence cannot contain."⁸² While Julian is careful never to objectify her God and thereby lose his essence in particularity and taxonomy, she is able to textualise him, adhering to the original hallmarks of revelation in order to retain his ineffability. For this reason, wonder and awe on the level of personal response, as well as repetition and fragmentation as linguistic devices, harness the enigmatic qualities of her *deus absconditus atque praesens*. When she displays the dynamics of apartness, distance, and interiority inherent in the relationship to the near-far deity, she nonetheless reveals that the spiritual and the literal coincide because her language circumscribes the godhead as both "homely" and entirely other, her response to the divine mirroring her sense of amazement, awe and paradox:

the marvelous curtesie and homlyhede of our fader that is our maker, in our lord Iesus Criste that is our brother and our saviour. But this marvelous homlyhede may no man weten in this tyme of life, but he have it of special shewing of our lord, or of grete plenty of grace inwardly govyn of the Holy Ghost. (Chapter 7)

⁸² Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 45.

Julian's revelations speak to antinomy: light and dark, sickness and health, mortality and (re)birth.⁸³ Indeed, her approach to the subordinate role of bodily sight before the sixteen showings lays the groundwork for a text that symbolises rather than designates:⁸⁴ "in this I desired never bodily sight nor sheweing of God, but compassion, as a kinde soule might have with our lord Iesus, that for love would beene a dedely man; and therefore I desired to suffer with him" (Chapter 3).⁸⁵ Throughout, her deity is nonetheless intimately present, in part revealing and providing access to itself through the modalities of love and compassion—but ultimately still hermetically sealed.

In many ways, the links Julian creates throughout her narrative from her God to humanity and from their perspective to his do not change significantly in content but in collocation, in their different thematic settings, and in new rotations that speak to a fuller picture of a concept-less deity that gradually takes hold of the reader. Finesse, playfulness, and polysemy are among the characteristic traits of her poetics, and the fecundity of her textual creativity, as well as its multimodality, mirror the magnificence of the unutterable. The products of the inventive human mind and affections are carefully incorporated and steered along the lines of her self-effacing textual strategies, which call for sapiential imagination while curtailing the curiosity of the wits so that detachment from the world goes hand in hand with retreat to a full inner life and an imaginative and intuitive form of theology.⁸⁶ Leading the readership beyond cognitive structures and human thresholds through its apophatic, non-referential thrust, her work

⁸³ According to Jenkins, the sense of paradox pertains to the beginning of Julian's text, but it is in fact sustained throughout. For Julian's use of metaphor, see her article "Web of Metaphor," 185 ff.

⁸⁴ There is a growing number of studies on the role of sight and perception in Julian's revelations. Some perceptive examples include Molinari, *Julian*, 60-70; Colledge and Walsh, "Introduction," 87; Gillespie and Ross, "Apophatic Image," 69-77; and Watson, "Trinitarian Hermeneutics," 85-87.

⁸⁵ Compared to Sloane, the Paris manuscript gives heightened emphasis to Julian's embodiment as the point of intersection between her and the second person of the Trinity: "in this I desyred never no bodily sight ne no maner schewing of god, but compassion as me thought that a kynd sowle might haue with oure lord Jesu, that for loue would become a deadly man. With him I desyred to suffer, *liuyng in my deadly bodie*, as god would giue me grace" (*my emphasis*).

⁸⁶ See also Barbara Newman's concept of "imaginative theology" in *God and the Goddesses. Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 294-304.

may also be read as a commentary on ways of engaging with the divinity—one that frustrates monotonically linear readerly ambition by juxtaposing a still centre with perpetual motion. Both concepts challenge those who have stopped to revise their understanding, and conversely train them in the art of unknowing and the paradox of intention. This is a text that teaches its readers the affective and non-teleological arts of letting go.

The apex of enigmatically abundant divine love and human wisdom, which is based on the former's reception and the ensuing development of an intuited and sapiential form of understanding, is encapsulated in Christ's answer to Julian's longing for him: "al shal be wel, and al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele."⁸⁷ This answer is given to her within the context of human sin, in Chapter 27 and revelation thirteen. The *felix culpa*-topos here demonstrates Julian's radical faith in the indestructible unity between God and his creation and his *donum gratis datum*, as exemplified in her assertion in Chapter 1 that "we arn kept aso sekirly in love, in wo as in wele, be the godeness of God."

Julian here calibrates theology from semantic uncertainty and styles the divine answer to come to her audience in their most human need: the deity's "all" overcomes all forms of human doubt, sin, and calamity. The universality of the answer is paired with simplicity: it is no circumlocutory explanation of the godhead's plan for creation, and neither is it a detailed analysis of the divine-human relationship. But, as so often in her writing, the ineffability of Julian's divinity lies precisely in its simplicity, encapsulated in its modality of entering her life in the form that is most conducive to her

⁸⁷ See also my previous discussion of this programmatic statement on page 34 and my analysis in Part II of this thesis.

understanding. The more she gains in the apprehension of divine love, and the more she is engulfed in its secrets, the meeker she becomes—and vice versa.

Chapter 26 illustrates an attempt to establish concrete foundations for the meditation *ad infinitum* on the deity:

And after this our [lorde] shewid hym more gloryfyed, as to my syte, than I saw him beforne, wherin I was lernyd that our soule shal never have rest til it comith to hym knowing that he is fulhede of ioy, homely and curtesly blisful and very life. Our lord Iesus oftentimes seyde: ‘I it am, I it am; I it am that is heyest, I it am that thou lovist; I it am that thou lykyst; I it am that thou servist; I it am that thou longyst; I it am that thou desyryst; I it am that thou menynt; I it am that is al; I it am that holy church prechyth and teachyth the; I it am that shewed me here to thee.’

Julian here endeavours to excavate the divine persons by merging the universal with the particular. Disclosing the mysteries of the Trinity through Jesus as the intermediary, this segment harks back to the assurance in Chapter 6 that “the goodness of God is the heyest prayer and it comith downe to the lowest party of our nede:” divine omnibenevolence suffuses the individual’s meaning-making faculties, inviting them to proceed into uncharted territory. As Julian apprehends the incarnate deity, the mysteries of salvation may just come within reach of understanding. Timebound existence collapses in this passage, which exists between the past of “more gloryfyed [...] than I saw him before,” and the present plane stretching into the future through not having any “rest” before “knowing” God’s essence, as well as his creative energies in the world.

Two silences lie at the heart of these “I it am”-lines: The incomprehensibility of the divine being, and the mysteries of its presence, as I shall show. And yet, the interpretation of “I it am” is possible only after the realisation that “he is fulhede of ioy, homely and curtesly blisful and very life” (Chapter 26), which alludes to a deity who imbues his creation with creative love. After all, the affective intentionality of the “fulhede of ioy” and God’s being “homely and curtesly blisful” serve to assuage the

chasm between this world and the next by presenting the deity's intention lovingly to relate to humankind. However, the assertion that he is "very life" references his transgression of the mundane and puts into question his "homely" manner, emphasising the transcendent "curtesly blisful" aspects.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the promise to dissolve this gulf soon but not quite yet is referenced in the declaration that "our soule shal never have rest til it comith to hym." It remains unclear just where the rest that the soul "shal never have [...] til it comith to hym" is situated on ontological and eschatological levels. Julian makes use of this linguistic construction only once in the *Long Text*. Is true and everlasting understanding related to the plenitude of joy and accessible only in the beatific vision, or is it through homely and courteous modalities that the deity renders itself accessible in this life? The latter may take place between spiritual progression towards the godhead at the beginning of the continuum and divine indwelling at its end. However, this aporia need not be resolved and cannot by necessity be uncovered, but has to be sustained, endured and embraced. At the heart of it lies the simultaneity of contrast between humanity and the divine perspective and mode of being. This is the nucleus of earthly life: an in-between, characterised by a longing for, and sapiential understanding of, the beyond. Thus, these lines are not a reference to the heights of contemplative absorption but to the continuous bond that is knitted throughout life between the godhead and humanity. After all, it is through her created means that Julian apprehends and subsequently textualises her relationship to God, and her fallen human mind does not preclude her from engaging with the divine, but rather enables, frames, and structures her understanding of it. The operative word linking the two realms is "knowing," which artfully heralds the discourse of unknowing.

⁸⁸ My emphasis. See also page 51.

Brant Pelphrey argues persuasively that the love-relation of Julian's God to his creation mirrors the Trinity's manifestation and state of being as love among the perichoretic persons. Through the Incarnation and the deity's presence in the world *in carne*, the creative forces of divine love repeat on earth the love among the divine persons—who remain hidden from humans—in their expression in Christ. Perichoresis thus refers to the mutual intersection of the divine persons but also conditions their workings in the world. It is “not a ‘feeling’ or an attribute of God, but a relationship of being, namely of indwelling [...]”⁸⁹ Because this absolute unity in diversity is grounded in a state of coexisting opposites, the existential condition of humanity as fragmented but aspiring towards completion both affirms and destroys distinctness. The outcome of these two pulls, one from the world, and the other from communion with a divine force, exemplifies the rhetorical and ontological forces of the *oppositio contrariorum*, the coincidence of opposites as presented in the Incarnation through Christ, who is both God and man.

Essentially, the “I-it-am”-lines trace a movement from an entirely human state of consciousness to moments of illumination far beyond.⁹⁰ These three words encapsulate the ebb and flow of understanding the divine that Julian traces through ever-changing approaches. As such, they can function as a *pars pro toto* for the profound question of the divinity's presence in the world. When Jesus explains the modalities through which the godhead can be understood, the “I-it-am”-parallelism hermeneutically begins to signify without a referent preceding “it,” an absence that situates mystery at the heart of the deity. In utilising the infinite semantic field that the verb “am” in its reference to the enigmatic divine ontology opens, its power to radiate

⁸⁹ Brant Pelphrey, *Lo, How I Love Thee. Divine Love in Julian of Norwich*, ed. Julia Bolton Holloway (n.p.: Spring Deer Studio, 2012), 99.

⁹⁰ See also Exodus 3:14. All biblical references henceforth are to the Douay-Rheims version: Edgar Swift and Angela M. Kinney. *The Vulgate Bible: Douay-Rheims Translation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010).

into various dimensions and resonate with several theological concepts is unlocked. The repetition of “I it am” at the beginning of these lines—and without the suffixes appended thereafter—establishes the godhead as the source, purpose, and soteriological end, significantly before these characteristics are enumerated, described in more detail, and depicted in their relation to humanity later on. “I-it-am” relates to the individual on an intuitively felt rather than cognitively decipherable level, as it metrically and visually grounds Julian, maintaining the focus on God as the still centre. Stress, or rather intention, is put on every word equally, referencing presence (“I”), ontology (“am”), and mystery (“it”). The phrase thus sustains the constant beat of the divine, the alliteration and *amplificatio* immersing the individual in the *mysterium*. Essentially, the beginning of this passage relates to the deity in two ways. First, in its being circumscribed in present tense and without other referents, infinity is condensed into three words. The monosyllabic chain potently and briefly manifests the deity (“I it am”) while fusing it with linguistic regress (the nature of “it” purposefully remains enigmatic). The repetition of “I-it-am” therefore gestures towards God’s *hyperessence*—being beyond being. Secondly, in its relational implication signifying the bond between the deity and creation, “I it am” is designed to demonstrate the not-yet gap that divides the earthly and heavenly planes. Significantly, there is no rigid separation that cuts off humanity from the heavens, but the text enfolds the contrasting world with the consistent divine omnipresence. In its deep understanding of creation, this technique of carefully articulating loving omnipresence as an answer to a question not yet asked comes to meet the reader at their most vulnerable and effects a loving cognitive stillness steeped in awe. It is a theology of “already” and of possibility.

As the text subsequently branches out into the relational modalities of the divine, the metre subtly guides the reader in separating “I it am” from the number of attributes appended. This has the effect of maintaining focus on what is important, but also of

implying distance between the created and uncreated. The paradox is upheld until the end of the entire passage quoted above, also because of its structural conjunction with circumscribing and grasping the deity that through the repetitive pattern of “I it am” is portrayed as exponentiated presence. It signifies a narrative combination of human and divine viewpoints but not necessarily their coherence. This additive strategy structurally magnifies the human striving for divine communion, as well as the potential for it, but the two parties do not morph into one. Crucially, the modality is not one of either/or, but both/and because the impasse is sustained throughout.

Colledge and Walsh discuss Julian’s use of *oppositio contrariorum* prior to this passage in her assertion that Jesus was “homely and curteys,”⁹¹ but it is in truth sustained further, and not only spoken by Julian but confirmed by the deity as well. The “I it am”-declaration is repeated twelve times, and the focus changes subtly throughout: loving, serving, longing, and desiring encompass the wide range of kenotic emptying as a reaction to the magnetism of the divine, but deciphered separately, these actions differ in the godhead’s relational conceptualisation. Only their cumulative effect can unearth the modes of being that presuppose and pervade the communion with the deity. In Julian’s characteristically circular style of argument, the ninth and tenth reiteration of “I it am,” “I it am that thou menyst” and “I it am that is al,” contain the intent and nucleus of the divine-human relationship, which they portray as endless and reciprocal, but again without fully closing the chasm and merging the two. Reference to the MED unearths the strata of meaning resonating in the verb “menen.” Remember[ing],⁹² say[ing]⁹³ and “intend[ing]”⁹⁴ are situated on the human side of the continuum, and they encompass allusion to a relationship begun in the past as well as setting the divinity as

⁹¹ Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 402.

⁹² MED, *menen*, v. (1), sense 4a.

⁹³ MED, *menen*, v. (1), sense 3(a).

⁹⁴ MED, *menen*, v. (1), sense 2a.

the focal point for all present and future actions. “Signify[ing],”⁹⁵ conversely, veers into economic Trinity territory because it asserts the ties that bind the individual to the incarnate deity. While Christ represents the perfect completion of humankind, the proclamation that humanity references him leads into the deity’s mystery without unfolding it. Julian’s response to the complex problem of divine ontology here is to situate it at the centre of cataphatic impulses to gesture at what cannot be linguistically harnessed. At the same time, the progression to “I it am that holy church prechyth and teachyth the” incorporates a more definite vehicle of mediation than Christ himself, but as the following “I it am that shewed me here to thee” states, the ineffable is simultaneously present and absent, as it is evoked, circumscribed, and suggested, but never written into definitive being. Even after this twelve-fold enumeration, God has not been uncovered. Through this empty chasm, Julian delves deeply into the space within which she suffuses the apophatic abyss with love.⁹⁶

This passage is a reworking from the *Short Text*, with Julian adding two “I-it-am” reiterations in the later version. The additional repetitions intensify the sense of enigma captured in these lines of absolute presence. Julian’s transition into an explanatory modality, however, changes dramatically from the *Short* to the *Long Text*. In the *Short Text*, she segues into an exhortation that combines the revelatory mode with the lived experience of her *even cristen*: “Thies wordes I declare nought botte for ilke man, eftyre the grace that god gyffes hym in vnderstandynge and lovyng, resayfe tham in oure lordes mengynge” (Chapter 13). In the *Long Text*, she branches out, declaring:

The nombre of the words passyth my witte and al my vnderstondyng and al my mights, and it arn the heyest, as to my syte; for therin is comprehendid – I

⁹⁵ MED, *menen* v. (1), sense 1b.

⁹⁶ See also Eleanor Johnson’s fruitful discussion of this passage in *Staging Contemplation. Participatory Theology in Middle English Prose, Verse, and Drama* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 60-62.

cannot tellyn; but the ioy that I saw in the shewyng of them passyth al that herte may willen and soule may desire; and therefore the words be not declaryd here but every man after the grace that God gevyth him in vnderstandyng and lovyng receive hem in our lords menyng. (Ch. 26)

The revision adds a sense of affective immediacy that the *Short Text* does not have, and it expertly communicates the *excessus mentis* that precludes Julian as well as other writers in the contemplative tradition from dissecting God into language. Using the stirrings towards unmediated joy that she has encountered, she passes it on to her readers as a hermeneutical device.

In another act initially seeming to pertain to the *via positiva*, the next instalment of “I it am” occurs in Chapter 59:⁹⁷

Thus Iesus Criste that doith good agen evill is our very moder; we have our beyng of him wher the ground of moderhed begynnyth, with al the swete keypyng of love that endlessly folowith. As verily as God is our fader, as verily God is our moder; and that shewid he in all, and namely in these swete words where he seith 'I it am', that is to seyen: 'I it am: the myte and the goodness of the faderhed. I it am: the wisdam of the moderhede. I it am: the lyte and the grace that is al blissid love. I it am: the Trinite. I it am: the unite. I am the sovereyne goodness of all manner of thyngs. I am that makyth the to loven. I am that makyth the to longen. I it am: the endles fulfilling of al trew desires.' For then the soule is heyest, noblest and worthyest when it is lowest, mekest and myldhest; and of this substantial ground we have al our vertues and our sensualite be gyft of kynde and be helpyng and spedyng of mercy and grace, without the which we may not profitten. Our hey fader, God almyty, which is beyng, he knew us and lovid us fro afor any tyme; of which knoweing, in his mervelous depe charite be the forseing endless council of all the blissid Trinite, he wold that the second person shuld becom our moder, our brother and our savior. Wherof it folowith that as verily as God is our fader, as verily God is our moder. Our fader [wyllyth], our moder werkyth, our good lord the Holy Gost confirmith. And therefore it longyth to us to loven our God in whom we have our being, him reverently thankyng and praiseyng of our makyng, mytily prayeng to our moder of mercy and pite, and to our lord the Holy Gost of helpe and grace; for in these iii is all our life—kynde, mercy and grace; whereof we have mekehede, myldhede, patiens and pite, and hatyng of synne and wickidnes.

⁹⁷ This is an addition, and there is thus no parallelism in the *Short Text*.

This time, the “I-it-am”-lines frame divine ontology with concepts of motherhood and fatherhood.⁹⁸ In a way, Julian is testing what her readers have taken away since the first instance of “I it am” in Chapter 26, and she challenges them to adopt a non-referential and non-anthropocentric engagement with the deity. Christ as the “very moder” goes beyond the remit of a traditional maternal figure in fending off *all* physical and metaphysical evil. Since he is more than a mother (“very” works as an intensifier),⁹⁹ he represents the “ground of motherhed” insofar as he provides access to the dogma of the virginal birth¹⁰⁰ and acts as the fulcrum that binds together humanity with the divine on earth.¹⁰¹ He does not, however, act as an anthropomorphic deity, and his type of motherhood may begin in the “ground” but has to end in the unknown beyond. The full completion of Christ’s motherhood does not belong to the affective spectrum to be experienced in this life.

Fatherhood and motherhood both coinhere “verily” in God, but only as dynamism concepts and not as indications of emotional or physical verisimilitude—although the implied intimacy is fully intended to work its psychological force. In “and that shewid he in all,” Julian alludes to the numerous interpretive trajectories she has laid out before and to the circular nature of her work. Therefore, an attentive reader would be observant carefully to apply the strategies that she has espoused to what

⁹⁸ For a recent discussion of Julian in the context of motherhood, pregnancy, and conception, see Vincent Gillespie’s text to his lecture “‘The Moderhede of Kynd Love:’ Conception, Labour, and Delivery in the Theology of Julian of Norwich,” Medieval English Research Seminar, Oxford University, October 10, 2018. Further works on the metaphorical language of motherhood and the symbolism of pregnancy in Julian’s work include Brant Pelphrey, *Christ Our Mother: Julian of Norwich* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1989); Tarjei Park, “Reflecting Christ: The Role of the Flesh in Walter Hilton and Julian of Norwich,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England V*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1992), 17-37; Maud Burnett McInerney, “‘In the Meydens Womb:’ Julian of Norwich and the Poetics of Enclosure” in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Garland, 1996), 157-82; Tarjei Park, *Selfhood And ‘Gostly Menyng’ in Some Middle English Mystics: Semiotic Approaches to Contemplative Theology* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003); Claire Sisco King, “The Poetics and Praxis of Enclosure: Julian of Norwich, Motherhood, and Rituals of Childbirth,” *Comitatus* 35 (2004), 71-82; Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 89ff.

⁹⁹ See also pages 44-45.

¹⁰⁰ MED, ground, n., sense 5a.

¹⁰¹ MED, ground, n., sense 11a.

follows. This concentration of “I-it-am” develops the previous one, in Chapter 26, into more indefinite and symbolic territory, and necessitates careful excavation. Much as in the first iteration of “I-it-am,” she begins by assigning attributes to the deity, though this time she correlates them with aspects of its “faderhed” and “moderhede.” In case anyone were to apply motherhood and fatherhood *per se* to the first and second divine persons, the absence of the Holy Ghost prevents such a reading. Intriguingly, the rhythm of the passage changes after reference to the love and unity of the Trinity, when “I it am” is shortened to “I am.” The subsequent “I-am”-catena delves into the modalities of God’s love, which is the essence of his ontology, consequently collocated as “I am.” Particularly in “I am,” the love-knot between the godhead and humanity comes to fruition, and Julian emphasises this through the ambiguous construction of “I am that makyth the to loven. I am that makyth the to longen.” Whether these lines should be read as “I made you so that I could love you” or “I made you so that you could love,” they overlay the unknown with the concrete action of both parties “to longen.”

Finally, Julian inverts the Trinitarian modalities again when the last segment reverts to “I it am: the endles fulfilling of al trew desires.”¹⁰² Accordingly, she revisits the human longing to understand the divinity but has by this time been taught to read motherhood and fatherhood as signifiers towards the enigma, and not as concepts that can be separated and subsequently applied neatly onto the perichoretic persons.

In a paradox, “heyest, noblest and worthiest” is the soul “when it is lowest.”

This alludes to the biblical imperative in Matthew and Luke to place less importance on

¹⁰² The remaining chains of “I it am” in the *Long Text*, all referents to a human perspective, are in Chapter 60: “‘I it am that holy church prechith and techith the’; that is to sey: ‘All the helth and lif of sacraments, al the vertue and grace of my word, all the godness that is ordeynid in holy church for the, I it am.’” See also the end of Chapter 60: “‘And this was shewid in all, and namly in the hey plentivous words wher he seith: ‘I it am that thou lovest.’”

the world and instead focus on the virtues that connect the anchoress to the eternal life.¹⁰³ The qualities attributed to the soul are reminiscent of those used before to address the deity, and in another parallel structure, the “substantial ground” reflects the beginning of the passage, “wher the ground of moderhed begynnyth.”¹⁰⁴ In this way, Christ *ones* the person to himself through his incarnational outpouring of “mercy and grace.” This covenant love emanates from the divinity, is mirrored on earth by the keeping of “vertues,” and enables personal moral and spiritual unfolding.¹⁰⁵ The gulf that nonetheless exists between human understanding and the godhead is epitomised in “God almyty, which *is beyng*,”¹⁰⁶ a phrase that ingenuously explains the divine ontology with reference to itself. It follows that earthly existence offers mere glimpses of and into “beyng,” an incompleteness that casts doubt on the fullness of life on earth and humanity’s understanding of the deity itself in equal measure.

In a further breakdown of referentiality, the second divine person has been ordained to “becom our moder, our brother and our savior” from the beginning; this is juxtaposed to “God is our fader, as verily God is our moder.” The ensuing supposedly neat connection between the deity’s fatherly and motherly aspects might be complicated with the sudden appearance of the Holy Ghost within the previously “incomplete” triad, but Julian immediately switches over to the modes of love that her *even cristen* should apply to the tripartite deity, which branch out from divine “kynde, mercy and grace”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled: and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” Matthew 23:12; see also Luke 14:11 and 18:1. The notion is inherited from the Old Testament, see for instance Isaias 57:15; Job 22:29; Ezekiel 21:26.

¹⁰⁴ Julian’s concepts of *substance*, *sensualite*, and *kynde* are discussed below.

¹⁰⁵ MED, *profiten*, v., senses 4d and 4e.

¹⁰⁶ My emphasis.

¹⁰⁷ For the triadic Augustinian concepts of might, wisdom, and love that Julian often applies to the trinitarian persons, see Nuth, *Wisdom’s Daughter*, 191. See also the prayer in the *Ancrene Wisse*, which makes use of a similar tripartite dynamic: “Almihti Godd, Feader, Sune, Hali Gast, as ye beoth threo an Godd, als wa ye beoth an mihte, an wisdom, ant an luve, ant thah is mihte i-turnd to the in Hali Writ, nomeliche, thu deore-wurthe Feader; to the wisdom, seli Sune; to the luve, Hali Gast. Yef me, an almihti Godd thrile i threo hades, thes ilke threo thinges: mihte for-te servi the, wisdom for-te cweme the, luve ant wil to don hit - mihte thet ich mahe don, wisdom thet ich cunne don, luve thet ich wulle don aa thet te is leovest. As thu art ful of each god - als wa nis na god wone ther-as theose threo beoth: mihte ant

into “mekehede, myldhede, patiens and pite, and hatyng of synne and wickidnes.” Any straightforward mapping of concepts onto the divinity collapses because the attributes in which humanity mirrors its maker multiply and diversify.¹⁰⁸

The idea that love is the medium through which contemplatively to explore the godhead, while leaving behind all acquired earth-bound modalities of meaning-making, also echoes God’s assertion in Chapter 58: “I love the and thou lovist me, and our love shal never be departid on¹⁰⁹ to.” It is the fullness and indivisibility of divine love that is manifested in the love-knot, whereas its psychological manifestations in the individual (and, therefore, also ecclesiastical) response are merely footsteps into its greater mystery.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, they allow for a participatory growth in understanding.

Another passage, in Chapter 53, resonates even more with the abovesaid:

Wherefore he will we wettyn that the noblest thing that eve[r] he made is ma[n]kynd, and the fullest substance and the heyest vertue is the blissid soule of Criste. And furthermore he will we wettyn that his derworthy soule was preciousley knitt to him in the makeing; which knott is sotil and so myty that is onyd into God; in which onyng it is made endlessly holy. Furthermore, he will we wettyn that al the soules that shall be savid in hevyn without end ar knitt and onyd in this onyng, and made holy in this holyhede.

Integral to the elevation of the human condition is its fullest completion in Christ.

However, he is not mentioned by way of comparison in these lines, and neither by his

wisdom ant luve i-veiet togederes - thet tu yetti me ham, Hali Thrumnesse, i the wurthschipe of the.” *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Robert Hasenfratz, *Teams Middle English Text Series* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2000), Part 1, ll. 114-121.

¹⁰⁸ Therefore, Nuth’s correlation of attributes to the distinct divine persons is problematic: *Wisdom’s Daughter*, 88-89.

¹⁰⁹ The Paris manuscript reads “in.”

¹¹⁰ See also Marion Glasscoe’s explication that “Mysticism in the precise sense of an ultimate spiritual reality [is] experienced both within the structure of the human personality and as a transcendent power. [...] They [the mystics] witness to a certainty that all the diversity of living beings are [sic] a part of a transcendent unifying spiritual whole which is by definition difficult to grasp in its totality; [...] Mystics are certain that for brief periods they have been enabled to experience such perception and know themselves to be part of a meaningful whole—one with the way things ultimately are.” *English Medieval Mystics. Games of Faith* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), 3.

physical and mortal presence as a vehicle for further contemplation into incarnational inscrutabilities. He functions as the essential dynamism that *ones* humanity to the godhead in a valorising impetus parallel to the creation of his own soul. The opening line is contingent upon sure knowledge as evidenced in the “will” and “wettyn,”-dyad,¹¹¹ carefully incorporating the reader into a ray of inspiration emanating from the divine source, which is, therefore, indisputably endlessly reliable. This puts an end to cognitive assumption and ruminative restlessness before they have had a chance to germinate. Attempts towards self-diagnosis or self-analysis—of the entire self, and through evaluation of a specific momentary mental state—are not the affective states focused on here. The narrative pattern unfolds less as a meticulous introspection or an elaboration on the modalities of self-knowledge than as a subtle generation of healing. With divine will and grace gestured at here, the specific and particular overtones of salvific benefaction curtail the unspoken undertones of the sinful human flesh’s inadequacy—that the reader could associatively add here—through linking humanity to the “blissid soule” of Christ. Even though his soul is immaterial¹¹² and eludes definitive grasp, it is “fullest substance”¹¹³ and Julian manifests him without evoking his more straightforwardly emotive physical representation that might speak more directly to her readers’ imaginative abilities and psychologies.

For a moment, the divine “will”¹¹⁴ and the human “wettyn” coinhabit the same space in the spiritual architecture of grace, which elevates the individual, and they freely move into Christ’s “substance.” Significantly, the kenotic self-emptying of the deity and the individual does not involve or necessitate a reduction on either side, which would require the divine, through its expression in the individual, to decrease. On the contrary,

¹¹¹ See my discussion of “weten” on pages 4-5.

¹¹² See MED *substance*, n. sense 1b: “divine essence” and “absolute goodness.”

¹¹³ See MED *substance*, n. sense 1a: “a material thing.”

¹¹⁴ “Will” reverberates here not only as a verb but also as its homonym the divine will.

Julian reveals how *energeia*, the divinity's manifestation in the world, effloresces in kenotic surrender.¹¹⁵ These lines depict a co-eternal, though not fully co-equal, moment given to Julian, with the effect that the reader is integrated into her play between unity and multiplicity at the heart of the connection to God.

The following sentence in this passage provides the catena's second part, when the repetition of "he will we wettyn" once more insinuates an affirmative and graspable access path to the deity, and moreover powerfully evokes Christ's soul as the apophatic point of contact, before employing the domestic and graspable metaphor of *knitting* to define the union that is a "knott," "sotil and so myty that is onyd into God." Yet, it has to be noted that the kinetic emphasis is not on the knot but on its trajectory, "into God." For this reason, this domestic metaphor of progression can insinuate beyond its means and dissolve itself, especially when the soul is rendered "holy in this holyhede" and thereby integrated into the godhead. The third link of the "he will we wettyn"-chain augments the focus on intelligible divine secrets, but not without again reverting to the assertion that the souls will be "knit and onyd in this onyng," a wording that swiftly confronts human psychology with the certainty of a domestic metaphor only to intermingle it once more with a deliberate ambiguity of reference and time. The polyptotons "onyd" and "onyng" juxtapose past and present participles, and thereby compress time and any form of ratiocinative thought. This conceiving of the unitive event as always present and constantly enfolding "without end" between the individual, Christ, and the Trinity as a whole is a strategic choice, as is Julian's veering between creative expansion and contraction.

¹¹⁵ See Turner, *Julian*, 252 for an exploration of contemporary theology's shortcomings in grasping the kenotic moment, and Philip McCosker's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Parsing Paradox, Analysing 'And'" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2008), chapter 5.

She subsequently ends this meditative moment by returning to the place of origin: “the soules that shall be sauid in hevyn.” This movement within and among different stages and states of conceptualisation subverts any self-reflexive impulses and didactically engages the deep mind with the circular emanation from and reversion to the deity; it is an integral part of her theology. Textualising God’s love does not need to, and cannot, make it understandable. The reverse is true: any attempts at ruminative stillness and contemplative abiding will be understood by the deity as human reflections of divine love. Like the crown of thorns at the beginning of the text, which acts as an apophatic signifier, the knot suggests an intricate communion on every level of being. Compared to metaphors of union used by other contemplative writers, such as mirroring¹¹⁶ or melting,¹¹⁷ *knitting* emphasises the continual and intricately skilled work expected to be undertaken as well as the physical existence in the world of humankind, which necessitates the presence of divine love.

Apophatic *Knitting*

Julian mentions the term “knot” just this once in the *Long Text* but uses the present progressive “knitting”—hinting at continuous, endless operation in concordance with

¹¹⁶ Augustine’s conceptualisation of humanity as an *imago Dei* implies a type of mirroring.

¹¹⁷ The *Prickynge of Love* and its Latin source, the *Stimulus Amoris*, make frequent use of this metaphor, which derives from the *Song of Songs*. See, for example, Part II Chapter 8 in *S.R.E. Cardinalis S. Bonaventurae ex Ordine Minorum Episcopi Albanensis, Eximii Ecclesiae Doctoris, opera omnia* 12, ed. Adolphe Charles Peltier (Paris: Vives, 1868). For the imagery of melting in Bernard of Clairvaux, see Nicholas Watson, “The Middle English Mystics,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 549. Denis Renevey discusses melting (“liquefactio”) in Richard Rolle’s work in *Language, Self & Love. Hermeneutics in the Writings of Richard Rolle and the Commentaries on the Song of Songs* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), 84. Margery Kempe’s *charisma lacrimarum* can be interpreted as yet another way of melting into the godhead, see also Rohrhofer, *Kempe*, 136-7.

her theology of becoming or *oneing*—throughout her text.¹¹⁸ A dynamic, ever-changing metaphor that is employed to diverse strategic ends and with shifting effects, it renders the interplay between radical immanence and the apophatic near-there as a fascinatingly nuanced laying bare of all modes of engagement. *Knitting* is first mentioned in Chapter 31, within the context of a meditation on the Trinity, Christ’s longing, and his spiritual thirst:

And this is the blis of Crists werks and thus he menyth where he seith in the selfe shewing: we be his blis, we be his mede, we be his worship, we be his corone. For anerst that Criste is our hede, he is glorified and onpassible, and anerst his body in which al his members be knitt, he is not yet ful gloryfyed ne al onpassible; for the same desire and threst that he had upon the cross, which desire, longyng and thrist, as to my syte, was in him fro withoute begynnyng, the same hath he yet and shal into the tyme that the last soule that shal be sauid is cum up to his bliss; for as verily as there is a properte in God of ruth and pity, as verily there is a property in God of threst and longyng. And of the vertue of this longyng in Criste we have to longen ageyn to him, withoute which no soule comyth to hevyn.

The repetition of “we” at the beginning of four consecutive and identical syntactic structures creates an arresting paradox because humans are not only compared but equated to the intangible and abstract concepts “blis,” “mede,” and “worship.” The final link in this chain, “we be his corone,” merges the concrete (the crown of thorns) with the elusive (the divinity’s majesty), but even in this instance the definite functions as an affective catalyst for the penetration of the godhead’s salvific ontology. These divine aspects receive an absorbing visual treatment in the concatenation of head and body that follows, with the repetition of the phrase “we be his corone” creating narrative space for the reader to insert themselves and embody all the aspects of the Trinity, even those that

¹¹⁸ On knitting, see also Denise N. Baker, “Julian of Norwich and the Varieties of Middle English Mystical Discourse” in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), 62; Ena Jenkins, “Metaphor.”

are “glorified and onpassible.” Their effacement hints at the enigmatic glory at the heart of the Trinitarian God.

In these lines, the concept of *knitting* becomes a point of entry into the *mysterium*. Beyond its corporeal import, the concurrence of the person and the godhead explores what it means to be alive: physical and spiritual thirst co-occur with desire and longing, and in addition to the text’s emotive impact in hinting at the crucified Christ’s pains, it develops these themes into essential attributes of the *deus desiderans*. This expression of love-longing exists outside of time and predates the Incarnation but finds its most perfect expression in it. Lastly, the *knitting*-metaphor is paraphrased in the final sentence, which grapples with the manifestation of divine love in the individual as a reciprocal image of the deity’s “threst and longyng;” *knitting*, “longyng,” and “longen ageyn” are presented as continuous practices and never-ending processes that exist beyond a temporal frame.

Likewise, *knitting* as a metaphor for the near-there relationship between God and his creation is used within the context of the Lord and Servant Parable in Chapter 51:

And at this poynte he began first to shewen his myte; for he went into helle, and whan he was there he reysid up the grit rote out of the depe depenes which rythfully was knit to hym in hey hevyn. The body was in the grave till Estern morow, and from that tyme he lay never more; for then was rythfully endid the walowyng and the wrythyng, the groning and the monyng; and our foule dedly flesh that Gods Son toke on hym, which was Adams old kirtle, steyte, bare and short, than be our saviour was made fair now, white and bryte and of endles cleness, wyde and syde, fairer and richer than was than the clothyng which I saw on the Fadir; for that clothyng was blew and Christs clothyng is now of a fair, semely medlur which is so mervelous that I can it not discrien; for it is al of very worshippis.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ For an analysis of the Parable of the Lord and the Servant, see Part II of this thesis.

In this passage, *knitting* acquires more explicitly eschatological overtones that erase any forms of concrete representation in the context of the emotive impact of sin, reminding the reader that those affective schemata that lend themselves to image-meditation and iconography-based imagination are not an end in themselves.¹²⁰ A powerful dialectic runs throughout these lines, first set up in the contrast between “myte,” and “helle,” as well as “reysid up” and “depe depenes.”¹²¹ Arranged in a chiasmic ring-pattern, these concepts acquire more complex salvific potency because they are invoked opposite their counterparts. A similar kind of structural and thematic interweaving is at play as the “grit rote” links heaven and hell,¹²² to be reclaimed through the Incarnation that has its origin “in hey hevyn”—outside the physical domain and beyond referentiality.

Complex layers collocate the three divine persons, and *knitting* is used to suggest a coming-together of heaven and earth, of humanity and divinity, and the indissoluble perichoresis among the divine persons. Alongside the “grit rote,” the “depe depenes” is incorporated into God as well. It is thereby both acknowledged and nullified. This methodology gives expression to the existence of failure, sinning, and its consequences, while at the same time including and ultimately erasing them in the divine plan. The subsequent sentence, “The body was in the grave till Estern morow, and from that tyme he lay never more,” augments the sense of a progression

¹²⁰ See also page 65.

¹²¹ Colledge and Walsh stress the tautology and *contentio*, “a statement built on contraries,” of “out of the depe depenes which rythfully was knit to hym in hey hevyn,” *Showings*, 542. Christina Cervone argues that the alliterations in “depe depenes” and “hey hevyn” juxtapose these two concepts: *Poetics of the Incarnation: Middle English Writing and the Leap of Love* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 150.

¹²² According to Watson and Jenkins, the “grit rote” refers to the sinners in hell freed by Christ’s harrowing (“rout”), *Writings*, 286. Colledge and Walsh combine the Old Testament reference to Paul’s calling of his defecting people as “root that is ‘holy’” (Romans 11:16) with its botanical homonym “And that which shall be saved of the house of Juda, and which is left, shall take root downward, and shall bear fruit upward (Isaias 37:31). Julian would likely have been aware of Christ’s designation as the “root of Jesse” (Isaias 11:1). Furthermore, knowledge of God’s might as it is expressed in his son is the root of immortal life (Wisdom 15:3), and the faithful have their roots in divine love (Ephesians 3:17) (Colledge and Walsh, 542). Julian’s “rote” includes all these meanings and allusions.

heavenwards and places sin in close textual and theological proximity to the Resurrection.

There follows a catena of present participles expressing various reactions to physical and spiritual agony, all related to the ongoing struggle to achieve cleanliness. “Walowyng,” “wrythyng,” “groning,” and “monyng” locate pain, penitence, misdeeds and their lamentable results at the heart of the human condition, but on a syntactic level, the preceding “rythfully endid” cuts them short. Echoing in the same vein is the “foule dedly flesh,” which is instantly exalted when “Gods Son toke [it] on hym” in a typological answer to and resolution of the doctrine of original sin. Reversal and coincidence in opposition are the modalities in which Julian proceeds further, when she breaks down the domestic metaphors of inadequate human dress to signify spiritual “cleness” in the same way that sin was unsaid before.

Where the primarily problematic aspects of *knitting* and clothing are endemic, in the challenging condition of living in the world, they are “made fair now, white and bryte, and of endles clenness, wyde and syde, fairer and richer than was the clothyng which I saw on the Fadir.” Rhyme and structural parallelism harmoniously thread together these attributes in white/wyde and bryte/syde; these features are absent in “Adams old kirtle, steyte, bare and short,” where the laconic sibilance and r-resonance reflect his lamentable physical appearance in linguistic form. Apart from its affective impact, Julian’s employment of clothing images at this point has wider and more eschatological implications. As the clothes stand at the centre of the transformation, they function as the metonymic extension of Christ’s transfiguration, rendering the boundary between him and humanity more porous. Adam’s kirtle is not dismissed as vile; rather, it—and with it humans and original sin—is transfigured precisely through its mundane links. The very qualities that are the basis and result of humanity’s failings

cause the deity's actions in the world, make the divine accessible and, far from leading to an overt opposition, are structurally analogous in God.

While at the outset the clothing metaphor functions as an image of humility, inferiority, and painful self-awareness, it is subsequently imaginatively modulated and developed more fully to dramatise the intersubjective dynamics among the Trinitarian persons and between the Trinity and the individual. The phrase “Fairer and richer clothing which I saw on the Fadir” establishes an iconological and hierarchical contrast that deliberately folds into itself because there is no difference or distance between the first and the second person of the divinity. Despite the suggestions of the opening lines that address and cater to the human need for readily accessible referential meaning, the comparison collapses in the comparative contrast between God the Father and the Son. This tonal shift, mirroring the structurally and rhetorically ambitious interplay between proximity and distance, is then brought to its apex, where it evokes the perichoretic union in the phrase “semely medlur”—a “worthy,”¹²³ “balanced mixture,”¹²⁴ and “the centre.”¹²⁵ An intermingling between divine and human attributes, it signifies beyond perichoresis and depicts human frailty as an integral part of the economic Trinity's ontology.

Seeing one in terms of the other, simultaneously and without interpretive opposition, permits the reader to grasp, for a moment, the fringes of the divine plan and the essence of salvation. Moreover, as the narrative subtly changes the referent from the kirtle (and its properties) to Christ himself, the term “medlur” allows the second Trinitarian person to exalt anything physical and worldly as part of the salvific impulse and trajectory. Julian's interjection at the end of the Parable articulates her awe but also

¹²³ MED, *semeli*, adj., sense 4(c).

¹²⁴ MED, *medle*, n. (2), sense 3(a).

¹²⁵ MED, *middle*, n., sense 1(b).

the end of all definite signification and human modes of thought because the “medlur” is “so mervelous that I can it not descrien.” In this moment of impasse and analytical stalemate, the effusive forces of love and faith enter as hermeneutical saviours: “for it is al of very worshipp.” Through these words, she manages to relinquish the definitive pictorial force of the foregoing, and all that is left is a sense that the preceding overtly visual simplicity and direct reference articulate theological and interpretive complexity. “Of endles cleness,” therefore, is the didactically intricate affective and imaginative impression on the reader when they act according to the text’s repeated import and learn to transcend the confines of narrative figuration and put an end to analytical thought. This veering between the states of definitive and ephemeral reference is calibrated precisely to relate to the inbetween-ness of humanity and exemplifies the means and limits of language to give a voice to the inexpressible.¹²⁶

Julian’s apophatic use of *knitting* is indeed a valuable concept to explore her work’s theological complexity. She further employs *knitting* as a linguistic choice carefully to move the reader towards a radical inversion and to realign their imaginative sensorium from consideration of the mundane to the ineffable in Chapters 57 and 58. A cluster of *knitting* in Chapter 57 begins with the following:

In our subs[t]ance we aren full, in our sensualite we faylyn, which God will restore be mercy and grace; and how our kinde which is the heyer part is knitt to God in the making, and God, Iesus, is knitt to our kind in the lower part in our flesh takyng; and of feith spryngyn other vertues; and Mary is our moder.

The emphasis on restoring a pervading sense of unworthiness is clearly realised in the penitential tone that is transformed to faith underpinned by soteriological security.

¹²⁶ See also A.C. Spearing on Elizabeth Salter’s notion of mystical texts’ literariness and meaning “created [in] language:” “Language and its Limits: *The Cloud of Unknowing* and *Pearl*,” in *Approaching Medieval Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*, eds. Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, Roger Ellis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 74.

Focus on the actions of God and Christ to subsume the *viatores* into the divine plan lead over to the metaphor of *knitting* both parts together, an action that is precisely modulated on parallelism: it moves the narrative perspective from negative/humility/impasse to positive/faith/solution. Even though the quick succession between “full” and “faylyn” shatters any aspirations for an uninterrupted and incrementally closer life of contemplative union, the very humanity that Julian excavates functions in a programmatically pastoral manner. In her description, failings are only temporal and an intrinsic part of human life, but they do not muddle the relationship with the divinity. Rather, the connection is built upon “mercy and grace,” given precisely because the deity regards the struggle as a defining feature of humanity.

We have already seen before that throughout Julian’s work, the mortal flesh, far from being cast as opposed to spiritual progress, is in fact vindicated through the Incarnation. In this instance as well, *substance* refers to the higher element of humanity, but it is not equated with a specific point of reference, such as the soul, the heart, or the ratiocinative faculties. Neither does the anchoress draw a strict boundary between *substance* and *sensuality*, because they are both united in God eventually, even though different processes antecede the union. Pelphrey agrees:

In a general way, she understands “substance” to be what something is in the eyes of God—what it is meant to be, in its nature (that is, as God intends it), regardless of how it may appear. [...] [S]ubstance is not immaterial or ideal, but is the truth of our being, body and soul: the way we are meant to be, as whole persons.”¹²⁷

Julian deviates here from contemporary contemplative writers. Walter Hilton divides the soul into two main parts: higher/inner and lower/outer, with the former part

¹²⁷ Pelphrey, *Love Thee*, 74-5.

subdivided into two further categories.¹²⁸ Apprehending the deity according to this plan engages the affections because it is human nature to be drawn to that which intrigues us. While Hilton posits that reason leads to divine truths, other writers, such as Thomas Aquinas or the anonymous *Cloud*-author appreciate reason's inability to grapple with the divine mysteries, and consequently they interpret it as a faculty related to the cognition of the world. Love, on the other hand, represents the higher modality of engagement. According to these three authors, an awareness of the world, often derived through the senses, is contingent upon the understanding of and loving devotion to God. The senses and sensuality, therefore, sit on the cusp between the physical and the spiritual, and between the present and the more profound spiritual goals that might be attained in the future.¹²⁹

Julian's form of argument falls in a similar vein when she locates redemptive divine love in *substance* as well as in *sensualite*. Thus, the entire person is united with the deity and the almost Manichaean duality of "heyer" and "lower" part is resolved—they coexist simultaneously and do not exclude one another, and neither does the latter preclude the former. Since the entire being is therefore perceived as inherently good, Julian bridges the difference of perception and requires her audience to see themselves through the godhead's loving eyes.

¹²⁸ "For þou schalt vnderstondyn þat a soule hath two partyes. Þat on is kalled þe sensualite, þat is þe fleshly felynge be þe fyue owtward wyttes, þe whilk is common to man and to best. Of þe whilk sensualite, whan it is vnskillfully and vnordinatly rewlyd, is made þe ymage of synne [...] for þan is þe sensualite synne whan it is not rewled after reason. Þat oper partye is kalled reason and þat is departed in two: in þe ouer partye and in þe nether partye." *The Scale of Perfection Book II. An Edition Based on British Library MSS Harley 6573 and 6579*, eds. S.S. Hussey and Michael G. Sargent, EETS o.s. 348 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Chapter 13, ll. 8-14.

¹²⁹ Pelphrey, *Love Thee*, 74-75. See also Gordon Rudy, *The Mystical Language of Sensation in the Later Middle Ages*, Studies in Medieval History and Culture 14 (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Chris Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), chapter 3; and the collection of essays in *The Saturated Sensorium. Principles of Perception and Meditation in the Middle Ages*, eds. Hans Henrik Lohfert Jørgensen, Henning Laugerud and Laura Katrine Skinnebach (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015).

Preeminent in the development of this textual strategy is Mary, “our moder,” who typifies the pinnacle of humility, the catalyst through which abiding has been expressed before, and the lens through which it should be interpreted and re-enacted. This hermeneutical path is suggested by the transition from the “lower part,” in which humanity is *knit* to Christ, to a reversal of perspective to Mary through the segue “and of feith spryngyn other vertues.” This phrase’s vague frame of reference becomes more definite with her as the example.

These concepts become clearer as chapter 57 progresses:

sothly I saw that we arn that he lovith and don that he lekyth lestingly withouten ony styntyng; and of the gret riches and of the hey noble, vertues be mesur come to our soule what tyme it is knitt to our body; in which knitting we arn made sensual. And thus in our substance we arn full, and in our sensualite we faylyn; which faylyng God will restore and fulfill be werkyng mercy and grace plentifully flowand into us of his owne kynd godhede. And thus his kinde godhede makith that mercy and grace werkyn in us.

These lines start from syntactic ambiguity and develop it through the affective *imaginarium* into an insight into the deity’s viewpoint. In Julian’s tried and tested method of textualising her revelations, she starts with herself, progresses to God, and construes the effects of his love as pertaining to all her *even cristen*. The antecedent for the phrase “lestingly withouten ony styntyng” could be either “he” (God) or “we,” and the impossibility of making that distinction gives pause for thought. In one reading, divine love is omnipresent, and in the other, all human activities, if they are aimed toward centring one’s life on God, will be met with his never-ceasing benevolence.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ See also Chapter 43: “And whan we of his special grace planely beholden hym, seying non other nedys, than we folowen hym and he drawith us into hym be love; for I saw and felt that his marvelous and fulsome goodnes fulfillith al our mytys; and then I saw that his continuate werkyng in al manner thing is don so godely, so wysely and so mytyly that it overpassyt al our imagyning and all that we can wenyng and thynken; and than we can do no more but behold hym, enioyeng, with an hey migty desire to be al onyd into hym, centred to his wonyng, and enioy in hys lovyng and deliten in his godeness.”

Another interpretational conundrum hinges on the term “noble” and the question of whether it should be construed as a noun or an adjective. In the first case, it forms a parallelism with “riches” and signifies the ways in which God will reward those who devote their lives to him. In the second case—removing the comma in Glasscoe’s edition—the emphasis is put on personal action that will bring about its spiritual rewards: “hey noble vertues.” A similar multiplication of meaning hinges on the following “be mesur,” which could be read to mean “in due proportion”¹³¹ compared to the divine “gret riches” and “hey noble,” or construed as “prudently, deliberately”¹³² in relation to the revaluation of the body and soul in their *knitting* together. When Julian subsequently affirms “thus in our substance we arn full, and in our sensualite we faylyn,” the foregoing lessens the force of fallen life, which is a strategy that she continues to embrace immediately afterwards. “Faylyn” and “faylyng” are programmatically incorporated into God’s eschatological dynamics, which will “restore” and “fulfill.” When she writes about human-divine indwelling, she strengthens the wholeness of the person through their connection to the godhead: “for I saw full sekirly that our substance is in God, and also I saw that in our sensualite God is; for the selfe poynte that our soule is mad sensual, in the selfe poynt is the cite of God, ordeynid to him from withouten begynnyng” (Chapter 55).¹³³ The essential *oneing* of humanity’s diverse parts follows the divine impulse to bind the creation to the divinity.

Knitting develops more cataphatic undertones as well:

for in that ilk tyme that God knitted him to our body in the maydens womb he toke our sensual soule; in which takyng, he us al haveyng beclosid in him, he onyd it to our substance, in which onyng he was perfect man; for Criste havyng knitt in him ilk man that shall be savid, is perfit man. Thus our lady is our moder in whome we are all beclosid and of hir borne in Christe; for she that is moder of our savior is moder of all that shall be savid in our savior. And our savior is our

¹³¹ MED, *mesure*, n., sense 7a.

¹³² MED, *mesure*, n., sense 8a.

¹³³ Mark the pun on the near homophones “cite” and “sete.”

very moder in whom we be endlesly borne and neve[r] shall come out of him.
(Chapter 57)

The Virgin Mary again functions as the prism through which the fruition of *knitting* is envisaged. Intermingling the deity's procreative powers with the Virgin's material presence, her role is only seemingly characterised by passive receptiveness, because she actually provides the space where God may perform the action of *knitting*. Rather than putting emphasis on her subordinate role, she mirrors Christ as the "perfit man." As an emblem of perfect humility for all humans and by giving birth to Jesus, she epitomises the ways in which Christ mothers every person "that shall be savid." Communicated through an envelope-pattern of endless enclosing, he is subsequently able to effect every person's spiritual rebirth, and Mary is "beclosid in him" as much as "we are all beclosed and of hir." This is exemplified in Julian's intricately ambiguous syntactic rendering: "moder of all that shall be savid in our savior." This line's opacity hinges on "that," which could have the Virgin as its antecedent, therefore putting emphasis on Mary's salvation, or pertain to "all," thus referring to humankind's universal salvation. As the Virgin delivers the reader to a state that allows for the realisation that they are always enclosed in God, divine-human communion is here at its most incarnational.

In a mirror image, Jesus takes on and subsequently develops Mary's motherhood in the following sentence, transforming it into its full salvific potential. His generative powers make him a "very moder" as well, and the bodily connotation reverberates through a clever play on syntax, which is itself based on an intermingling of the physical with the salvific mysteries: "we are all [...] of hir borne in Christe" elucidates the human side of the Incarnation, namely the Virgin's participation, and its ramifications on "all." But because the action is attributed to Christ instead of Mary, giving birth acquires spiritual dimensions. Christ's "us al haveyng beclosed"

theologically precedes Mary as “our moder in whom we are all beclosid.” As these lines indicate, the identification of Christ with his creation is at once full and fleeting. The materialisation of the transcendent, however, does not lead to any tension with—or within—the material world. On the contrary, the references to *knitting* and giving birth develop within a language of the flesh and the world, rendering God’s presence on earth instinctually graspable.

Julian develops these metaphors into concepts beyond their mundane signification, gesturing towards the transcendent realm. The figurative is used to indicate the divinity’s emblematic *beyond*: “our savior is our very moder in whom we be endlessly borne and neve[r] shall come out of him” starts by equating Christ not only to any mother but to “our very moder.” This emphatic paradox harnesses the similarities between human motherhood and Christ’s spiritually procreative powers in order to point out their differences. Apart from acting as an intensifier, “very” transmits Christ’s divinity and distinguishes the eternal life that he promises from the physical life a mother may give.¹³⁴ But this is not where the distinction/comparison ends. In contrast to the single occurrence of a person’s physical birth, being born in Christ is an endless process that condenses infinity into continuous instances of rebirth. Divine eternity keeps flourishing in the person, who is thus born again in every moment. Life and time are, therefore, expanding indefinitely and still compressed into a point. As a further contrast to the earthly realm, birth does not lead to a physical separation from the mother—being endlessly born “in” Christ, the individual will “neve[r] come out of him.”

Chapter 57 continues to explicate the synchronism of birth, perfection, and consummation through mutual enclosing:

¹³⁴ See MED, *verrei*, adj., sense 5c.

Plenteously and fully and swetely was this shewid; and it is spoken of in the first wher he seith we arn all in him beclosid and he is beclosid in us; and that is spoken of in the xvi shewing wher it seith he sittith in our soule; for it is his likeyng to reygne in our vnderstanding blisfully, and sitten in our soule restfully, and to wonen in our soule endlesly, us al werkeng into hym; in which werkyng he will we ben his helpers, gevyng to him al our entendyng, lerand his loris, kep[ying] his lawes, desirand that al be done that he doith, truely trosting in hym; for sothly I saw that our substan[c]e is in God.

Here Julian engages with the mysteries of revelation by initially unsaying them, in the first clause. As a reference to the limits of language when writing about contemplative encounters, abundance captures the excess of illumination, and the collocation of “Plenteously and fully” pertains merely to the manner and not to the content of the secrets revealed. The assertion that “swetely was this shewid” puts emphasis on the presence of divine love in the absence of a more explicit contentual explanation. Thus, in addition to the mutual enfolding of God and humankind,¹³⁵ the textual method of infinite hermeneutical openness mirrors the divine absolute.

Julian brings matters to a head when she explains that her text is bookended, in revelations one and sixteen, by a sense of multiplicity in unity, which holds the key not only to the interpretation of her entire work, but to any engagement with the divinity. In sitting “in our soule restfully” and living there “endlesly,” the deity sketches out the modality through which it can be accessed. It is primarily the reciprocal enclosing that makes this kind of participatory insight possible, whereby the soul is not separated from understanding—neither physically nor spiritually—and where the *fruitio Dei* transcends the dyadic separation between the transcendent and the material world. This form of meaning-making localises “vnderstanding” within the soul and starts with a portrayal of the intimacy between the two participants because the divine *pneuma* performs

¹³⁵ On reciprocal enclosure and enfolding, see Krantz, *Life and Text* 49-66; Denise N. Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings. From Vision to Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 142-164.

iconographically and iconologically human actions of sitting, reigning, and living within the soul.

Contrasting the deity's self-contained rest with the incessant human search for completion, the phrase "for it is his likeyng [...] us al werkeng into hym" again configures the *modus operandi* Julian envisages for her *even cristen*. The plurality of human response hinges on the present progressive "werkeng," which is a fundamentally loving exhortation to answer the divine call. This verb describes the ideal state of focus, where anything but the relationship to God has become secondary, and where activity and passivity coinhere. In Julian's multimodality, to which the reader has become accustomed by now, *werken* unearths the continuum of engagement through which humans may co-create the relationship and thereby enter into a communion with the transcendent. The range of meanings—all of which resonate simultaneously—include "proceed[ing] into him,"¹³⁶ "serv[ing],"¹³⁷ "practis[ing],"¹³⁸ "exercis[ing] creative power,"¹³⁹ "generat[ing],"¹⁴⁰ and "transform[ing]."¹⁴¹ Julian seems to be intent on conveying that there is a seamless fit between the focus on the deity and the attention to the creative forces of the self within the *unio mystica*. Even in a single word there is enough room to house the multiplicity of approaches required to apprehend the divinity's omnipresence. That does not, however, entail one (*divinitas*) becoming indistinguishable from the other (*humanitas*).

As in many of the passages discussed above, the text distinguishes between the human and the divine by use of the present progressive. The intermixing of the present progressive of "werkeng" with God's "reygne," "sitten," and "wonen" instils the reader

¹³⁶ MED, *werken* v. (1), sense 1a.

¹³⁷ MED, *werken* v. (1), sense 3a (c).

¹³⁸ MED, *werken* v. (1), sense: 3a (d).

¹³⁹ MED, *werken* v. (1), sense 10a.

¹⁴⁰ MED, *werken* v. (1), sense: 10c.

¹⁴¹ MED, *werken* v. (1), sense 15.

with a sense of difference—a modulation of awareness within the mystical love knot that ensures the two strands continuously *knitted* together retain their distinct qualities. Julian’s God, however, is not a deity of difference but one of unification through the medium of love. The adjectives used to describe his actions therefore communicate a benevolent presence rather than a detached ruler. In overlapping the intimate with the exalted, the text recalibrates any impulses towards concrete personification and renders God’s indwelling abstract while ensuring his love is intimately and intuitively felt.

As ever, this love is a simultaneously simple and complex construct. In the final lines of the passage, humanity lays the ground for and even starts to co-construct the union when Julian expands on the scope of “werkeng.” In addition to sapiential understanding, biblical and catechetical knowledge, as well as *imitatio Christi* convey the range of practices approximating the apprehension of “al [...] that he doith,” the actualisation of which relates to a form of salvific insight that remains shrouded in mystery. The use of the preposition “into” in “us al werkeng into hym” implies a penetration of the divine enigma from two different points of departure. In the first instance, and in its interpretation as “into,” such a conceptual *knitting* starts from the outside.¹⁴² In the second instance, the *oneing* takes place within the union, playing with humanity’s obfuscated situatedness and its oscillating between outside, in-between, and already.¹⁴³ Even in the latter instance, the *already* is only partially attained and still requires the present progressive of further “werkyng.”

More broadly, the strategic withholding of any form of definite grasp also applies to the conceptualisation of the innermost self. The *deus desiderans*, however, lessens the blow, and reframes the spiritual work to be done as a labour of love on both

¹⁴² MED, in-to, prep., sense 1.

¹⁴³ The MED entry for in-to, prep. gives “within” as another meaning (sense 2c).

ends: “he wil we ben his helpers” encapsulates that anything done in pursuit of the deity’s love is reciprocated through his grace. Furthermore, he elevates humanity to divine co-workers who contribute their fair share to the relationship through apophatic *knitting*. After relaying the comprehensive force of divine love and its emulation by humankind, Julian completes this train of argument coherently: “for sothly I saw that our substan[c]e is in God.” Having affirmed indwelling but at the same time balancing it with the denial of full understanding at this point in time, the text frustrates any attempts at interpretive stability. It is radically at odds with any finite form of reading. Consistent with the above, all ontological and hermeneutical strains coinhere in God, and his love forms the foundation of the self. Beyond that, despite the denial of divine referentiality and personification, he is still accessible through a creative act of intuition separate from rationality and more attuned to the psychology of human awe. In this reading, the self is acutely aware of the divine force, through and in which it is already blossoming and cannot help but yearn for progress towards completion. Julian’s dictum that her book is “not yet performid” (Chapter 86) thus extends to the mode of engagement with her divinity—one that is not straightforward or measurable by degrees but eternally coinciding and collapsing every paradox. Wisdom is encompassed in the understanding that even the entirety of all creative energies will not unravel this apophatic knot of meaning.

Substance, sensualite, and kynde

Textual complexity as epitomised in her repeated *beholding* of concepts from different angles is one of the hallmarks of Julian’s text. In Chapter 58, she develops the notion of mutual indwelling further:

And whan he wold, be full accord of all the Trinite, he made us all at onys; and in our makynge he knitt us and onyd us to hymse[lf], be which onyng we arn kept as clene and as noble as we were made. Be the vertue of the ilke pretious onyng we loven our maker and liken him, praysen him and thankynge him and endlessly enioyen in him. And this is the werke which is wrought continually in every soule that shal be save; which is the godly will aforneid.

In an ingenious twist, unity and plurality within the Trinity—“he wold, be full accord of all the Trinite”—lead to the breakdown of divine/human separation “at onys.” Through this immediate act of creation, human impermanence is placed alongside the enigmatic workings within the Trinity. The godhead’s *knitting*, therefore, happens in an instant in these lines, and it infuses the entire being with worth and moral cleanness throughout their life, which leads to endless “enioyen in him” in the life beyond.

Julian frequently relishes in the subtle process of undoing the dialectic between high and low along the lines of the Christian doctrine that the lowest shall be highest and the poorest shall be richest, for instance in her treatment of mortal flesh and divine spirit, motherhood and fatherhood, and humanity’s viewpoint in relation to God’s. On the level of style and content, this recurring motif also manifests more subtly when applied to her impulse to merge different forms of conceptualisation, various ways of engagement on human levels with divine truths, and her strategy of interlocking the material and imagistic with its more elusive counterparts. But this line of argument might suggest a theological either/or, when it is in fact an unequivocally given additive “and.” Thus, her text continuously and implicitly signifies a higher meaning, and all approaches and meanings resonate simultaneously. The textualisation serves as a mere springboard but is self-reflexively conscious of its own limitations and works in the service of a radical, full-dimensional elucidation. Therefore, the theological conceit of *knitting* applies to her text as much as it pertains to her God and innermost self.

This notion resonates with Chapter 56, where Julian again accords importance to the materiality of the flesh:

And anemptys our substan[c]e and sensualite, it may rytely be clepid our soule; and that is be the onyng that it hath in God. The worshipfull cyte that our lord Iesus sittith in, it is our sensualite in which he is inclosid; and our kindly substance is beclosid in Iesus with the blissid soule of Criste sitting in rest in the Godhede. And I saw full sekirly that it behovith neds to be that we shuld ben in longyng and in penance into the time that we be led so depe into God that we verily and trewly knowen our own soule. And sothly I saw that into this hey depenes our good lord himselfe ledith us in the same love that he made us, and in the same love that he bowte us be mercy and grace throw vertue of his blissid passion. And notwithstanding al this, we may never come to full knowyng of God till we know first clerely our owne soule; for into the tyme that it is in the full myts we may not be al ful holy; and that is that our sensualite be the vertue of Cristis passion be browte up to the substan[c]e, with al the profitts of our tribulation that our lord shall make us to gettyn be mercy and grace. I had in partie touching, and it is grounded in kynde; that is to sey, our reson is groundid in God which is substantial heyhede.

These lines exemplify the intensity of the essential inbetween-ness and the longing for the godhead that completes and *ones* humanity to him. But more than that, they offer a glimpse into the specific state of the soul. The combination of *substance* and *sensuality* makes up the entire person, and both predate the individual while at the same time coming to fruition in a specific moment in time, in a unique person, and through the union with the divinity.¹⁴⁴ *Sensualite* is here collocated with imagistic linguistic choices that articulate the proximity and immediacy of divine indwelling. So present is Christ that he becomes physically graspable, sitting in the “worshipfull cyte” of our soul that encloses him. As a contrast to this iconographical commonplace, the parallelism that underlies the following sentence begins with a known action that leads straight into the

¹⁴⁴ According to Bernard McGinn, “the exemplary or virtual preexistence of the soul in God” is “an important theme of the new mysticism of the thirteenth century [...]. It is “a notion that served as at least part of the foundation for new modes of conceiving the *unio mystica*.” *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism (1200-1350)*, (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1998), 214.

unknown, as Christ is “sitting in rest in the Godhede.” Thus, paradoxically, the soul is both enclosed by and enclosing the deity.

Not only does the soul’s *substance* rest within God as ground of its being, but his image resides within the soul from the moment it is embodied with sensuality.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the difference between Christ dwelling in the soul and humanity being enclosed in him is signalled by different verb choices: “inclosid” and “beclosid” suggest similar modalities of surrounding, but the former also alludes to the hidden divine spark within the human soul,¹⁴⁶ which might still have to be discovered. On the other hand, aside from touching on “surround[ing]” and “encircl[ing],” being “beclosid” also indicates “protection” and “keep[ing] safe.”¹⁴⁷ Moreover, in its sense of “contain[ing],”¹⁴⁸ the preceding structural parallelism gives way to more pronounced distinctions between the divine-human dyad, where the deity’s omniscience becomes the subject of high contemplation because the love that he emanates does not equal any human conception of it. At the same time, however, human love is here so linguistically similar to its divine origin that the connection remains palpable, as one derives from the other.

Continuing the combination of divine wisdom and human types of understanding, Julian sees “full sekirly,” a modality that resides in the overlay between the heavenly and worldly spheres and potently reimagines the penitential yearning in a way that does not allow for dread to develop, focusing instead on the security God offers. “Longyng” with humility as a never-ceasing link to the deity is the form of living that stretches all her resources to reach for what is beyond them. In another circular

¹⁴⁵ Baker, “Varieties,” 62.

¹⁴⁶ MED *enclosen*, v. sense 4. For Meister Eckhart’s concept of the divine spark in the soul, the *scintilla animae*, or *Fünkelîn*, see Williams, *Wound*, 132-9 and Oliver Davies, *God Within: The Mystical Tradition of Northern Europe* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988), 47-59.

¹⁴⁷ MED *beclosen*, senses 1 and 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, sense 3.

argument, this type of dealing with spiritual desire through the lens of penitential self-reflection redefines the notion of presence because it requires the development of the self to discover God. In combination with the gerund, the passage blends the present with its continuous aspect and stretches time infinitely. The result is an existence between the worlds, on the threshold of understanding, continually motivated to reach out while exploring the spiritual interior.

Self-knowledge, and specifically the self vis-à-vis its divine origin, is located in the soul. For this reason, it cannot be attained through conscious effort but only through surrender, when: “we be led so depe into God that we verily and trewly knowen our own soule.” The text remains silent here as to whether this ultimate insight may be attained by way of contemplation or in the afterlife,¹⁴⁹ an absence that poses a conundrum. Nonetheless, the illuminations gained are “verily and trewly” promising understanding that is going to the core of what it means to be human. In addition, any form of apprehending the deity is accessible only through his wisdom, which is “so depe.” It is important to note the passive construction; “we” must “be led” into the mysteries instead of being able to discover them through any human faculties. The next sentence generates a sense of immense certainty when “our good lord himselfe” is the force that will be known and therefore lovingly opens himself up to the fallen mind. More than that, living and attaining a profoundly intuitive bond with the godhead have their origin “in the same love that he made us,” and are therefore permanently interconnected. This notion expands to creation being “bowte” through the Incarnation, which makes human insight possible. Nevertheless, the fundamental origin and principal focus of contemplative absorption continues to be surrounded in paradox

¹⁴⁹ Chapter 43 is equally ambiguous: “And then shal we, with his swete grace, in our owen meke continuat prayors, come into hym now in thys life be many privy tuchyngs of swete gostly syghts and felyng, mesurid to us as our simplehede may bere it.”

because God inhabits the “hey depenes” that unsays the deictic solidity of the previous sitting-metaphors. To this, Julian adds further ambiguity because the twice mentioning of “in the same love” alludes to the manner that allows her to pervade the “hey depenes” through which the deity expresses himself in the Incarnation, or pertains to the Passion, which combines the physical with the ineffable.

This insight into the divinity happens suddenly and is taken away equally abruptly, causing a reversion to the subordinate human position, where understanding is not conjugated with certitude but possibility. There are hurdles in this life before the godhead’s enigmas may be fully appreciated, and instead of looking for them on the outside, in the form of worldly temptations to be negated or devilish lures to withstand, they reside within the person and are part and parcel of their makeup. Again, Julian collocates the apprehension of her God in an analogous way to the knowledge of the self but with an important difference. The phrases “full knowyng of God” and “till we know first clerely our owne soule” share the impetus toward resolution of the mysteries, but also establish a relational discrepancy. “Clerely” carries connotations of exactitude and fulness that are absent in understanding directed towards the divinity.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, even though both processes are related, and the same purpose and natural inclination bind these actions together, they differ both in their extent and in their active- and passiveness. And here Julian makes a surprising theological assertion: the soul without the body is not “ful holy” until Christ’s passion unites *sensualite* and *substance*. This argument stipulates that pure, guiltless self-knowledge entails the entire human being and not only their more spiritual parts. But, far from being a straightforward process, tribulation experienced on the level of *sensualite* lines the path to the sapiential understanding of God and the self, even though its agency is immediately turned into

¹⁵⁰ MED clerly, adv., senses 2b and 3a.

constructive “profitts,” intended by the deity’s “mercy and grace” to work inside the self and encourage meekness.

Watson and Jenkins argue that in these lines Julian posits that the soul “paradoxically cannot be complete until it has first been ‘doubled,’ split off into *substance* and *sensuality* so that aspects of divinity other than ‘kind,’ namely mercy and grace, can be brought to bear on it.”¹⁵¹ This reading, however, does not include the entire trajectory of the argument and risks reducing it to one-dimensionality. The crux of Julian’s poetics is the engagement with the divine through human means, and, therefore, understanding has to be acquired through the faculties available to the individual. Meaning-making is thus contingent upon their being in the world. As a result, she “had in partie touching, and it is grounded in kynde;”¹⁵² divine illumination is again communicated through her physicality, even though “touching” merely reveals a part of human-divine *interknitting* and not its full salvific extent. What Julian is trying to convey here is not the notion that the person as such is divided into two—this would be the absolute opposite of the argument she is trying to lay out—but that the amount of understanding attainable can never be full, *and* (not *because*) it is “grounded in kynde.” It is, therefore, important to note the blamelessness and guiltlessness that she ascribes to sensuality in the lines leading up to this important theological breakthrough. Yet again, she cements the ontological *knitting* into the godhead, when she posits that any human

¹⁵¹ Watson and Jenkins, *Showings*, 302.

¹⁵² On the concepts of *kynde* and “kynde knowyng” in *Piers Plowman*, see: James Simpson, “The Role of *Scientia* in *Piers Plowman*,” in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G.H. Russell*, eds. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1986), 49-65; See also James Simpson, “From Reason to Affective Knowledge: Modes of Thought and Poetic Form in *Piers Plowman*,” *Medium Aevum* 55 (1986): 1-23; Mary Clementine Davlin, “Kyndely Knowyng as a Major Theme in *Piers Plowman* B,” *The Review of English Studies* 22, no. 85 (1971): 1-19; Spearing, “*The Cloud of Unknowing*.” On “kynde knowing” compared to other concepts of cognition, see Schmidt’s discussion of C.1.136-44 in *Piers Plowman: A New Translation of the B-Text*, trans. A. V. C. Schmidt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

apprehension of the deity “is groundid” in him, “which is substantial heyhede,” an antinomy never to be understood.

Far from only relating to paradox, however, the interweaving of ground and “heyhede” further resonates within a framework of immanent transcendence. The love directed towards the divinity, and the deity’s love for his creation that is “grounded in kynde” are two trajectories that are ultimately similar:¹⁵³ Julian uses the multifarious significance of the word *kynde* as kind/natural and loving, a relationship that is connotated through the mother, father, child, and spouse metaphors elsewhere in the text.¹⁵⁴ In a negation of any prolonged form of division, the divine communion with the individual, and with humanity in general, consists of an endless circle: the first part is an oscillating process of fundamental *oneing* of the self, the second the ebb and flow of the person’s *oneing* to God, and the third his pre-existing love for his creation that can be “kindly” apprehended but that predates the individual and exists independently of and unintelligibly to it. The Trinity once more functions as the essential image of oneness: three separate and coinhering parts. Moreover, unity within and through the Trinity via a continual process of apophatic *knitting* suffuses the very essence of human existence, including its more troublesome aspects (yet another meaning of “grounded in kynde”), thereby reforming the reader. Being loved by the divine Other enables the self to acquire the skill of sympathetically regarding itself, fully and without any shame. While this might not have previously been in the individual’s psychological toolkit, the integrative divine force endlessly unifies the fragmented person by pervading them to their core. As it is *oned* with humanity, the Trinity reveals itself through a relationship

¹⁵³ See also Diane F. Krantz’s argument that “[k]indly means to be loving,” in *The Life and Text of Julian of Norwich: The Poetics of Enclosure*. *Studies in the Humanities* 32 (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 97-109. According to Jenkins, “In the property of Kind, its associations and the metaphors arising from it, Julian affirms a fundamental link between Creator, humankind and the natural world. [...] all things are seen to be interconnected” (“Metaphor,” 183).

¹⁵⁴ Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning*, 88. See also Marion Glasscoe’s remarks in the introduction to her edition, *Revelation*, xvii-xviii.

that consolidates the depths of the person's being. Furthermore, a constant increase, expansion, and intensification takes place, creating an existential love-knot throughout life on earth. In the progression of this *oneing*, humans grow into becoming the beloved spouses of the divine. The link between the oneness of the Trinity and its *oneing* with humanity points to a divine fecundity and universality that generates harmony.¹⁵⁵

In *Piers Plowman*, Langland also takes advantage of the semantic richness of the term *kynde*. In his study *Nature and Salvation in Piers Plowman*, Hugh White notes:

Nature is one of the more polysemous words in Modern English, and it can be argued that Middle English *kynde* was even more so, since its field included not only the idea of nature, but also the idea of kindness, which modern nature terms do not cover. The extreme polysemy, a resource for Langland, is something of an impediment to the critic; it is not always easy to know what meaning of *kynde* is operative, even before one starts to make allowances for the possibility of word play.¹⁵⁶

Modern commentators have ascribed a sense of partaking to the phrase “*kynde knowing*,”¹⁵⁷ which pushes the boundaries between activity and passivity¹⁵⁸—an important insight that can be applied to Julian's text as well. Furthermore, Britton Harwood equates “*kynde knowing*” in *Piers Plowman* with an intuitive awareness, the “*notitia intuitiva*” linked to Duns Scotus,¹⁵⁹ a concept that closely resonates with the anchoress's intuitive apprehension of divine love.

Further on, Julian expands on the properties of *kind* more fully:

the kind godhede that we have of him abilith us to receive the werking of mercy and grace. I saw that our kind is in God hole, in which he makyth diverssetis

¹⁵⁵ Kerrie Hide, “Oneing in the Trinity: An Antipodean Reflection on the Trinitarian Theology of Julian of Norwich,” in *God Down Under. Theology in the Antipodes*, eds. Winifred Wing Han Lamb and Ian Barns (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2003), 52-53.

¹⁵⁶ *Nature and Salvation in Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1988), 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ See, for instance, Davlin, “Kyndely Knowyng,” and White, *Salvation*.

¹⁵⁸ Curtis A. Gruenler, *Piers Plowman and the Poetics of Enigma. Riddles, Rhetoric and Theology* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 409.

¹⁵⁹ “Langland's ‘Kynde Knowyng’ and the Quest for Christ.” *Modern Philology* 80 (1983): 242–55 and *Piers Plowman and the Problem of Belief* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

flowand out of him to werkyn his will, whom kind kepith, and mercy and grace restorith and fulfillith; and of these non shall perishen; for our kind which is the heyer part is knitt to God in the makynge; and God is knitt to our kinde which is the lower partie in our flesh takynge; and thus in Christ our ii kinds are onyd; for the Trinite is comprehendid [in] Criste in whome our heyer partie is groundid and rotid, and our lower partie the second person hath taken, which kynd first to him was adyte; for I saw full sekirly that all the workes that God hath done, or ever shall, wer ful knowen to him and afornseen from without begynning; and for love he made mankynd and for the same love himself wold be man. (Chapter 57)

The beginning of this section, “the kind godhede that we have of him” is so hermeneutically perplexing that it might be understood on several levels, all of them simultaneously working their confounding force on the reader. “Godhede” could signify the godhead itself in its expression as the economic Trinity, his essential goodness,¹⁶⁰ or both notions as naturally occurring within the person as they reflect the divine. The play on polysemy, however, comes to a standstill because it leads to the same result: God’s omnibenevolence. Julian purposefully invokes referential ambiguity and positions the reader on the receptive end of her linguistic finesse to let cognition falter.

Furthermore, in all potential interpretations that manifest here, *kind* refers to the abundance of divine love that makes the granting of “the werkyng of mercy and grace” possible, and which allows the audience to develop an apprehension of its profusion. In a more reflexive sense, however, human modes of *kind* pertain to a deeply personal way of life lived *sub gratia* in the fallen world. This is an idea that Julian continues from Chapter 56, where she writes: “for in kind we have our life and our beyng.” She seizes and develops this notion further in Chapter 57. Through the composite and relational landscape of *kind*, the radical potential of human fallenness to consolidate rather than sever because of its connection to the Trinity is ignited; this is hermeneutics without

¹⁶⁰ See MED, godhead, n., senses (1) and (2).

trauma. To this end, Julian explains: “our kind is in God hole.”¹⁶¹ It is not the absence of tension or paradox but the presence of exuberance that positions the reader in a state of full immersion, relating to and reflecting on the world while endlessly letting themselves go into love. This careful declension of the divine-human potential for connection subsequently moves into a demonstrative inversion: instead of the person containing lower and higher parts, it is the deity who emanates “diverssetis” according to his “will.” In a counter-movement to any argument towards human fragmentation, the latter is subdivided into “kind,” “mercy,” and “grace,” applying an overly human way of classification to the deity, almost to trace an illusory attempt of delineating him. Abstraction and fragmentation are Julian’s modalities of approaching and savouring the godhead on her own terms. *Kind*, mercy, and grace are the qualities through which the divinity starts and stops being understood, but not where he ends. This state of flow within, signified by the assertion that of these three attributes “non shall perisken,” combined with his emanation into the world, parallels the Trinitarian ontology, a correspondence that is emphasised by the verbs mediating the divine triads and actions: *kepen*, *restoren*, and *fulfillen*. This form of unity in diversity retrospectively entirely unsays any contradictory aspects that make up the individual before they are “in God hole,” and none of them have to be separated off in the unitive event. So intimate is the relationship between humanity and the deity that his supreme harmony is replicated in (the conception of) his creation.

When Julian expounds the essential *oneing* to the deity this time, “heyer” and “lower partie” are kinetically united with God the Father again. Far from a static equation, the images morph into one another as the text develops, and the unitive force

¹⁶¹ See also Chapter 56: “And therefore if we wil have knowlidge of our soule and comenyng and daliance therwith, it behovith to skeyn into our lord God in whom it is inclosid.” Grace Jantzen explores the “whole-making” properties of God’s love in *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian* (London: SPCK, 1997), 92-93.

from “the makyng,” which alludes to a parallel timespan starting both from the advent of creation and the birth of every person, thus pertains to spiritual and physical birth. The spiritual birth, continual rebirth, and eternal life to which “these non shall perishen” and “in the making” gesture also establish a shift towards a Boethian perspective, confirming the differences between the human understanding of time and the divine concept of eternity. Such a change in the interpretational approach is necessary to appreciate the intricacies of this instance of apophatic *knitting*.

In these lines, any notion of “higher” and “lower” noticeably disintegrates and folds into itself. This is achieved through the double signification of *kind(e)* in “for our kind” and “to our kinde.” In the first case, when Julian expounds that “for our kind which is the heyer part is knitt to God in the makyng,” one could argue that *kind* references the human ability to love—natural through its divine origin—whereas “and God is knitt to our kinde which is the lower partie in our flesh taking” attributes the more physical parts of nature and creation to the deity. But Julian once more does not encourage any either/or reasoning and opts for “yes, and” instead, allowing all meanings to resonate concurrently. To this end, she not only uses the same term to collapse any form of separation between the person and God but employs another tactic: since the temporal architecture has already been suspended, and any intrapersonal division has been contravened previously, the perspectival frame itself collapses. It does not matter who “is knitt” to whom, neither when (at Genesis or birth), because the importance is placed on the never-ending act of *oneing* itself.

The embrace of the supposed antithesis of “our ii kinds” is immediately expounded again, when these are shown to be no insurmountable contrasts at all and “onyd” in Christ, the ultimate paradox of God and man. His mode of being allows for worldly union in antinomy, which is expressed in the seemingly contrasting assertion

that “our heyer partie is groundid and rotid” in him¹⁶²—a play on physical proximity that denotes spiritual presence, and similarly a subtle marker of difference between the divinity and his creation that is communicated through the quick succession of antithetical adjectives. This sentiment folds over into what follows, when perichoresis is subtly posited as the model by which the self can be known. Covertly explaining one by reference to the other, human division may not be overcome but instead appreciated and strengthened. This idea is reminiscent of the Platonic ideal of two halves joining, and it diffuses the tension of the fragmented self separated from God by invoking and appreciating the very qualities that make it human.

To move the reader to the beginning of apprehension, Julian substantiates her claims by affirming that she “saw full sekirly that all the workes that God hath done, or ever shall, wer ful knowen to him and aforseen from without begynning; and for love he made mankynd and for the same love himself wold be man.” In a cycle of eternal becoming and flourishing, the deity’s love expands eternity, gestured at by reference to the past and future, both of which are endless, “without begynning,” and suffused with the security that only divine love can engender. Simultaneously, the godhead’s presence manifests in one specific moment in time, compressing eternity to enter into a relationship with his creation. This is crucial because the deity’s connection to humanity is based on an intimate understanding of the human condition. “And for the same love” that brings about the creative divine and human energies, the Incarnation permanently and intimately links the depth of unimaginable cosmic dimensions with creation. Instead of allocating an overtly inferior status to matter, any contradictions and frictions that might arise of corporeality are subverted in the linguistic fissure of love, which allows the inconceivable to coexist. Thus, love is the deity’s access point to humanity,

¹⁶² See also the previous discussion of the “grit rote” on pages 55-6.

and, in a reversal of the argument, humanity's only modality to engage with the divine. Instead of failure or lack, salvific impulses and individual analogical alignment are two aspects that are essentially intertwined, without any boundary or transition between them—a profound identification and understanding of one through the medium of the other.

As this passage indicates, the capacities to be loved and to pass on the same impulse of love among “mankynd” permit the reader to “ful knowen” everything that is needful to know, exchanging human limitations for the divine perspective. Removed from the present moment yet omnipresent, love's unifying impulse is the fundamental “hey privyete hid in God” (Chapter 27), so intricately intertwined with the soul that it is not only graspable but also a form of *energeia*, the actualisation of human potential, which combines immutability and agency. The implication is that so long as one is loving, using love as the prism to make sense of the mutable world and immutable divine, one cannot fail.¹⁶³

This fundamental omnipresence of divine benevolence that I have outlined above stands in contrast to Bauerschmidt's fractured argument according to which:

The longing of God for the salvation of humanity is an event that occurs not within God (Julian is quite orthodox in maintaining that God, being eternal, does not have “events”) but within humanity—first in the humanity of Jesus in his suffering on the cross, and after his resurrection in his body the church. Longing is the action of God—“for our lord god doth all [...]” yet carried on within creaturely reality, “for he is the myd poynt of all thynges, and all he doth.” The divine activity of longing for humanity is decentered into creatures as humanity's longing for God. [...] Christ communicates his own spiritual thirst to those who belong to his body; Christ's lovers are, as it were, caught up in the desire of Christ, and thereby share in his compassion [...].¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ On reciprocal love, see Jantzen, *Julian*, 92-93

¹⁶⁴ Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 110.

Bauerschmidt's separation of the Trinity's love and ensuing actions fundamentally goes against Julian's vision of unity. When she speaks about Christ, she always gestures towards all triune persons and the unitive vision of the godhead.

The Concept of *nought*

The preceding analysis has shown that the connection between the deity and creation is not predicated upon a one-way vector but on celebrating and savouring the intricately presented points of contact when both parties coinhere in and are *knitted* to one another. With reference to other passages, some scholars have noticed maternal, womb-like imagery of birth in the ways in which Julian deploys *knitting*.¹⁶⁵ Little of this overt maternal imagery is present in the passages discussed aside from reference to Mary and the generative faculties of the self,¹⁶⁶ and a general sense that humanity is born and reborn through faith in God. The central crux of the organic/transient/everlasting *oneing* lies in establishing moments of illumination and periods of superior insight by interweaving the nearness of the divine with its farness and not simply by explicitly conjuring up the female womb. Julian's complex phenomenology and enfolded linguistic knots allow this interrelatedness where "all things are interconnected, and interconnectedness is the inner reality of things and persons in themselves."¹⁶⁷

Despite the fundamental affirmation of God's love that roots the text, the central concern remains the inevitable strangeness of the relationship with the divine Other.

¹⁶⁵ See footnote 118.

¹⁶⁶ One could, however, argue that the practice of knitting is femininely connoted.

¹⁶⁷ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1998), 14. On "word-knots" in Julian's text see Gillespie and Ross, "Apophatic Image," 75.

Crucially, though, Julian's text harnesses not only the deity's immeasurability but the radical unknowability of the self.¹⁶⁸ In Chapter 53, she writes:

whan God shuld make mannes body, he tooke the slyppe of erth [...] and therof he made mannys body; but to the makyng of manys soule he wold take ryte nought, but made it. And thus is the kynd made rytefully onyd to the maker, which is substantial kynd onmade, that is, God.

The idea that *nought* lies at the heart of the soul introduces mystery as the ground of human existence. In the all-too-worldly quest for any knowledge of the self, the unknowability of *nought* forces the reader to pause. Furthermore, the overlay between indwelling and ineffability is inscribed in the oscillation between the high and low: while the human body was created from the "slime of the erth," the *nought* of divine inspiration stimulates a questioning modality, subsumed in three essential ontological inquiries that radiate inwards and heavenwards: How can the self be known? What is the relationship between the creator and creation? Where does the impulse that instils the restless search for the creator originate? These queries are central to the configuration of the engagement with God, they are inextricably related, and they collide in Julian's *nought*. If this is the nexus through which the human-divine relationship is configured, then it is not only human self-emptying but the profound unknowing and unknowability of the self and the deity that is discussed here. Consequently, the effervescent negation of any linear examination in favour of an epistemological breakdown simultaneously incorporates and bypasses understanding.

¹⁶⁸ Michelle Karnes argues that "As God himself is engaged in an eternal act of self-knowing, so the mind that knows God is most like him." She goes on to reference Augustine's "per speculum in aenigmate," "we see now through a mirror darkly," a notion which very much accords with Julian's hermeneutics." *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 18.

Several interpretational potentialities co-exist in this *nought*. First, the self may only be approached through what Nicolas of Cusa would call “learned ignorance.”¹⁶⁹ Second, the relationality of the divine *nought* takes hold of the person’s essence and thereby binds the self to the divinity’s uncreatedness, bringing supposed dyads together. Consequently, Julian affirms that the world can, and in fact does, contain God. One enfolds the other, and the divine manifoldness meets human multiplicity in the same way that the soul’s *nought* encounters and reflects the deity’s simplicity. Cusa grapples with similar issues:

Therefore, because the universe is contracted in anything that exists, it is obvious that God, who is in the universe, is in anything, and anything that actually exists is immediately in God, like the universe. Thus, to say “anything is in anything” is not other than to say “through all things God is in all things” and “through all things all are in God.”¹⁷⁰

But importantly, there can be no hierarchical collapse in this relationship—a false syllogism that led to Marguerite Porète’s burning at the stake in 1310 in Paris. As a modern-day example, Martin Buber’s “I-Thou”-concept, with its bilateral symmetry and equality, does not excavate the unintelligible; this lack causes Levinas to critique Buber’s work. The latter, on the other hand, proposes a model that can more fruitfully be related to Julian’s spiritual scaffolding. Levinas argues that by recognising and prioritising the divine otherness and infinite superiority, God refrains from being known by integration of the Other in the self, which would degrade him to a mere object of analytical enquiry.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ See footnote 77.

¹⁷⁰ “Unde, cum universum in quolibet actu existenti sit contractum, patet Deum, qui est in universo, esse in quolibet, et quodlibet actu existens immediate in Deo, sicut universum. Non est ergo aliud dicere quodlibet esse in quolibet, quam Deum per omnia esse in omnibus et omnia per omnia esse in Deo.” *De docta ignorantia. Libri tres. Testo latino*, ed. Paolo Rotta (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1913), liber II, cap. 5.

¹⁷¹ *Outside the Subject* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 43. All translations from Latin, German, French, and Italian throughout the thesis are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

Despite the soul's intricate internal relations, its emptiness points not only to the undecipherable self but to the relational *nought* that cannot be configured and to the ontological *nought* of uncreated existence. It follows that there is an undercurrent of linking life itself, "the slime of the earth," with *nought*, wherein the salvific divine potentiality fully unfolds. Emptiness requires filling, and an existence as *nought* predicates itself on the promise of the presence of its opposite. This cannot, however, be confused with certain attainability, because it only suggests that cataphatic excess and apophatic regress both coincide in the divine Other, and, through their relation, in the self. The state of *nought*, therefore, is not one of being, but is instead outside of being and analytical consciousness because it activates the deep mind. In its fullest form, it does not only signify self-emptying (after a process of self-reflexion, and as preparation for indwelling) but also emptiness before the beginning of history (an ontological state), and a return to emptiness throughout life. As *nought* establishes itself as atemporal and without spatial or temporal deixis, eternity and *nought* are linked at once. At its most affirmative, this lack of referentiality can signify a state of flow, of communion, and of unmediated access between humanity and the divinity. Encountered through his own medium, the Infinite does not risk being reduced to a mere object but manifests itself in eluding definition. Immoderate demands (or, in fact, any at all) as to the acquisition of knowledge, perception, and experiential sureness fold into themselves in the face of the textual-theological impetus towards sapiential ignorance.

The unintelligible self has been a matter of continued interest throughout time and has consequently exercised the minds of the writers in the contemplative tradition since late antiquity, with some scholars positing that it was Saint Augustine in his *Confessiones* who first contended with interiority, the problem of the self that cannot be

comprehended, and the philosophies of mind and language.¹⁷² David N. Bell interprets Augustine's crucial message as: "We are, and we are what we are by participation in God."¹⁷³ When the Church Father writes "heal me—in whose eyes I have made myself an enigma,"¹⁷⁴ he distinguishes between his Manichaean youth and his later years. But rather than focusing on the past, he concentrates on the present and on the ways in which he has started to inhabit a question *sub gratia*. The interrogative modality that lies at the core of his statement is one that Julian understands too well, albeit in a less destabilising and probing expression. Like Augustine, she develops a direct link between her spiritual interior and the divinity.¹⁷⁵ In contrast to the Church Father, however, she amplifies the potential of the implied and intuitive, from which two things spring. First, the facts of her personal life are shrouded in linguistic regress, and alterations from the *Short* to the *Long Text* erase what little circumstantial details of her life she shared in the initial account.¹⁷⁶ Second, because the recourse to *nought* avoids interpreting God as an object, it simultaneously escapes linear thinking about the self, which means that the focus lies on what can be gained and not on what cannot be

¹⁷² See Gareth B. Matthews' introduction in *Augustine. On the Trinity, Books 8-15*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, ed. Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ix-xxix.

¹⁷³ *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of St. Thierry*. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 22. On Augustine's theology of participation, see 21–64.

¹⁷⁴ "[S]ana me, in cuius oculis mihi quaestio factus sum." In *Augustine. Confessions. Volume I. Introduction and Text*, ed. James J. O'Donnell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Book 10, Chapter 50. The continued prominence of this term in Augustine's works is discussed in Cornelius Petrus Mayer, "Aenigma," in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, ed. Cornelius Petrus Mayer (Basel: Schwabe, 1996), cols. 140-1.

¹⁷⁵ A recent translator describes Augustine's *De Trinitate* as "the quest for, or the exploration of, the mystery of the Trinity as a complete program for the Christian spiritual life, a program of conversion and renewal and discovery of self in God and God in self," in Edmund Hill's introduction to *The Trinity. The Works of St. Augustine 5*, ed. John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 19. See also Gilles Emery, "Trinitarian Theology as Spiritual Exercise in Augustine and Aquinas," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 2–17. Julian's emphasis, however, is less on conversion, because in her theological cosmos, humans are inherently good.

¹⁷⁶ See Windeatt, "Audience," as well as the introduction to his edition, *Julian of Norwich. Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xxiii.

known. One could posit succinctly that because the divine catalyst is omnipresent, the individual cannot know themselves.

As a circular concept, *nought* is radically un-epistemological (not “no-thing”) as it plays with contemplative stillness while simultaneously engaging the probing mind in a strategic signification of this deadlock modality of engagement. In this juxtaposition of spiritual restlessness and clarity, unknowing and understanding start to overlap. Even as the most pointless (and human) approach towards an apprehension of God, rumination on *nought* and ensuing cognitive restlessness are integrated into the divine-human relationship, but inverted and nullified. It follows that the contemplative self has limited authority over their psychological and psycho-dynamic interiority and, by implication, over the subsequent interpretive process. Levinas describes the procedure of probing the self in a similar way: “For the ethical relationship which subtends discourse is not a species of consciousness whose ray emanates from the I; it puts the I in question. This putting in question emanates from the other.”¹⁷⁷ If the soul is made of and thus imbued with divine *nought*, it mirrors the ultimate antinomy of the unintelligible deity expressing itself in the soul.

However, despite the unanswerable question of how God and the self co-exist in a soul made of *nought*, Julian does not invoke any self-abnegation or *contemptus mundi*. She is far too confident in the deity’s love for his creation that self-emptying and self-accusation could ever become correlative processes. Rather, the soul’s *nought* tells of the abandonment of the self and the death of the ego, again as a mirror image of the immeasurable love that caused the Incarnation and the Passion. Therefore, her focus is not on losing herself/the self but on gaining (more of) the divine Other, however much

¹⁷⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 195.

intuitive understanding of the *mysterium absolutum* is given to her. In this reading, her text diversifies from a theology of *not yet* to one of *already*, and replaces *nothingness* and unthinkability with possibility and relational presence in, before, and outside of time. Any attempt to embark on the path of certain knowledge is futile because God is already intimately expressed in the soul.

As discussed before, the attempt to resolve *nought*, therefore, results in absolute passivity, stillness, and self-oblivion but may conversely initially activate intellectual speculation that ultimately has to peter out. The creative impulse of the divine, however, leaves a mark in the person's soul, which leads to the full fruition of an abundance-consciousness that arises from and connects the moments of high illumination that do not allow any conscious reflection. Linking God and his creation in an unending and circular process through the concept of *nought* and conceding the impossibility fully to comprehend it, Julian perfectly succeeds in valuing the self: pure absence and pure presence of the divine and human coincide in her *nought*, and her divinity can only be known as imperfectly as the innermost self. Through the combination of abundance and *nothingness* in *nought*, her theology of participation effloresces.

Julian emphasises this fundamentally unintelligible connection in Chapter 46, where she concedes that her understanding is that of a "simple child:"

for althyng that the simple soule understode God will that it be shewid and knowen; for the thyngs that he will have privy, mytyly and wisely hymselfe he hydeth hem for love; for I saw in the same shewing that mech privy is hid which may never be knowen into the tyme that God of his goodnes hath made us worthy to sen it. And therwith I am wele paid, abyding our lords will in this hey mervel. And now I yeele me to my moder holy church as a simple child owyth.

Casting herself and her audience in the role of the "simple soule," this reverential humility when faced with the *mysterium* recognises that her God withholds what is "privy" out of love. The unknown and the unknowable, however, are not two analogous

concepts in these lines, and Julian sketches out a procedural approach to gaining an insight into those aspects of divine love that may be disclosed in the future. In a recourse to worldly forms of attachment, she is “wele paid” by her lord, not in money nor goods but in immaterial “hey mervel” that reflects her role as a “simple child.”

When Julian yields herself to the Church, she further underscores two notions: first, she alludes to the limited understanding that she attests to herself as a “simple child” who seeks protection within an authorised exegetical framework. Secondly, she emphasises the call to her *even cristen* to see themselves as humble children who are able to move towards an apprehension of God within the parameters of his enigma.

PART II: Dread

Reverent Dread and Participatory Sapience

The previous chapter has analysed the intuited sense of wonder that the relational acts of loving the deity, apprehending divine love, and understanding/unknowing the innermost self as an *imago Dei* engender. Indeed, love and awe are analogous and correlative processes—apophatic matrices that transfigure the discursive mind from the monovalent towards the threshold of contemplation. Like Julian’s complex textualisation of the godhead’s love and its internalisation, her concept of awe-inspired *reverent dread* as a response to divine omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnibenevolence is a foundational principle of her poetics and spiritual praxis. This type of dread centres on aporia, requires kenotic self-effacement, and leads to an *excessus mentis* that, like her languages of love, functions as a springboard for slippage into contemplative absorption. Alongside *reverent dread*, on which she elaborates towards the end of her work, her other concepts of dread, and even her encounters with the devil, generate interpretational trajectories towards divine grace.

Julian’s unwavering trust in the godhead enables her to reconfigure periods of tribulation from potentially dreadful events to potent opportunities that solidify her text’s anagogical thrust. Through a serial and highly associative system of thematic and verbal parallels that refocus the interpretational work on the deity, these encounters enable her readership to grow into a full communion with God. This chapter, thus, explores the reciprocal and organic relationships among Julian’s various forms of dread, sin, spiritual security, and theological joy, which are respectively suspended and culminate in the paradox of the Resurrection.

The Hazelnut and the Absence of Divine Wrath

Julian cursorily classifies her four types of dread in the final fifth of the *Long Text* (Chapters 73, 74, and 75).¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, *reverent dread* plays a pivotal role throughout her work in conceptualising the awe-inspiring divine properties that transcend all her human modes of meaning-making.¹⁷⁹ This type of dread is not collocated as a fear of punishment but as the intuitive apprehension of the godhead's beyond. Not once does it manifest itself in the guise of terror, nor is her deity ever associated with the wrathful God of the Old Testament.¹⁸⁰ Consistent with Julian's spiritual optimism, her divinity's ontology is love,¹⁸¹ a principle on which she extrapolates in Chapter 49:

Our lif is growndid in love, withoute the which we perish; but yet God is never wroth, but in our wreth and synne he mercifully kepith us and tretith us to peace, rewarding our tribulations. [...] For this was an hey mervel to the soule, which was continuly shewid in al, and with gret diligens beholden: that our lord God,

¹⁷⁸ See page 129ff.

¹⁷⁹ On the theme of fear of the Lord, see Ronald F. Youngblood and Glen G. Scorgie, "Fear of the Lord," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, eds. Glen G. Scorgie, Gordon T. Smith, and James D. Smith III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 444-446; Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005); Robert Henry Pfeiffer, "The Fear of God," *Israel Exploration Journal* 5, no. 1 (1955): 41-48; Bruce K. Waltke, "The Fear of the Lord," in *Alive in God: Studies in Spirituality Presented to James Houston*, eds. James Innell Packer and Loren Wilkinson (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 17-33; Lindsay Wilson "The Book of Job and the Fear of God," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46, no. 1 (1995): 59-79. J. Stephen Yuille, *Puritan Spirituality: The Fear of God in the Affective Theology of George Swinnock*. Studies in Christian History and Thought (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007). See also Glen G. Scorgie, "Wonder," in *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, eds. Glen G. Scorgie, Gordon T. Smith, and James D. Smith III (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 845-6; Celia Deane-Drummond, *Wonder and Wisdom: Conversations in Science, Spirituality and Theology* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2006); Esther de Waal, *Lost in Wonder: Rediscovering the Spiritual Art of Attentiveness* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2003); Robert C. Fuller, *Wonder: From Emotion to Spirituality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Daniel W. Hardy and David F. Ford, *Praising and Knowing God* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Know Press, 1985); Morris Inch, *The Wonder of It All. Mystery and Meaning in Scripture* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2009); Sam Keen, *Apology for Wonder* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

¹⁸⁰ Attributing any form of wrath to the deity would risk "demonising" ("dämonisieren") him, see Paul Tillich, "Das Dämonische. Ein Beitrag zur Sinndeutung der Geschichte," in *Paul Tillich. Gesammelte Werke. Band 6. Der Widerstreit von Raum und Zeit*, ed. Renate Albrecht (Stuttgart: De Gruyter, 1963), 58-9; Alois M. Haas, *Mystik als Aussage. Erfahrungs-, Denk- und Redeformen christlicher Mystik* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2007), 327.

¹⁸¹ On the interpenetration of love and dread in her work, see also Sheldrake, *In God's Sight*, 130-1; Christopher Abbott, *Julian of Norwich. Autobiography and Theology* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 173-8; Pelphey, *Love Thee*, 373-8; Riehle, *Mystik*, 327-333.

anempts hymself, may not forgevyn, for he may not be wroth—it were impossible.¹⁸²

The beginning, “Our lif is growndid in love,” explains the mutually self-emptying modalities through which Julian potentiates her text because the phrase delves into the inexhaustible properties of divine love and its effects in the wounded world, also illuminating humanity’s reciprocal devotion. While her boundless security in the deity as a never-ceasing grounding force excludes any cognitive routes that do not centre on his goodness, she acknowledges the discrepancy between him and his creation, which is capable of “wreth” as well as “synne.”¹⁸³ Against the background of creatural frailty and imperfection, the “mervel” about his numinosity comes to the fore.¹⁸⁴

Simultaneously juxtaposing the temporality of human wrath with the immutability of the godhead’s love, being “growndid” in the latter denotes the possibility of access to the divine mode of being by partaking in it. In an ingenious demonstration of grace, God “may not forgevyn,” because he already holds his creation in the highest regard. Therefore, the *mysterium* resides in the divine *and yet*, a promise of compensation not based on deed but intent, no matter how grievous the sin. At the same time, the absence of forgiveness hints towards the collapse of any worldly dynamics of retribution and reward: grace is a *donum Dei* that is freely given.

¹⁸² For a similar sentiment, see Chapter 48: “For I sow no wreth but in mannys partie, and that forgevyth he in us; for wreth is not ell but a frowardness and a contrarioste to peace and to love, and eyther it commyth of faylyng of myte or of faylyng of wisdom, or of faylyng of goodnes, which faylyng is not in God, but it is on our partie.”

¹⁸³ Windeatt maintains that because “forgiving involves a change of heart, it would be incompatible with God’s immutability” (*Revelations*, 245). The discrepancy between his permanence and human inconstancy is also communicated through the subtle vowel difference “wroth”/“wreth,” which does not exist in the Paris manuscript.

¹⁸⁴ Turner remarks on the human tendency to attribute meaning to a “selfcreated hell [...], an infantile world of unreality,” in which sin distorts self-perception (*Julian*, 105). The concept of the numinous (“das Numinose”) referring to the awe-inspiring, non-rational response to the ineffable deity as the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* was coined by Rudolf Otto in *Das Heilige—Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen* (Breslau: Trewendt und Granier, 1917).

Similarly, the *Orcherd of Syon*, an early fifteenth-century Middle English translation and reworking of Catherine of Siena's *Dialogo*, interprets the time *sub gratia* as *jouissance*: "Imperfeccioun," or sin, is conquered by a devotion to the godhead in holy dread and love, reciprocated in his "parfiȝt lawe of loue:"

The lawe of dreede is þe oold lawe, þe which I ȝaf to Moyses, þat was igroundid oonly in dreede, bycause as soone as þei hadden synned in hise dayes, anoon þei suffriden peyne þerfore. But þe lawe of loue is þe newe lawe, ȝouen of my verrey soopfast sone, Ihesu, þe which is groundid in charitable loue. [...] He couplide and knytte þe lawe of drede wiþ þe lawe of loue. [...] And þe lawe of imperfeccioun is maad parfiȝt and holy by þe parfiȝt lawe of loue."¹⁸⁵

The secure attachment that both Julian and Catherine demonstrate is neither offered nor achieved *despite* human frailty but *because* of it, and the ensuing hermeneutical impasse forms the essence of the hazelnut allegory in Chapter 5. As Gillespie and Ross have shown, the "littil thing" is written into ephemeral existence through contrived analogies. Though it is linguistically specified as "the quantitye of an hesil nutt" and "as round as a balle," its physical form remains shrouded in mystery.¹⁸⁶ By conjuring up this ostensibly simple and static image that is in fact dynamic, pulling the reader into the perception of eternity, the icon-like hazelnut as a meditation on the entirety of creation activates the deep mind and lets the reader partake in the divine perspective, in which all that exists is so small that it should "fallen to nowte." This allusion to the *creatio ex*

¹⁸⁵ The *Orcherd of Syon*, eds. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS o.s. 258 (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 131, ll. 16-20; 23, 29-30. This is an almost entirely faithful translation of the medieval Italian: "La legge del timore era la legge vecchia, che fu data da me a Moyses, la quale era fondata solamente in timore, perchè commessa la colpa pativano la pena. La legge dell'amore è la legge nuova, data dal Verbo de l'unigenito mio Figliuolo, la quale è fondata in amore. [...] e uní la legge del timore con quella dell'amore. [...]. Sí che la legge imperfetta fu fatta perfetta con la legge de l'amore." Catherine of Siena, *Il Dialogo della divina Provvidenza ovvero Libro della divina dottrina*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini (Rome: Edizioni Catheriniane, 1968), 126-7. On the dissemination of Catherine's works in the British Isles, see Jennifer Brown, *Fruit of the Orchard: Reading Catherine of Siena in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019). Brown lists eighteen extant manuscripts that circulated in later-medieval England (206-7) and argues that "by the mid-fifteenth century, some of that literary tradition [that Catherinian works enjoyed in Italy] was established in England" (4).

¹⁸⁶ Gillespie and Ross, "Apophatic Image," 67. Colledge and Walsh, on the other hand, take Julian's remarks literally and refer to contemporary conceptualisations of the cosmos as globular (*Showings*, 299). See also pages 39-40.

nihilo illustrates that only *nothingness* lies outside the realm of God's grace.¹⁸⁷

Similarly, the attributes “maker,” “keeper,” and “lover,” attempt to survey the godhead's relationship with humans, though Julian lets her partitioning taxonomy result in linguistic regress: “But what is to me sothly the maker, the keper, and the lover I canot tell.” Her mind is unable to penetrate the inner workings of the perichoretic union, which is a whole that cannot be reduced into its constituent parts. By recourse to manmade language that fails to encompass the divinity, she thus communicates a sense of distance within the divinity's loving embrace—a remoteness that is based on her place in time and space vis-à-vis the deity's *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Correspondingly, the Augustinian notion that there can be no rest nor bliss until “there is right nowte that is made betwix my God and me” builds on the ambiguity between “nowte” as “nothing” and a play on its near homophone “nou” that an elision with the following word creates.¹⁸⁸ This dyadic interpretational potential creates and solves a conundrum because the former reading gestures towards the abundance of understanding in the afterlife, when nothing will separate the anchoress from her God. The latter, however, explores the here and now as a breeding ground for two notions, namely the present as a fleeting particle in the deity's point of view, and timebound existence as an opportunity to cultivate self-emptying surrender.¹⁸⁹ When Julian consequently counsels her audience to be aware of their “litlehede” and to “nowtyn all thing that is made for to love,” the subordinate clause creates yet another form of apophatic haze because, depending on the hermeneutical prism applied to it, the

¹⁸⁷ On the problems of interpreting the hazelnut's “nowte,” see Watson and Jenkins's comments in the introduction to *Writings*, 25.

¹⁸⁸ MED, nou, adv., sense 1(a): “at the present time.” See also footnote 209.

¹⁸⁹ The *Cloud*-author invokes a similar correlation between the limitations of the human life and divine majesty through *nought* in his notion of the *athom*: “[þe werke is] neiþer lenger ne schorter þen is an athomus; þe whiche [...] is þe leest partie of tyme; & it is so litil þat, for the littilnes of it, it is undepartable & neiþhonde incomprehensible.” (10, ll. 6-9).

grammatical construction “for to love” could either mean “to love” or “to be loved:” the godhead and humanity’s reciprocal forms of love coincide in kenotic kinesis.

Reverent drede as the excessus mentis of Awe

Julian’s *reverent dread* flows out towards the Incomprehensible just as it encompasses her self-perception in relation to him. Her conception of the self as little, however, never plunges into self-abnegation. Quite on the contrary, she conflates various strands of her theology of love into the kenotic process. Instead of calling herself unworthy,¹⁹⁰ she communicates her awe as profound wonder through the verbal clustering of being “mervelous litil” compared to the godhead’s “mervelous grete”—a connection that brings about “mervelous sekirness.”¹⁹¹ In its double meaning as both “wonderful” and “terrifying,”¹⁹² the adjective “mervelous” excavates the contrast between the “litil” and the “grete,” which ultimately coexist within the same linguistic and affective frame, namely the *sekirness* that goes hand in hand with divine indwelling. As a result, Julian understands that the condition of *sekirness* effloresces in “reverens and mekenes,” because yielding all aspects of the self to the deity lets her appear naked and vulnerable before her God, a self-divestment that paradoxically keeps her safe from any harm.

This disposition of the self as an *imitator Christi* deliberately rips apart worldly versions of authority and power, seeking to position the bare self suffused with love, and thus armoured with it, as the vehicle towards the greatest heavenly riches. Plentiful

¹⁹⁰ Margery Kempe starts her *Book* with a reference to “hys nobeley and hys goodnesse” that “werkyth in any creatur” despite her conceptualisation of *humanitas* as “synful wrecchys” and “unworthy.” *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 41, ll.1-2; 5-6.

¹⁹¹ References are to Chapter 65 until specified otherwise. On *sekirness* as an important concept in the devotional landscape of late-medieval England, see footnote 340.

¹⁹² MED, *merveillous*, adj., senses 1a (a) and 4a.

marvelling about the exalted enfolding the little in turn begets the relational effect of “holy, curtes drede of our lord, to which mekeness is knitt.” Wonder, holy dread, and *sekirness* are thus anagogical trajectories that speak to the essential otherness of the heavenly realm. To cultivate this intersection,¹⁹³ the reverent *beholding* of the deity with love and awe is a mode that has been conferred on all whom God loves: “for these vertues arn had endlesly to the lovid of God.” Once more, the divine conferral of understanding and the access points to the godhead through human means coalesce because the passive construction suggests that the deity’s lovers both “have”¹⁹⁴ and are “provided with”¹⁹⁵ the very momentum that can bring about the *unio mystica*. Since *reverent dread* is essentially connected to the “sekir hope” that the unfathomable reality of salvation brings about, Julian is “mekil bounden to [God] in love.” In this passive wording, he is the efficient and final cause of the relationship, and the act of binding contradictorily frees her. To “se [herself] as” part of this love knot and receive grace is all that is required of her, and therefore, the emphasis lies on her intention—not on a transactional *quid pro quo*. Consequently, the divine *loin et près* of enfolding distinction instils in her a response equally steeped in paradox, namely “drede that is swete and delectable.”¹⁹⁶

The peripeteia that the redemptive act causes and the infinite wisdom in which it is grounded solidify in the insight that the love and dread of God are parallel means through which Julian’s understanding of him expresses itself: “And thus oweth our soule to thinken that God hath don for him al that he hath don; and this shewith he to maken us to loven him and nowte drede but him.” Since the combined force of *amor*

¹⁹³ Watson and Jenkins also remark on the confluence of “‘sekernesse,’ [...], ‘reverence,’ ‘drede,’ and ‘meekenes,’” linking the essential marvel that accompanies them to the Virgin’s *beholding* (*Writings*, 326).

¹⁹⁴ MED, haven, v., sense 1b (a).

¹⁹⁵ MED, haven, v., sense 2a (a).

¹⁹⁶ This oxymoron does not appear in the *Short Text*, see also Windeatt, *Revelations*, 268.

and *timor* is the adequate response to the godhead's conquering of the devil, neither suffering nor calamities have to be feared. In contrast, the deity in the *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, a work whose catechetical impetus results in a tendency to classify and enumerate devotional schemata in a sequence towards spiritual ascent, counsels: "Dredeþ hem not þat mowe sle þe bodi, but raþer dredeþ him þat mai sende bodi and soule into euerlasting fuir."¹⁹⁷ While the objective is similar in that it focuses all forms of dread on God, the conceptualisation of the divinity as judicial fundamentally differs from Julian's account. Unlike her, the wording in the *Contemplations* devotes mental space to the devil and the transcendent Other in equal measure, even though it counsels to channel all affective energies away from the fiend.

Similarly, the second type of dread the *Contemplations* cites is more concerned with the fear of hell than with the love of God. It occurs "whan a man wiþdraweþ hym or absteineþ him fro sinne more for þe drede of þe peine of helle, þan for loue þat he scholde haue to God."¹⁹⁸ Parts of the third type, "chast or [...] frendeliche" dread, provoke anxieties and suggest a fragile human-divine bond too:¹⁹⁹ "whan he dredeþ þat

¹⁹⁷ The *Contemplations of the Dread and Love of God*, ed. Margaret Connolly, EETS o.s. 303 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Chapter C., p. 8, ll. 11-13. Cited henceforth by chapter, page, and line number. This segment quotes Luke 12.4-5 and Matthew 10.28, biblical passages that Langland incorporates into *Piers Plowman* in Latin: "Nolite timere eos qui possunt occidere corpus," William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C, and Z Versions, Volume I. Text*, ed. A.V.C. Schmidt, (London: Longman, 1995), C-text, Passus X, 367, l. 99 (not extant in other versions).

¹⁹⁸ *Contemplations*, C., 8, 14-15.

¹⁹⁹ *Contemplations*, C., 8, 20. This type of taxonomy goes back to Augustine and was later employed by Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury. See also Paul Megna's unpublished doctoral dissertation "Emotional Ethics in Middle English Literature" (PhD. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2015). On Aquinas's subdivision of fear into *timor filialis*, *initialis*, *servilis*, and *mundanus*, see Claire Banchich's unpublished doctoral dissertation "Holy Fear and Eloquence in the Age of Chaucer" (PhD. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2002), 9. Eric J. Johnson's work excavates the medieval varieties of *timor*: "'In dryȝ dred and daunger': The Tradition and Rhetoric of Fear in *Cleanness* and *Patience*" (PhD. diss., University of York, 2000). Hugh of St Victor's categories of dread are discussed on pages 23-65. For Anselm's "Meditatio ad concitandum timorem," see Anselm of Canterbury. *The Prayers and Meditations of Anselm with the Proslogion*, trans. Benedicta Ward (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 221-24, and for translations of Anselm's text in Middle English, see Evelien Hauwaerts, "The Middle English Versions of St. Anselm of Canterbury's *Prayers and Meditations*," in *Saint Anselm of Canterbury and his Legacy*, ed. Giles E.M. Gasper and Ian Logan (Toronto: Institute of Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies, 2012), 258-69; for Geoffrey Chaucer's version in the "Parson's Tale," see *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1987), 291-3, ll. 161-230. References to taxonomies of fear in Wycliffite sermons are given in Paul Megna, "Dread, Love, and the Bodies of *Piers Plowman* A.10, B.9 and C.10," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 29 (January 2015): 65.

God wol go fro him as percas wiþdraweþ his gras fro him.”²⁰⁰ Trepidation and contrition in the *Contemplations* emphasise the *iudicium Dei*, whereas Julian’s *reverent dread* signifies his omnibenevolence. Both texts, however, conceive the benefits of *reverent dread* in the same way: “þe drede of God [...] schal be to his worschipe, and profit to þe redere,”²⁰¹ because it “may bringe þe into þe loue of God; 3if þou loue God, þan þou hast wisdom, so þus, þe drede of God his þe biginning of wisdom.”²⁰² Like the *Contemplations*, the *Cloud*-group’s *A Tretyse of þe Stodye of Wysdome þat Men Clepen Beniamyn* aligns wisdom with the apprehension of divine judgement when it quotes from the Psalms:

‘þe bygynnyng of wysdom, dreded of oure Lorde God.’ Þis is þe first-felt vertewe in a mans affeccoun, wiþoutyn whiche none oþer may be had. [...] He schal on o partye þink þe greetnes of his trespas, and on anoþer partye þe power of þe domesman.²⁰³

While in the *Contemplations*, the dread of God acts as a devotional dynamo that “schal bringe þe into euerlasting sikernes, wher þou schalt neuer drede,”²⁰⁴ Julian’s spirituality recognises *sekirness* as a condition preceding her practice of *reverent dread*. The conferral of security is not contingent on her awe, and the economy of grace is thus not based on achievement but flourishes in the full continuum of her being. In this type of hermeneutic crystallisation, tribulation and “al the myte of our enemy is token into our frens hand.”²⁰⁵ Without denying the devil’s presence in the world, the wordplay on

Megna lists three sermons: Sermon 108 in *English Wycliffite Sermons II*, ed. Pamela Gradon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 286-97; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 95, fols 23v-25r, see Helen L. Spencer, “The Fortunes of a Lollard Sermon-Cycle in the Later Fifteenth Century,” *Mediaeval Studies* 48 (1986): 256-96; and Cambridge, Sidney Sussex College, MS 74 (SS74), see Fiona Somerset, *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings after Wycliff* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), 43-44.

²⁰⁰ *Contemplations*, C., 8, 22-23.

²⁰¹ *Contemplations*, B., 8, 102-3.

²⁰² *Contemplations*, C., 9, 42-43. This is a quote from The Book of Proverbs 9:10.

²⁰³ *The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Treatises*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson (Exeter: The Catholic Records Press, 1982), 129, ll. 17-19; 21-23.

²⁰⁴ *Contemplations*, C., 9, 49-50.

²⁰⁵ References are to Chapter 65 until specified otherwise.

“token” as a verb and a noun²⁰⁶ nullifies his powers by alluding to their limitations, instead reinterpreting the misery he may inflict through an eschatological lens.²⁰⁷ Because he is rendered ineffective and humanity’s gravitational pull towards him prevented, *fear-dread* ceases to exist, whereas *awe-dread* remains reserved for her creator only.

Other varieties of *timor*, stemming from the “passions and bodely sekene and imaginations,” connected to “peyne” and “disease” might momentarily influence the experiential reality of the sufferers so that “we can thynke ryte nowte but that we arn in.” However, even these fleeting discomforts can be overcome by setting them “at nowte.”²⁰⁸ Julian contextualises two prismatic possibilities here by once more playing with the now/*nought* dyad.²⁰⁹ Interpreting these examples as *nought* allows for two conclusions. When plagued with afflictions, the victim either cannot transcend them, or manages to transcend them precisely by accessing the godhead’s “nowte:” *nothing* can be conceivable except for his loving presence. An interpretation of both instances of “nowte” as “now” first proceeds from the finite temporality, to which the individual is bound, and which prevents them from accessing the beyond. In the second sentence, the adoption of the Boethian vantage point of eternity, according to which any form of distress is ephemeral, frees the sufferer from their shackles. This reframing of affliction will be rewarded with the equanimity that divine “peas” and “rest” exemplify and yield. Most significantly, the implementation of this template unites the strands of understanding, love, and *reverent dread*. For this reason, the biblical axiom of the dread of God as the beginning of wisdom comes to fruition in the insight that the experience

²⁰⁶ MED, token, n., sense 4a: “evidence, proof.”

²⁰⁷ The Paris manuscript reads “our enemy is loketh in our frindes handes” (also extant, with slight variation, in the *Short Text*), communicating a similar sentiment.

²⁰⁸ This foreshadows the diabolical temptations that befall her in later chapters, see also Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, 328.

²⁰⁹ Two spellings of the adverb “nou” listed in the MED, namely “know” and “ynow” invoke this complexity. The Paris manuscript reads “nought,” foregoing this wordplay. See also footnote 188.

of fullness in the postlapsarian life rests on the perception of the eternal divine presence, particularly throughout calamities.

Julian's periods of suffering train her in self-effacing awe: "Tweyn poynts longen to our soule be dett: on is that we reverently mervelyn, that other is that we mekely suffryn, ever enioyand in God."²¹⁰ The overarching bracket uniting the *even cristens*' "reverently mervelyn" and "mekely suffryn"²¹¹ is the present participle "enioyand in God," which alludes to an ever-increasing closeness²¹² through humble devotion and immense joy, focusing the alliterative contemplative strands of "mervelyn" and "mekely."

Co-suffering fosters an increased intimacy and simultaneously nurtures wonder because the divine self-sacrifice is a creative act not originating from necessity but caused by charity. *Reverent dread* is therefore not directed towards the divinity as a wrathful *iudex* but towards his majesty, which expresses itself in "mercy and forgiveness." The manifest incongruity between this revelation and the pastoral instruction of the Church, which centred on the diminishing of divine wrath through the axis of contrition and mercy, is not resolved but uncovered in a strategic paradox that only increases the prevalent sense of wonder. Julian finds herself unable to convey a subordination of vision to doctrine or vice versa, a characteristically open-ended solution that invokes the limits of her humanness by conceding that she "could no se this poynte in al the shewyng."²¹³ Her explanation sets out partly to attenuate—though

²¹⁰ References to the *Long Text* are to Chapter 47 for the rest of this subchapter.

²¹¹ The verb "suffryn" fuses the "suffering" with and for God with the notion of "permit[ting]" and "allow[ing]" the kenotic process to unfold, thus yielding to the *voluntas Dei*. MED, sufferen, v., senses 1(a), 7(a), 8 (a and b).

²¹² MED, joinen, v. (1).

²¹³ Sheldrake argues that Julian's "persistent, deep, and personal struggle" to grasp the "emphasis on God's love [...] and mercy" focuses on the discrepancy between the *magisterium* of the Church and her visionary insight (*In God's Sight*, 120), but he disregards two vital points. First, any cognitive "struggle" invariably comes to a dead end, at which point her kenotic marvel sets in. Second, she devotes merely a few lines to the acknowledgment of a distinction between her illumination and received teaching—on the one hand because she has been trained to sustain paradoxes, and on the other because she incorporates her

not resolve—any text-internal contradiction, while her sightless seeing reveals the fundamental otherness of divine predestination.

The Sin-Paradox

The correlation of blindness and illumination forms an enigma that reverberates with the peculiarly absent presence of sin in Julian's work. After seeing God "in a poynte" in Chapter 11, she beholds "with avisement, seing and knowing in sight with a soft drede," posing the aetiological question "What is synne?"²¹⁴ This questioning modality is crucial to her treatment of transgression, first because it underscores her perplexity as to its underlying causes in a divinely created universe, and second because it displays the perpetual tensions between logical discursiveness, the language of disputation, and agendaless *beholding*. Momentarily, Julian here succumbs to speculation, although in place of receiving a concrete answer, she is served another paradox. And yet, she incorporates her unsuccessful path of trying to force comprehension into her theology of humanity, whose "blindhede and [...] onforesight" might lead to sin because these are inevitable by-products of a life in contingency. Instead of entirely despising these ailments, they are instead incorporated in the salvation plan because "althing that is done, it is wel done, for our lord God doth alle." Her visionary world and the narrative ethos it produces once more do not tolerate vectors of cognition that concede space to anything outside the realm of divine goodness. Thus, she does not manage to clarify the

defensio as a practical necessity, and a defence against accusations of heresy. In any case, she is more concerned with the divine-human axis than with the role of organised religion, although she is keenly aware of the need to consolidate her faithfulness to the Church.

²¹⁴ See my discussion of the apophatic concept of *poynte* on pages 172-178.

ontology of sin—not because of her own failure, or that of humanity in general, but rather because of the visionary emphasis on grace.²¹⁵

for in this time the werkyng of cretures was not shewid, but of our lord God in the creature; for he is in the mydde poynt of allthyng and all he doith. And I was sekir he doith no synne. And here I saw sothly that synne is no dede, for in al this was not synne shewid. And I wold no lenger mervel in this, but beheld our lord, what he wold shewen. (Chapter 11)

In these lines, the anchoress is inspired to put a halt to her entirely self-involved “puzzlement”²¹⁶ and refocuses her “mervel,” the customary mode of encountering the divinity, towards those revelatory truths that “he wold shewen.” The implicit deduction is that because the instruction she desires on sin does not manifest itself, and the demiurge does not sin himself, sin itself does not exist in his view and presence. By replacing any speculation on its nature and purpose with its perplexing *nothingness*, the extent and intensity of grace is revealed.²¹⁷ A focus on sin would lead to an exercise in self-centred vilification when it is effacement, its opposite, that her text seeks to effect. Within this spiritual architecture, Julian appreciates the distinction between human and divine modes of discernment à la Boethius:

for a man beholdith some dedes wele done and some dedes evil, but our lord beholdyth hem not so; for as al that hath being in kinde is of Godds makynge, so is althing that is done in propertie of Gods doing. (Chapter 11)

Divine goodness is axiomatic, and consequently humans, endowed with the divine *scintilla*, partake in it, even if they must fail to comprehend the underlying mechanics of redemption. At the same time, the godhead counsels that sin itself is imposed on each soul “agens thy will.” (Chapter 82). For this reason, when Julian contemplates the

²¹⁵ See also Marilyn McCord Adams “Julian of Norwich: Problems of Evil and the Seriousness of Sin,” *Philosophia* 39 (2011): 433-447.

²¹⁶ MED, *merveillen*, v., senses 1ab, 2a.

²¹⁷ Sheldrake also speaks of sin’s lack of “ontological reality” in Julian’s account (*In God’s Sight*, 124).

rationale behind his allowing the “begynnyng of synne” in Chapter 27, mourning that in its absence “al shuld a be wele,” the divine answer forgoes crude schematisation: “synne” keeps humanity “in solace and in drede” (Chapter 82)— its suspension is the cause for hope and *awe-dread*, allowing for an anagogical apprehension of the unknown. This contextualisation decidedly does not offer a blanket “all is well”-sentiment in the current circumstances but an “al shuld a be wele” in the eternal present. Hence, “Synne is behovabil, but al shal be wel, and al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele” (Chapter 27).²¹⁸ According to this hermeneutical knot, the beginning of sin is tantamount to its end because it is unexpectedly recast as salvation, its antithesis.²¹⁹ Consequently, the theme of sin turns into an apophatic matrix, its inversion underlining its redemptive potentiality founded in divine mercy:

The kindness of God assingneth no blame to his chosen, for in these is a godly will that never consent to synne; for it behovyth the ruthfulhede so to be knitt to these that ther be a substance kept that may never be departid from hym. (Chapter 53)

“Kindness” and “ruthfulhede” are terms that echo the apophatic *oneing* analysed in my chapter on love, the first term alluding to the Incarnation,²²⁰ an “affection due to kinship” and “constancy in love,”²²¹ and the second flourishing in reciprocal *knitting* as well. The adjective “reuthful” in its combination with the suffix “-hede” creates a noun that generates theology through grammatical vagueness because it refers to humanity’s

²¹⁸ Most scholars remark on the semantic breadth that the adverb “behovabil” invokes, which includes the meanings “useful, profitable, beneficial, [and] good.” This architecture of reference, with its emphasis on sin’s teleological potential, which dismisses its pitfalls, however, is swiftly designated as a secondary discourse by the disjunctive “but” and a juxtaposition with the promise of salvation. The syntactic embeddedness of “behovabil” points towards its main interpretation as “requisite, necessary,” although all meanings covibrate, and any semantic distinction becomes undone in the lens of the cross (MED, *bihoveli*, adj., senses 1a and c).

²¹⁹ Baker correctly maintains Julian’s renouncing of the Augustinian “causes and consequences”-model of sin in favour of “a concentration on purpose and ends.” Indeed, there lies a didactic impetus behind the falling into sin, and “the regarding [of] sin from an eschatological perspective [...] consoles rather than condemns [...]” The interpretative interrelation of “behovabil” sin and the assertion that “al shal be wel” is a particular strength of Baker’s account (*Showings*, 68-71).

²²⁰ See also my discussion of Julian’s concept of *kynde* in Part I.

²²¹ MED, *kindness*(se), n., senses 2a, 3b.

“pitiable, lamentable”²²² situation and to the “compassionate, tender-hearted”²²³ godhead. Consequently, creatural frailty is the nexus from which Julian conceives of and intimates her deity’s love.

Nonetheless, by underscoring the immeasurable contrast between the fickle human will and the steadfast godhead, she does not deny a sense of duality, or, rather, multiplicity:

I understode this man is chongeable in this lif, and be frelte and overcummyng fallith into synne; he is onmytye and onwise of hymself, and also his wil is overleyd; and in this tyme he is in tempest and in sorow and wo, and the cause is blindhede, for he seith not God; for if he sey God continuly he shuld have no mischevous felyng, ne no manner steryng the yernyng that servyth to synne. (Chapter 47)

This intricate line of argument splits sin into cause and effect, affirming that a state of imbalance might be intrinsic to the *conditio humana*, though it is set off by an array of entirely external factors. Julian’s central point is the inculpability of the individual, who sins merely because their imperfection is bombarded with excess, which she mirrors in the mental overload her language evokes. “Overcummyng” and the free will being “overleyd” gesture towards the perilous intersection of being and non-being, of freedom and bondage. While the same soundscape persists, she approaches the problem from another angle. When she calls humans “onmytye” and “onwise,” the clustering refers to their contrast to the divinity, progressing from the experiential “overcummyng” to primarily ontological categories. By instilling this sense of dissimilarity, the wretched and “chongeable” mind, however, is deconstructed by the agent of grace because, as Julian appends, frailty is not only a basic principle of “this lif” but also entirely confined to it: all limitations will be lifted “if he sey God continually.”

²²² MED, reuthful, adj., sense 1a.

²²³ MED, reuthful, adj., sense 2.

The Parable of the Lord and the Servant

Followed by a period of “techyng inwardly” that continues for twenty years, the Parable of the Lord and the Servant in Chapter 51 enables Julian to adumbrate the divinity’s timeless eternal perspective, and sin’s multidimensional scope as *felix culpa* and *vis unitiva*.²²⁴ Few are the Julian-scholars who have turned down the opportunity to interpret the Parable as a narrativisation of her eschatological principles; they often go to great lengths to extrapolate a rigid set of soteriological deductions from its pictorial features, mapping a systematic semiotic methodology onto a text that defies any such constraints. Yet, instead of providing quick answers as to the place of sin and suffering in Julian’s theology, the Parable instead opens her imaginative universe through recurring cycles of ever-increasingly symbolistic import. It is thus better understood as an “interpretative narrative,” whose hermeneutics of incompleteness are incorporated into its textual *modus operandi*.²²⁵ When the Parable successively unveils Julian’s preliminary exegetical methods, neatly mapping Adam onto humankind and Christ, and seemingly principally appealing to the visual instead of the visionary mode, it lays a trap for those readers who are still caught in sequential narrative content and worldly expositions, instead of perceiving the processes of cogitation as manmade and not apt to engage with the divine enigma.

An *exemplum* by genre, the literary form of the parable skilfully operates within the structure of the *Revelations*.²²⁶ A readership well versed in Julian’s formal and

²²⁴ On Bonaventure’s interpretation of love as “vis unitiva,” see Robert P. Prentice, *The Psychology of Love According to St. Bonaventure* (New York: The Franciscan Institute St Bonaventure, 1957), 67.

²²⁵ See also Paul Ricoeur, “Interpretative Narrative,” transl. David Pellauer, in *The Book and the Text. The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. Regina Schwartz (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 237. On the perfunctory nature of Chapter 51, and its function as “narrative theology,” see Turner, *Julian*, 109; 115.

²²⁶ On the genre of the *exemplum* and medieval exegesis, see Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 127-144. Rita Copeland argues that “[s]peaking in ‘parables’ [...] is simply another version of the digestibility of the letter as story,” *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages. Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99.

stylistic codes would effortlessly connect the Servant's fall into a ditch, their own falling into sin, and the notion of sin as *felix culpa* or fortunate fall. However, ending the interpretational momentum at this stage would be a fallacy because the Parable lays no claims to explanatory totality, instead illustrating the frustration and imperfection of a life lived through the mind. In those fertile avenues of interpretation where the need for narration, and the *sensus litteralis*, give way to the *sensus mysticus*, the divine, as well as the intended hermeneutical approach, come to the fore.

At the beginning of this segment, the text seeks to accomplish a clear dichotomy between the deity and human pitifulness, the latter mnemotechnically deftly embedded in the tautology “ful grete sore,” the rhyme “gronith and monith,” and the alliteration “waylith and writhith.”²²⁷ The Servant's fall firmly anchors him to the earth on a literal level, and Julian amplifies his sorrowful, creatural cries through the stylistic instrument of *mise-en-abîme*. Moreover, his attempt to rise again robs him of all dignity because when he “writhith,” he is iconographically likened to a worm, or even to the Edenic serpent of temptation. The feebleness that Julian attest to him as her everyman is pervasive, taking place time and again—“anon.” Amidst all this physical and spiritual anguish, no blame is put on the individual, nor even on sin itself, but on the effects of a loss of *beholding*, “for he cowde not turne his face to loke upon his loving lord,” a trajectory that leads to despair, shame, and the “faylyng of comforte.” The crux of these lines is the obstruction of all visual, and, more importantly, anagogical channels, a deficiency not borne out of faithlessness but a corollary of the postlapsarian experience.²²⁸ In a full circle, embodied spiritual blindness, which is the root cause of sin, exists in synchronicity with another impairment, namely the loss of the sight of

²²⁷ The following references are to Chapter 51 until indicated otherwise.

²²⁸ Sheldrake rightly points to the absence of original sin in Julian's theology of salvation, which leads to her circumstantial view of wretchedness that is located in “blindness,” “naiveté and ignorance rather than [...] evil and malice” (*In God's Sight*, 121-2).

God.²²⁹ Crucially, the inability to perceive mercy and grace lies with the person and is not based on the deity's withdrawal, which is shown in the split perspective between the Servant's mourning and a "loving lord which was to hym ful nere, in whom is ful comfort." The theme of human blindness is key to the development of this passage's significance because throughout the Parable, the personifications run the risk of being misconstrued as convenient one-stop shops for soteriological clarification and descriptors that anthropomorphise Trinitarian mysteries into digestible typological categories.²³⁰ Quite on the contrary, as a substitute for these allegorical trompe l'oeil effects, processes of abstraction and fragmentation encourage awe instead of methodical certitude. Far from providing a stable reference system, the Parable as a "mervelous example" is merely "the begynnynge of an ABC," although "sum vnderstondynge of our lo(r)dis menyng" is "hidd therin."²³¹ The alphabet as the fundamental building block of language presupposes a common ground between illumination and worldly methods of meaning production "hidd therin," while at the same time questioning the ability of a rigid methodological architecture to cover more than the most basic elements of enlightenment. Nonetheless, the emphasis is not on curtailment, nor on blindness. The consciousness Julian conjures is one of uncharted potential, expansion, and promise—an invitation to engage. Accordingly, her extended interiorising of the divine "techyng inwardly" received after the Parable's end is a crucial technique of spiritual expansion

²²⁹ This "brokenness" concentrates all energies on the individual, who can only focus on their misery instead of turning towards their enlightenment through mercy and grace (Jantzen, *Mystic and Theologian*, 206-8).

²³⁰ Jantzen perceptively subdivides the Servant's tripartite loss of sight into him being 1) "blinded to his lord's loving compassion," 2) "blinded to his continued worth in the lord's sight," and his 3) "blindness to his own deepest nature" (*Mystic and Theologian*, 206).

²³¹ Windeatt discusses the illuminating parallel between Julian's "ABC" and the Christocentric layout of the alphabet in contemporary children's primers (*Revelations*, 252), which would have seen it bookended by a cross and "Amen" [Marie Denley, "Elementary Teaching Techniques and Middle English Religious Writing," in *Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition. Essays in Honour of S.S. Hussey*, ed. Helen Phillips (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), 226.] According to Nicholas Orme, reciting the ABC would have been "a kind of devotion, beginning with the act of crossing yourself, and ending, as all prayers did with 'amen,' *Medieval Schools. From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 56.

working against the constraints of any narrative form and defying rumination in favour of contemplation.²³²

Because of the gulf that the Servant perceives between himself and his Lord, seven “grete peynes” befall him. Yet, under the guise of a sequential and precise transcript of agony, which she numbers from “i” to “vii,” the anchoress develops an acute exploration of the human psyche through an overlay of the vision and her exegetic commentary. Wondering why the Servant appears to be utterly abandoned, his isolation appears to be “mervelous” to her, fully exhausting the adjective’s conflicting range of meanings from “terrifying” to “wonderful” and “awe-inspiring;”²³³ his isolation evokes existential co-suffering just as it seemingly contradicts her notion of an omnipresent God. Simultaneously, she begins to understand, yet again through the prism of wonder (“I merveled”), that her assessment of the spiritual drought interlinks her with the Servant, and her limited perspective is merely a matter of her existence in the *regio dissimilitudinis*.²³⁴ This aporia, and the contrast between the pitfalls of humanocentric hermeneutics and the inherent possibilities that their transcending allows, can be applied to the entire Parable, which is not intended to be analysed but internalised, just as Julian replaces cogitation with wonder. It is both lock and key to her revelatory cosmos.

As a corrective to the consequences of fallenness, the Parable allows Julian, and the reader, to expand their frames of reference while acknowledging their being

²³² Abbott’s existential question “how one ought to conduct oneself in relation to an unseen God,” which he poses in response to life’s contingencies and answers with a shift “from action to contemplation” (*Autobiography and Theology*, 170) can fruitfully be applied to Julian’s leaving behind the methods of ratiocinative speculation.

²³³ MED, *merveillous*, adj., senses 4a, 1a, and 1b.

²³⁴ It would be reductive to claim a straightforward replacement of the medium of sight with that of insight when Julian’s theology illustrates the unknowable properties of the soul that only the divine can penetrate. Her illumination lies in the appreciation of the deity’s transfigured viewpoint, a supra-reality at which she can attempt to gesture but which she cannot yet fully assimilate. For the concept of the split perspective, see Sheldrake, *In God’s Sight*, 128.

constrained by them. When the anchoress is instructed on the tension between divine intangibility and the human preference and convention (and, hence, narrative need) for a precise system of coordinates, the text comments on the impulses and fallacies behind such systematising, which substitutes the concrete as an end in itself for the infinite. Thus, the Parable contextualises the *sekirness* that supplants her transitory perception of the *deus* as *absconditus*, and locates this security in her wholehearted surrender to comprehend her God in the manner in which he wants to be known. Julian's reception of her visionary insight in the modality that it fosters can in turn be applied to the intended function of her textualised *verbum Dei* to break with any corrupted exegetical techniques. As a consequence of this fusion in difference, *beholding*, the mode of mutual confluence, unites the divinity with humanity: "ryth thus continually his lovand lord ful tenderly beholdyth him." Only by reciprocating in the same manner, namely by mimicking the deity's ontology of love, can the reader hope to escape the prison of their mind and share in the divine *energeia*.

A further enigma pertains to the triad of revealing, withholding, and nonexistence. When Julian "merved how this servant myte mekely suffren there al this wo," she initially uses the triadic m-alliterations to collocate her deeply-felt wonder with humility, also playing on the homophonic qualities of "myte" (subjunctive) and "might" (noun) to group these concepts together. Initially, she erroneously substitutes her awe for rumination, "beheld[ing] with avisement to wetyn if [...] [she] cowth perceyve in hym any defaute, or if the lord shuld assigne in hym any blame."²³⁵ The result is unavoidably inconclusive, first because she has actively applied her own agenda to the decoding of the vision, desiring to "wetyn"²³⁶ instead of resting in the

²³⁵ Mercy is an integral Trinitarian attribute and transfigures the human self-perception. See also Sheldrake's comments, according to which "sin is not a matter of "separation [...] [and] conflict," because Julian's deity is "a healer rather than a judge" (*In God's Sight*, 126; 128).

²³⁶ See footnote 13.

beholding of God. One mystery supersedes the other because secondly, the passive construction “sothly there was non seen” adds another layer of unknowing. Any iconographical and semiotic solidity makes way for the multidimensional antinomy of losing sight within the brackets of the visionary event.

Nonetheless, the grammatical shift to the passive subtly conflates the revelation with the godhead’s “true”²³⁷ regard of his creation’s inherent goodness, which comprises the personal and tropological (“good will”) and the anagogical “grete desire” to return to their maker. By locating the reason for the Servant’s fall, and the ensuing inability to *behold*, interpret, and comprehend in these two concepts rather than attributing it to his sinfulness, all periods of falling and subsequent suffering are reconfigured as necessary purgative gateways, whose ties to shame or disgrace dissolve in the deity’s viewpoint.²³⁸ This split perspective, and the discrepancy between the timebound and eternal, is subsequently suspended in the godhead’s “double cher,” which emanates outwardly and inwardly, and signifies a co-temporality of past, present, future, and infinity. When “this was shewid with a ledyng of my vnderstondyng into the lord,” a turn of phrase that exemplifies Julian’s *participatory sapience*, God’s outpouring into the world as “plentevous grace” and the understanding of him through the same lens are presented as the *unum necessarium* for a transfigured visionary lucidity. This type of illumination literally and symbolically conveys Julian’s contemplative absorption, in which she is passively “led,” thereby echoing the narrative play between spiritual sight/material blindness and the need to discard all

²³⁷ MED, *sothli*, adj., sense 1a.

²³⁸ The emphasis on frailty and unknowing instead of accusation and moral corruption plays a crucial part in Julian’s theology. For her, “sin [does not] cause separation from God; [...] sin ensues from such separation,” Baker, *Showings*, 99. This “subversive liberation from the familiar theology of intimidation,” (“subversive Befreiung aus der ihr vertrauten ‘Einschüchterungstheologie’”) eliminates any sense of dread of the Last Judgement (Riehle, *Mystik*, 328). See also Lynn Staley, *Margery Kempe’s Dissenting Fictions* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 19-23; Rosalynn Voaden, “God’s Almighty Hand: Women Co-Writing the Book,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, eds. Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995), 55-65.

epistemological certainties to modify the perception of life's haphazard randomness into a recognition of divine purposefulness and intentionality.

Consequently, the Servant's kenotic surrender exalts him:

Than seith this curtes lord in his menyng: 'Lo, lo, my lovid servant. What harme and disese he hath takeyn in my service for my love, ya, and for his good will! Is it not skyl that I award hym his afray and his drede, his hurt and his mai[m]e and al his wo? And not only this, but fallith it not to me to gevyn a geft that be better to hym and more worshipfull than his own hole shuld have ben? And ell me thynkyth I dede hym no grace.' (Chapter 51)

Whereas "afray" and "drede" have blocked the Servant's view before, they, along with their causes and effects, "hurt," "mai[m]e" and "wo," are all suspended at once, having been suffered in "service for [...] [God's] love." This perceptual shift, and the mode through which it can be attained, is emphasised by the tripartite alliteration pointing out the conjunction of seeing and loving in "Lo, lo, my lovid servant." Yet, the "geft" of redemption that surpasses the Servant's sacrifice is merely alluded to, and therefore characterised as exceeding all possibilities for linguistic and cognitive signification, in their stead activating an intuitive sense of awe. While neither fallen language nor the wandering mind would be adequately equipped to grasp the gift's magnitude, the argumentative thrust is stringent: it is bestowed *because* of human frailty and not *despite* it, the deity *in carne* both undergoing the same experience and presented as an exemplar. Because her God's sacrifice in turn transfigures all creatural suffering, the constrictions of the *conditio humana* are not entirely erased and still define Julian's existence for the time being, although her awareness of these limitations, which are exalted through the receipt of grace, inverts them. Moreover, the veering between security and doubt that is a distinctive feature of humanity's situatedness in time is captured by the deity's questioning modality. Any elements of uncertainty are resolved

even before they are expressed by recourse to the register of logically structured argument, which strategically collapses in “grace.”

Because the *stimulus* of sin has thus been rescinded, Julian can grow into the chasm that opens between the inevitability that she “shuld synne” (Chapter 37), the instrumentalisation of sin as “the sharpest scorge that any chousyn soule may be smyten with” (Chapter 39),²³⁹ and the deity’s immanence as the basis for her “full overcomyng agens al our wekenes and al our douteful dredis” (Chapter 42). This central enigma does not provide a solution to Julian’s question “What is synne?” (Chapter 11) and yet is perceived by her as the “answere to the doute afor” (Chapter 51) because, rather than portraying sin as a problem to be solved, it is conceived as a paradox of absent presence that has to be sustained. The exact phrasing is important. If Julian had asked “Why is sin?” the implications of the conundrum would be entirely different, widening the gulf between humanity and divinity just like her enquiry into the beginning of sin. On the other hand, receiving no answer to the question “What is synne” reveals its existence on the cusp of unreality and its nullity in her deity’s view. This narrative duality in juxtaposition acknowledges the situatedness of sin between the poles of its embeddedness in the world and its ontological *noughting*, an irreconcilable simultaneousness that Julian intuits through *soft drede* (Chapter 11).²⁴⁰ Far from an oxymoron, this type of *awe-dread* references the “gentle”²⁴¹ shiver in front of the *mysterium tremendum* that accompanies the assurance of salvation. *Soft drede* does not translate the I-thou distinction into centreless contemplation but lets Julian *behold* the beyond. It invokes the transfigured self and opens her to the sublime. She then contrasts the spiral of sinfulness with the godhead’s redemptive mercy:

²³⁹ Whether the “scorge” will defeat by inducing guilt or exalt through humble acceptance depends on the presence of contrition. For a similar sentiment, see Sheldrake, *In God’s Sight*, 125.

²⁴⁰ MED, soft(e), adj., sense 4f: “reverent, awed.”

²⁴¹ Ibid., senses 3(a) and 4(a).

Our lord God shewid that a dede shall be done and hymsef shal don it; and I shal do nothyng but synne, and my synne shal not lettyn his goodnes werkyng. And I saw that the beholdyng of this is an heyly ioy in a dredful soule [...]. (Chapter 36)

As an allusion to and extension of the deity's inscrutabilities, the "dede" functions as a portal into the apophatic; it is not the causal result of abstinence from sin but prevails precisely through its inevitable recurrence. This coincidence of opposites, which corresponds to the simultaneity of the divine and human ontologies, therefore, modifies the effects of transgression from egocentric shame to a theocentric appreciation of the sin-grace impasse. The affective vortex of love unites the uncreated with the created through the combination of seemingly contradictory means, "an heyly joy in a dredful soule."²⁴² An acoustic play on "lettyn" as both "hindering"²⁴³ and its opposite "allowing"²⁴⁴ further points to the logical gridlock that the sanctioned existence of sin and its synchronous suspension create. Whereas the former meaning is undeniably the intended one, this double construction at the intersection of security and doubt/dread allows Julian to express the main discourse while galvanising it through its counterpoint.

By appending analytical detail and a division into two parts, the description of the "dede" briefly enters the domain of ratiocinative thought, but not without immediately putting the attainable understanding of God in this life side by side with his impenetrability.²⁴⁵ Because the "dede" is split up, one part pertaining to the world and the other "nether be knowen in hevyn ner erth till it is don" (Chapter 36), it marks the

²⁴² The Paris manuscripts reads "hevynly," a phrasing that increases the sense of unity in difference.

²⁴³ MED, *letten*, v., sense 1a.

²⁴⁴ MED, *leten*, v., sense 9a (a).

²⁴⁵ Sheldrake maintains that the purpose of the deed is "to redeem God's lovers from the fear that they are inextricably trapped in their status as sinners" (*In God's Sight*, 135).

unification of continuity and contrast: it is a signifier of grace.²⁴⁶ With ever-increasing degrees of enigmatic import, the attempt at classification proves ephemeral because

what this dede shuld be, it was kepud privy to me. And in this I saw that he wil not we dredyn to know the thyngs that he shewith; he shewith hem for he will we know hem, be which knowing he will we love hym and lekyn and endlesly enioyen in hym. (Chapter 36)

This passage revolves around a tripartite model of ascent indicated by subtle perspectival modulation from “dredyn to know” to “will we know” and “knowing he will.” The first mode is a discourse of difference, the second one, collocated with the doubling of the phrase “he shewith” is a descriptor of revelation, with the third pertaining to the immanent and unitive Trinitarian mysteries.²⁴⁷ Hence, the visionary axis joining Julian to her God provides her with unmediated “privy” understanding that conveys sapiential (and not conceptual) clarity beyond the fallacies of certainty about notions as complex as redemption and grace. By leaving the door open to the possibility of obtaining further—though still comparatively rudimentary—insight into these supreme truths in this life and at the same time eliminating the cloud of ignorance that can entail dread, Julian nurtures the continuous and incremental apprehension of the deity through his own dynamism of love. Nonetheless, she acknowledges the contiguity of divine providence and matters that can never be known: “the gret dede afornseid shal nether be knowen in hevyn ner erth till it is don” (Chapter 36).

Because the anchoress asked for the wound of contrition at the beginning of her visions and embedded it within the context of kenotic surrender to a loving God, the

²⁴⁶ Baker offers an insightful analysis of the clash between the ultimate reconciliation to which the second deed gestures and the Church’s negation of *apokatastasis* (universal salvation) (*Showings*, 79-80). Once more, the anchoress is relieved of having to resolve the discrepancies between visionary and dogmatic standpoints because the illumination is too vague to convey disputable principles. Julian’s is not a discourse of argument, but she evokes the promise of potentiality.

²⁴⁷ Bauerschmidt rightly contends that Julian generally shows “little interest in stages of spiritual progress” (*Mystical Body Politic*, 54), but here she skilfully plays on the simultaneousness of being and becoming.

sting of self-consciousness that sin can evoke in the penitent does not torture her to the same extent as the retrograde angst that befalls Margery Kempe.²⁴⁸ As a further result of this spiritual disposition, Julian's pre-visionary past loses its importance and is expunged textually. Nor do any anxieties about her future infringe on her present, which becomes progressive and endless. Although she is aware that human nature entails the proclivity to sin, the existential dread that could follow in the wake of this realisation has been erased because "he suffrith us to fallyn in knowing of our wretchidness, he hastily reysith us, not brekyng his love for our trespass" (Chapter 61). A relocation of the comma in Glasscoe's edition from after "wretchidness" to after "fallyn" would more effectively demonstrate the dynamism behind the notions of falling and raising.

The response to the heavenly that Julian envisions is thus an ever-increasing internal congruence with her godhead's love, expressed in both parties' continuous self-divestment. Particularly in the context of sin and redemption, the rescindment of fear through *soft*, or "reverent, awed, tender," *drede*²⁴⁹ echoes as an enharmonic equivalent to her expression of love throughout the text. A cursory discussion of the various types of dread forms the final part of the *Short Text*, coming on the heels of her temptation by the devil, and intended as a prophylactic and diagnostic remedy against any unprofitable manifestations of this spiritual illness. In this first version, her work ends somewhat abruptly, as she directs her readership towards the purposeful channelling of *reverent dread*, to ensure that they will not fall prey to "dredes [...] that ere not so trewe (Chapter 25)." Whereas discernment, or "avisement" in Julian's vocabulary, is the final gift she imparts on her readers in the earlier version, she embeds her "iiii manner of

²⁴⁸ Margery's fears stem from her past behaviour, which included hubris, vanity, as well as sexual thoughts and actions. In addition, she is plagued by the pervasive threat not to be taken seriously as a visionary woman, or worse, to be condemned. In Book II, she increasingly develops anxieties about her travels at sea as well. See also Rebecca Krug, *Margery Kempe and the Lonely Reader* (Ithaca, New York and London: Cornell University Press, 2017).

²⁴⁹ MED, *soft(e)*, adj., sense 4f.

drede” in the final fifth of the *Long Text*, reviewing them from Chapters 73-5. This new placement, following a series of chapters that are largely additions, which include the Parable of the Lord and the Servant, succeeds in better localising the complexities of all forms of dread within her concept of the human-divine relationship.

The depth of her development as a theologian becomes evident by comparing the earlier and later versions. The *Short Text* portrays the long-term effects of *reverent dread* as a rising reduction: “the mare it is hadde, the mare it softes and confortes and pleses and restes” (Chapter 25). Yet in the *Long Text*, love progressively cancels out dread because the latter is “full soft, for the more it is had, the less it is felt for swetenes of love” (Chapter 74).²⁵⁰ It decreases in relation to the increase of love. Consequently, the working in concert of the strands of love and dread speaks to their potentiality to function as indicators of grace:

Love and drede are brethren; and thei arn rotid in us be the goodnes of our maker and thei shall never be taken fro us without end. We have of kinde to loven and we have of grace to loven; and we have of kinde to dreden and we have of grace to dreden. It longith to the lordshippe and to the faderhede to be dred, as it longith to the goodnes to be lovid; and it longith to us that arn his servants and his children to dreden him for lordshipp and faderhede, as it longith to us to loven him for goodhede. And thow this reverent drede and love be not partid asundre, yet thei arn not both one, but thei arn ii in properte and in werking and neither of them may be had without other. Therefore I am sekir he that lovith, he dredith, thow that he fele it but a littil. (Chapter 74)²⁵¹

My previous analysis of Julian’s separation of the Trinity into its constituent parts and her subsequent appending of attributes to each split off entity proves that she strategically charters a misleading linear engagement that is intended to fail. Likewise,

²⁵⁰ See also the *Contemplations*: “þou schalt drede for loue, and [...] þou maist comme to loue þoru drede of God. But þe more loue encresithe in þe, þe more drede goþ fro þe, so þat yif þou haue grace [to] come to feruent loue, þou schalt bote litel þinke on drede, for þe swetnesse þou schalt haue in þe loue of Crist. But yet be þou neuer so parfit, it ys nedful þat þou drede discretliche as longe as þou | art in þis world (C., 9, 59-65).

²⁵¹ Turner cautions that “the God of sin’s story infantilizes us, reproducing and reinforcing the need to placate an implacable tyrant” (*Julian*, 104-5). In contrast, Julian’s self-conceptualisation as a child references her fundamental conviction that she will always be kept safe and never be forsaken.

as definitively as her love and dread are initially precisely allocated to the first two perichoretic persons in the above lines, the absence of the Holy Ghost, who is replaced by the nouns “goodnes” and “goodhede,” unveils the breakdown of any systematising model. The intricate linguistic play on the deity’s ontology as “goodnes”/“goodhede,” and the close resemblance to the term “godhede” (divinity) puts a halt to the conception of the Trinity as a plural entity.²⁵² Because the deity is to be understood as the mutual interpenetration of all persons, the modalities of love *and* dread, which cannot be “partid asunder,” have to be harnessed to engage with it. Just as the union of the different characterises perichoresis, the strands of love and dread are not the same, because “thei arn not both one, but thei arn ii in properte and in werking and neither of them may be had without other.”²⁵³ In this segment’s final sentence, *reverent dread* forms a derivative and subordinate discourse, solely existing because of its embeddedness in love: “Therefore I am sekir he that lovith, he dredith, thow that he fele it but a littil.” *Sekirness* and love are the dominant modalities of Julian’s *love-dread*.

The notion of love and dread as “brethren” resonates with the *Cloud*-author’s *A Pistle of Preier*, which interweaves them as well:

Be goostliche experience of þe profe of þis worching, it stondeþ al in a reuerent affeccioun þat a man haþ to God in þe tyme of [þ]is preier, causid of þis drede in þe grounde of þis werk and of þis stering of loue, þe whiche is brouzt in bi þe goostly steppis of þis staf hope touchid before. For whi reuerence is not elles bot drede and loue medelid togeders wiþ a staf of certein hope. Me þink þat þe profe of þis worching is deuocioun.²⁵⁴

Variations on the themes of operation, skill, and work (“profe of þis worching,” “grounde of þis werk,” “þis worching is deuocioun”) pervade the *Cloud*-author’s

²⁵² On this fallacy, see Aaron J. Cotnoir, “Mutual Indwelling,” *Faith and Philosophy* 34, no. 2 (2017): 6-7.

²⁵³ For a similar argument, see Paul Megna, “Dread,” 61-67.

²⁵⁴ Hodgson, *Unknowing*, 102, ll. 29-35.

illustration of prayer. According to him, the blending of *amor* and *timor* is set in motion by a “staf of certein hope” for salvation, an efficient cause, and culinary metaphor, that revokes any sense of effort. Whereas he regards “drede and loue medelid togeders” as devotional entry point, Julian’s envisioning of a familiar relationship between them renders them distinct while retaining their integral cohesion. Both writers communicate spiritual certainty, but the exact configuration of thire *love-dread* recipe differs.

Julian elaborates on the inner workings and effects of *reverent dread*:

And the bliss and the fulfilling shall be so deepe and so hey that for wonder and mervell all creatures shal have to God so gret reverent drede, overpassing that hath been seen and felt befor, that the pillers of hevyn shall tremelyn and quakyn. But this manner of tremelyng and drede shall have no peyne; but it longith to the worthy myte of God thus to be beholden of his creatures, dredfully tremeland and quakand for mekehede of ioye, mervelyng at the greatnes of God the maker, and of the litalhede of all that is made; for the beholdyng of this makith the creature mervelous meke and mylde. Wherefore God will, and also it longith to us, both in kynde and grace, to witten and knowen of this, desirand this syte and this werking; for it ledith us in ryte wey and kepith us in true life and onyth us to God. And as good as God is, as gret he is; and as mekil as it longith to his Godhede to be lovid, so mekill it longyth to his grethede to be dredid; for this reverent drede is the faire curtesie that is [in] hevyn aforn Gods face. And as mekil as he shall than be knowen and lovid overpassing that he is now, in so mekill he shall be dredid overpassing that he is now. Wherefore it behovith needs to ben that all hevyn and erth shall tremelyn and quaken when the pillars shall tremelyn and quaken. (Chapter 75)

“Overpassing” forms the linguistic bracket that bookends this illustration of abundance, and the *excessus mentis* is framed through an articulation of the spiritual realm brimming over with sensory data (“so deepe and so hey,” “wonder and mervell”), a choice of register that speaks to the process of *oneing*.²⁵⁵ The three times “overpassing” is repeated, it refers to the infinite increase of understanding, love and reverential awe beyond any mundane reference, its intensification continuing from this life into the next, where it will be potentialised. In addition, the structural parallelism alludes to the

²⁵⁵ On the contemplative topos of overflowing, see page 12.

interpenetration of *humanitas* and *divinitas* through the medium of *love-dread*: “And as mekil as he shall than be knowen and lovid overpassing that he is now, in so mekill he shall be dredid overpassing that he is now.”

A vortex into the sustained tension between the yearning in the present and the future communion, the threefold repetition of the verb *longen* throughout the passage combines the awe “natural[ly]”²⁵⁶ owed to God with the “desire” to be illuminated and the notion of insight “belong[ing] to” the believer.²⁵⁷ This enlightenment elevates the mind’s darkness into the eternal present as seen from the godhead’s standpoint, a congruence that corresponds to the divine indwelling in “kynde” and “grace:” “it longith to us, both in kynde and grace, to witten and knowen.” However, any concretisation of knowledge would contradict the affective blueprint of simplicity that Julian has provided, according to which holy awe is based on the self-conceptualisation as embodied humility, a response to the ineffable supra-formal.

In the longer quote above, the imagery that leads into the unknown is architectural: “the pillers of hevyn shall tremelyn and quakyn.” The wording “tremelyn and quakyn,” which is repeated three times and a fourth time as a participle construction, is reminiscent of the Gregorian chant “Libera me,” sung as part of the Office of the Dead, which would have been recited at Julian’s enclosure.²⁵⁸ It is certainly conceivable that she would have been familiar with its lyrics and their vernacular meaning. Whereas in the “Libera me” fear makes the individual tremble in horror of the godhead’s impending judgement (“tremens factus sum ego, et timeo”), in

²⁵⁶ MED, *longen*, v. (3), sense 1b.

²⁵⁷ MED, *longen*, v. (1), senses 1 and 2; *longen*, v. (3), sense 4 (a).

²⁵⁸ On the performance history of the “Libera me,” see Fernand Cabrol, “Absoute” in *Dictionnaire d’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie I*, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1924), 203; Pierre Batiffol, *Histoire du Bréviaire romain* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1893), 189–90. See also Walter Howard Frere, *The Use of Sarum II. The Ordinal and Tonal. The Original Texts Edited from the Mss with an Introduction and Index* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901), 146.

Julian's version, the psychosomatic reaction, "tremelyng and drede," becomes part of her vocabulary of awe and "mekehede of ioye." In the "Libera me," heaven and earth will be moved by divine wrath ("ventura ira quando coeli movendi sunt et terra"), while in the anchoress's text "hevyn and erth shall tremelyn and quaken" because of the "ioye" that the "mervelyng at the greatnes of God the maker" evokes. In its first and fourth iteration, when the "pillars (of hevyn) shall tremelyn and quaken,"²⁵⁹ the enormous capacity of humility to reaffirm and collapse the distance between timebound worldly existence and heavenly eternity is affirmed. *Reverent dread* is Julian's *beholding* of the deity's goodness with existential wonder.

Other types of dread, Julian clarifies

thow they come under the collor of holyness, yet arn not so trew; and hereby may they be knowen asu[n]der. That drede that makith us hastily to fleen from all that is not good and fallen into our lords brest as the child into the moder barme, with all our entent and with all our mynd knowand our febilness and our gret nede, knowing his everlesting goodnes and his blisfull love, only sekeing to him for salvation, clevand to with sekir troste—that drede that bringith us into this werking, it is kinde, gracious, good and true. (Chapter 74)

The concept of *reverent dread* that Julian outlines goes hand in hand with the breakdown of a mechanistic worldview of deed and reward, privileging a soteriological optimism of "sekir troste" instead. Therefore, the unflinching hope intrinsic to her theocentric *awe-dread* results in her surrender in the primary modality of love. However, because the affective matrices of *amor* and *timor* cannot effectively be separated from one another, the lexis distinguishes the redemptive and awe-inspiring "lord's brest" from the mundane "moder barme." As part of a recurrent theological strategy that avoids the pursuing of textual avenues that would steer the audience off course, she does not specify the symptoms and signs of any unbeneficial types of dread here—partly because she has already done that at the beginning of the chapter, but,

²⁵⁹ The addition in brackets is only part of the first iteration.

more importantly, because these afflictions can be reduced to contrariness and wrongness. Since they can only be defined with reference to what they are not, they exemplify *nothingness*: “And all that contraries to this, either it is wronge, or it is medlid with wronge. Than is this the remedye, to knowen hem both and refusen the wrong” (Chapter 74).

The projection of this blend of love and accurately-channelled dread onto the divine Other *knits* Julian to him, at the same time paradoxically stressing the fundamental ontological differences at the heart of their bond:

And thus we shall in love be homley and nere to God, and we shall in drede be gentil and curtes to God; and both alike evyn. Desir we of our lord God to dredin him reverently and to love him mekely and to trosten in him mytyly; for whan we drede him reverently and loven him mekely our troste is never in vaine; for the more that we trosten and the mytylier, the more we plesyn and worshippe our lord that we trosten in. And if us feile this reverend drede and meke love [as God forbode we should] our trost shall sone be misruld for the tyme. And therefore us nedith mekil for to prayen our lord of grace that we may have this reverent drede and meke love, of his gift, in herte and in werke; for withouten this no man may plesyn God. (Chapter 74)

Julian opts for a four-part repetition on the theme of “reverent drede and meke love” to demonstrate that both are “his gift,” a *donum gratis datum*, but also to specify, through the invariable collocation of this motivic knot with the term “trost,” that their spiritual proliferation is invariably linked to an intuited sense of being granted sanctuary.

Crucially, the prayer for her *love-dread*, “us nedith mekil for to prayen our lord of grace,” can be interpreted as appealing *to* “our lord of grace” or as being able to beseech him *because of* grace. Its function is a portal between this life and the divine absolute, a trajectory also evident in the twice collocation of “mekely” and “mytyly”/“mytylier.” The conjunction of these terms construes the Trinity as a unitive and immanent force.

Further apophatic contradictions abound. While Julian posits the intimately “homley and nere” aspects of her God as meriting love, *reverent dread* leads into the

ineffable near-far, where “gentil and curtes” courtly conduct permits her to unlock the apprehension of the sublime.²⁶⁰ However, this apparent split of her methods of approach, and the division of the godhead which they seem to suggest, reveals once more that, just as the deity is characterised by unity in diversity, both love and dread, even though they are unidentical impulses, are fruits of rapture. Hence, because the divinity cannot be reified as a linguistic construct, it cannot be accessed via a static methodology. By engaging with the paradox of immanent transcendence, Julian seeks to counteract a misidentification of the heavenly presence with the perception of her God as entirely familiar. Denys Turner cautions against this inherently flawed classification:

To possess the knowledge that explains how that conflict is resolved we would have to be in possession of the divine self-knowledge, to know by means of the Trinity’s own self-knowledge, and to love by means of the Trinity’s own love, and that knowledge and that love are the Trinity’s very being. And so they are infinitely beyond us. By grace in this life we can enter into some participation in that selfsame life of the Trinity, for the Trinitarian life in us—grace—is the Christian life. But to live the Trinitarian life within history is to live by means of a mystery, it is to live the divine self-knowledge in the form of faith, and it is to live by means of the divine love in the form of vulnerability, suffering, and defeat.²⁶¹

In the parameters of this argument, the reciprocal interweaving of faith, grace, understanding, and affliction releases Julian from the constraints of the world into the embrace of *participatory sapience*. Moreover, the sustained conceptualisation of the divine as ineffable is conceived as a self-emptying act of devotion:

That this should be so defeats the mind’s power of explanation, for the conjunction is incomprehensible, on the contrary appearing to us, and to Julian, as disjunction. In consequence, for all the affirmative wealth and positive vibrancy

²⁶⁰ On courtly love within a devotional context, see Vincent Brümmer, *The Model of Love. A Study in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 102. Although Nuth cautions against the “love for God [...] degenerat[ing] into presumptive familiarity,” she attempts to locate the “perfection of love” in humanity’s adoption of the divine aspects of “courtesy and homeliness” (*Wisdom’s Daughter*, 156). This argument for universal simultaneity collapses the hierarchical distinction between creator and created and runs the risk of minimising the inexpressible into worldly dialectics. In contrast, Julian’s *participatory sapience*, bestowed (not “achieved”) through the modality of *awe-dread*, is not a conscious decision to imitate the deity but an indwelling that transfigures the human will.

²⁶¹ *Julian*, 23.

of Julian's Trinitarian vocabulary [...] and for all its striking homeliness and human familiarity, one should not be misled into the lazy characterization of her theology as cataphatic, as if in contrary distinction from the apophaticism of the starker and more astringently negative metaphors of, for example, her contemporary, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*. The "darkness of God" is every bit as deep for Julian as for that nameless Carthusian monk. Julian's darkness of God is a darkness at the heart of the divine providential will, at the heart of the Trinitarian love.²⁶²

Turner's argument accords with Rowan Williams' exposition:

If God is to be seen at work [...], he is indeed a strange God, a hidden God, who does not uncover his will in a straight line of development, but fully enters into a world of confusion and ambiguity and works in contradictions.²⁶³

Although Julian will concede at a later stage that she speaks "but littil of reverent drede" in the hope that "it may be seen in this matter aforneid," she still acknowledges: "wele I wot our lord shewid me no soules but those that dred him" (Chapter 76). The absence of *love-dread*, thus, receives the same theological and linguistic treatment as sin, hell, and the devil—it is unseeable, inconceivable *nought*.

²⁶² Ibid., 23-4.

²⁶³ Williams, *Wound*, 4.

Other Forms of Dread

Although the topos of *reverent dread* in Julian's work constitutes a recurrent *ostinato* in which she anchors her apprehension of immanent transcendence, she incorporates several other forms of dread into her composition, tactically reversing their detrimental dynamism. It is important to note that Chapters 73-75, which contain the division of dread into four subcategories, do not go into great detail about those dreads that are not *reverent*, and this conciseness is a statement in itself, as is their placement towards—not *at*—the end of her work. The structural recrafting in the *Long Text* integrates the initially unbeneficial kinds of dread into her theological topography and, rather than accenting them, inverts them into the *beholding* of the promise of salvation.²⁶⁴ They are listed because Julian seeks to engage with the fullness of human affliction in the *regio dissimilitudinis*, at the same time utilising their suspension to guide her audience towards a release from their worldly exile.²⁶⁵ Any omission of the spiritually challenging kinds of dread would leave unglossed the affective avenues and interpretational routes she has to undergo throughout her health tribulations and the temptations by the fiend, just as a rejection of their presence would negate the very essence of humanity as created beings distinct from the deity. Julian's aim is thus to provide her readers with a concise diagnostic toolkit enabling them to reframe any periods of anguish as potent vectors towards the absorption into the Ineffable.

The three types of potentially/entirely flawed dread outlined in Chapter 74 are:

- “drede of afray that cummith to a man sodenly be frelte,” which is deemed as potentially useful because of its cleansing properties, “for it helpith to

²⁶⁴ See pages 120-1.

²⁶⁵ Jantzen contends that in her treatment of dreads, Julian “echo[es] Jesus [, who] never minimized the problems of evil and suffering” (*Mystic*, 168).

purge man as doeth bodily sekene.” This revisionary trajectory potently reconfigures human weakness as a tropological possibility.²⁶⁶

- “Drede of peyne wherby man is sterid and wakid fro sleepe of synne,” a contrition-inducing form of dread that temporarily prevents the individual from “perceivyn the soft comfort of the Holy Gost till he have vnderstanding of this drede of peyne, of bodily deth and of gostly enemyes.”²⁶⁷ The apparent absence necessitates action, and therefore, “this drede helpith us to sekyn comfort and mercy of God and abileth us to have contrition be the blisfull touching of the Holy Gost.” Again, Julian taps into the full potential of the *conditio humana* to transcend itself through the cross.
- Lastly, the destructive “doubtfull drede” “drawith to dispeir,” a dangerous pull that the alliteration emphasises. The questioning of divine omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence and omnibenevolence requires the ego-centric, hubristic, and ratiocinative usage of the mind to define mercy and grace in human, instead of supra-substantial, terms. Earlier, Julian has already recognised that “the cause why we arn trevellid [...] is for onknoweing of love” (Chapter 73), and as a countermeasure, Chapter 74 asserts that the deity “will have [...] [doubtfull drede] turnyd in us into love be the knowing of love.” Thus, the internalisation of the reciprocal love-knot and the *sapientia amoris* it yields eliminate the emergence of any self-defeating kinds of dread.²⁶⁸ In any case, Julian counteracts the cathexis on resignation-

²⁶⁶ This type of dread is intricately linked to Julian’s diabolical encounter, which will be discussed in the following chapter. See also Pelphey, *Love Thee*, 374.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 375.

²⁶⁸ While Abbott attests to Julian a general lack of interest in taxonomic or catechetical declensions of the points of faith, he singles out the list of her four dreads in Chapter 74 as an anomaly whose instructive potential lies in its definitiveness (*Autobiography and Theology*, 173-5). Anna Kelner persuasively argues that while Julian does not abide by the customary rhetoric of penitential tracts, she seems to have been inspired by their register. Crucially, “The kinds of dread remain distinct from one another, schematized in a list form that would be legible to any confessor or advisor conducting discernment,” “Trusting Women’s Visions: The Discernment of Spirits in Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Love*,” *Journal of*

based personal frailty with the appreciation of “sekirnes and liking in love,” a phrase twice repeated in Chapter 73, which reconstructs the person as an *imago Dei*:

this unknowing, it is that that lettith most Gods lovers, as to my syte; for whan we begynnen to haten synne and amenden us be the ordinance of holy church, yet ther dwellith a drede that lettith us, for the beholding of ourselfe and of our synnes afor don, and sum of us for our everydayly synnes; for we hold nor our covenants ne kepe not our cleness that our lord settith us in, but fallen oftentimes in so much wretcidness that shame it is to seen it. And the beholding of this makyth us so sorry and so hevvy that onethis we can finde ony comfort. And this drede we taken sumtime for a mekness, but this is a foule blyndhed and a waykenes. And we cannot dispisen it as we don anothe[r] synne that we knowen, for it comyth of enmite. And it is agen truth; for of all the propertes of the blisfull Trinite it is God will that we have most sekirnes and likeing in love; for love makith myte and wisdam full meke to us. (Chapter 73)

In these lines, the development from preliminary “unknowing” to “wisdam” hinges on several tectonic shifts with which the text removes both visionary and visual obstacles. First, Julian plays on the homonymic quality of *letten/leten* as “hindering” and “departing:”²⁶⁹ while the “unknowing” “that lettith most Gods lovers” is an impediment, it is a fading spiritual illness. For this reason, the “drede that lettith us” teeters on the cusp of non-existence. In a distinctive movement that holds in tension the access to the divine through human means and the overcoming of the latter’s limitations, the twice reiteration of “beholding,” a term Julian usually reserves for the contemplative mode, here pertains to its humanocentric execution, which renders the lapsed “sorry and so hevvy,” entirely focused on themselves and “synnes afor don.”²⁷⁰ This aberration from the efficient and final causes of insight references the “foule blyndhed” that such a trajectory generates, and on which it is based, at the same time not putting any blame on

Medieval and Early Modern Studies 51, no. 2 (May 2021): 206. This type of discernment could very likely have started on a personal and private level.

²⁶⁹ MED, *letten*, v., sense 1(a), and *leten*, v., senses 4(a) and 5(a).

²⁷⁰ See also Windeatt (*Revelations*, 276) on the similarities to Flete’s insistence on the incessant rhythm of diabolical temptation.

the individual, who is simply overcome by “enmity.” Therefore, Julian presents an unfathomable substitute for shame and, accordingly, the effects of the fall alter the course of *beholding* rather than leading to perdition: the fallen are rewarded with “love [that] makith myte and wisdom full meke to us.” In addition to the alliterative emphasis, the sonic play on “myte” as “might”/“mighty”²⁷¹ reveals the reciprocal interweaving at the heart of the mystical love-knot. The pun alludes to the restoring of the individual’s spiritual fortitude and analogical sight through the Passion and incarnated suffering.

A hermeneutical point of absence is made in the list of dreads in Chapter 74 because the agonies of hell, as well as any fear of the devil, are not mentioned directly and are only gesturally present in their most neutralised form as dread of “bodily death and of ghostly enemies.”²⁷² Neither is Julian’s wish for a sight of hell and purgatory in Chapter 33 granted, for the reason that “the revelation was made of goodness,” an assertion that once more precludes speculation about the fiendish realm about which “was made little mention.”²⁷³ As before, she circumspectly presents her knowledge of the catechism and “the faith that holy church teacheth” to confirm her orthodoxy, holding it in balance with the absence of hell and “all creatures that are of the devil’s condition” in

²⁷¹ MED, might, n., senses 1(a) and (c-g), 3(a-d), 6 and mighti, adj., sense 1(a).

²⁷² The *Short Text* still includes the “dred [.] of the fyre of purgatory” (Chapter 25). See also Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 175. Likewise, the *Prick of Conscience* lists and invokes the distinct “paynes in helle” that the sinners will have to endure: *Richard Morris’s Prick of Conscience. A Corrected and Amplified Reading Text*, eds. Ralph Hanna and Sarah Wood, EETS o.s. 342 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 177-207, ll. 6417-7527; 6524. See also Alastair Minnis’ recent monograph, *Hellish Imaginations from Augustine to Dante: An Essay in Metaphor and Materiality*. *Medium Ævum Monographs*, new ser., 37 (Oxford: The Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2020), xii-xiv. In contrast to the *Long Text*, the early thirteenth-century homily *Sawles Warde* draws on the allegorical personification of fear to illustrate the torments of hell: “Ich the ondsweerie: ha lihteth hwere se ha eaver kimeth with a thusent deoflen; ant euchar bereth a gret boc al of sunnen iwriten with swarte smeale leattres, ant an unrude raketehe gledread of fure forte binden ant to drahen into inwarde Helle hwuch se he mei preovin thurh his boc, thet is on euch sunne enbre|vet thet he with wil other with word other with werc wrahte in al his liffsithe—bute thet he haveth ibet earthon with soth schrift ant with deadbote.” In *The Katherine Group: MS Bodley 34*, ed. Emily Rebekah Huber and Elizabeth Robertson (Kalamazoo, Michigan: 2016), URL <<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sawles-warde>>, 7. See also Megna, “Dread,” 63.

²⁷³ Such a vision would presumably also contradict Julian’s contemplative mode of *beholding*. Nuth rightly contends that the anchoress is instead shown the deity’s victory over the devil (*Wisdom’s Daughter*, 163).

her vision: “there is no more mention made of hem afor[n] God” (Chapter 33).²⁷⁴ Just as sin loses its ontological reality in the *oneing* to the godhead, hell is stripped of its annihilating force:

Synne is more peynfull than hell, and vile and hurting kinde, but grace savith kinde and destroyith synne; the children of Iesus be not yet all borne, which pass not the stature of childhood, livyng in febilnes till thei come to hevyn where ioyes arn ever new begynnand without end. (Chapter 63)

As Julian progresses into the redemption-enigma and the impasse that the duality (not dichotomy) of sin’s non-existent existence creates, the concept of hell correspondingly disintegrates. Rather than presenting a model of substitution and replacement, the phrase “vile and hurting kinde,” which either references a nominative or accusative construction, radiates syntactic ambiguity. In the first case, creation, or “kinde,”²⁷⁵ is both depraved and damaged, though sin “caus[es] [more] spiritual or mental pain.”²⁷⁶ In the second, sin is hurting *kinde*, the point of confluence with the divinity. Both interpretations are superseded in the following clause, which substitutes the guilt-schema for the ennobling of *kinde* through “grace.” So interconnected are the notions of grace and human blamelessness that the topos of fragile childhood is seamlessly transfigured into the theme of eternal life in the remainder of these lines.

²⁷⁴ “Not being ‘mentioned’ may refer to being overlooked as irrelevant or it may imply a fall into nothingness rather than enduring eternal punishment” (Sheldrake, *In God’s Sight*, 135).

²⁷⁵ MED, kinde, n., sense 7a.

²⁷⁶ MED, pein(e)ful. adj., sense 1c.

The Paradox of Reversal *sub specie aeternitatis*

Far from reducing the figure of the devil to strict monochromatism centring on his Sisyphean powerlessness and eventual defeat, his embeddedness in an incremental and multidimensional process of theological and linguistic dissolution yields profound insight into Julian's stylistic and formal textures of paradox and reversal. On the one hand, he plays an important role as an indicator of the ultimate *nothingness* that lies outside the divine realm. Yet, this is not where his hermeneutic trajectory ends, because Julian's techniques of unsaying him through a series of dynamic and circular thematic and verbal connotations with the redemptive act invariably evoke theocentric *reverent dread*. In all of Julian's encounters with the devil, he acts as an apophatic signifier of grace because his physical form and menacing qualities are formulaic and endlessly deconstructed—his sterile *nought* is juxtaposed with the divinity's creative fecundity.

The Devil as a Token that Epitomises Christ's Transfiguration

Julian's fifth revelation starts with a programmatic declaration of salvific reversal: "the temptation of the fend is overcome be the passion of Criste, to the ences of ioy of us, and to his peyne, everlastingly" (Chapter 13). With this concise assurance, she contrasts the heavenly kingdom and its ties to the world with its antithesis, swiftly associating the devil with "peyne," the fruit of his labours, which is cast back onto him. The abundance-centred words and phrases "overcome," "ences of ioy," and "everlastingly" create a tripartite intensification alluding to the progression into, and continuous surpassing of, the emotive apex towards which the divine salvation plan unfolds. Instead of evoking any sense of dread at the mention of the fiend, the notion of *overcoming* incorporates him into the overarching context of grace: he is indeed

powerless in as much he represents all that is outside of God's laws, which is nothing.²⁷⁷ At the same time, the exact phrasing is crucial because rather than annihilating the devil altogether, the Passion eradicates the "dangers"²⁷⁸ to the soul. This is no oversimplification of the psychological subtleties of dread, because Julian will be exposed to the fiend's potency to divide, frustrate, and cause shame in their later confrontations.²⁷⁹ However, in the course of these encounters, she undergoes a continuum of responses starting from crippling affliction and culminating in the nullification of any types of dread that are not *reverent*. Thus, any potentially damaging affective counterreactions operate as dynamic interfaces to the divinity that instruct the anchoress in the significance of her personal points of fissure as double markers of penitence and grace. So long as she is suffused with "sekir troste" (Chapter 74) in the Passion's redemptive potentiality, the devil will not be able to conquer her. Any type of engagement with the fiend *per se* without his integration into her salvific cosmos would assign considerable destructive potential to him, a trajectory that would result in fear about the *poena damni*, anxieties about personal unworthiness and the deity's absence, and despair.²⁸⁰

The "encres of ioy" (Chapter 13) originating from Christ's self-sacrifice, which overturns eternal damnation, echoes the anagogical overflow at the end of Chapter 12:

The pretious plenty of his dereworthy blode descendid downe into helle and braste her bands and deliveryd al that were there which longyd to the curte of hevyn. The pretious plenty of his dereworthy blode overflowith al erth and is redye to wash al creaturs of synne which be of gode will, have ben and shal ben. The pretious plenty of his dereworthy blode ascendid up into hevyn to the blissid body of our lord Iesus Criste, and there is in him bleding and praying for us to the Father—and is and shall be as long as it nedith. And evermore it flowith in all hevyns enjoying the salvation of al mankynde that arn there and shal ben [...].

²⁷⁷ For a similar argument that envisions the devil "as nouȝt" and "a m'ow's," also designating those who fear him as great cowards, see Hilton, *Scale*, Chapter 45, 346, l. 51; 348, ll. 60-1; 346, ll. 52-3.

²⁷⁸ MED, *pein(e)*, n., sense 6a.

²⁷⁹ See pages 179-230.

²⁸⁰ For a similar sentiment, see Nuth, *Wisdom's Daughter*, 168. Julian's dissolution of despair will be discussed on pages 179-180, 217, 221, 224, and 227.

When the flowing of blood aplenty, highlighted in the anaphoric “pretious plenty of his dereworthy blode” mirrors the abundance of grace in the Harrowing of Hell, it has already transcended the world and any constrictive references to physical materiality.²⁸¹ More specifically, the profusion of blood resonates with the bodily manifestations of Christ’s pain but transfigures them within the linguistic range of the abyss.²⁸² Imbued with soteriological efficacy, it descends into hell, where it instantly liberates the captives, exalting them to esteemed members of “the curte of hevyn,” for which they “long,” and to which they already “belong” (*longen*).²⁸³ Creatural yearning and its fulfilment are united in this eternal moment of becoming.

Not only does divine blood defy the laws of physics when it “overflowith al erth,” but it simultaneously removes *and* exemplifies any distinctions between earthly forms of embodiment and heavenly ontologies as it “ascended up into hevyn to the blissid body of our lord Iesus Criste.”²⁸⁴ Receiving eternal life in heaven in the form of his transfigured blood, Christ acts as a signifier of the glorification of the *conditio humana* through the agent of grace. Consequently, the symbolism of his *transitus*, his passage from death to eternal life, invokes the paradox of his hypostatic nature just as the profusion of blood, and suffering, implies life. To this end, the present progressive of the verb “flowing,” which gestures towards a process of continuous un- and enfolding, and the discarding of the register of pain used in the previous chapters, which

²⁸¹ Because Julian is “in the non-discursive mode of beholding, she sees the bleeding body not in the context of the historical or temporal narrative of the Passion. [While she] grounds her description in the discourse of affective meditation, [...] she signals that the grounding is tactical rather than definitive in a process of effacing the materiality of the description” (Gillespie and Ross, “Apophatic Image, 74).

²⁸² Similarly, Bauerschmidt argues that the incarnated deity’s suffering is “*itself* ‘ineffable.’” (*Mystical Body Politic*, 89).

²⁸³ MED, *longen*, v. (3), sense 4a.

²⁸⁴ According to Gillespie and Ross, “The theological force of this fluid word-knot (fill, fulfil, flow, overflow, beflow, overpass, passover) derives from her earlier explorations of many of its terms, but its pictorial and imagistic potential are held at arm’s length (“Apophatic Image,” 75).

centre on the Passion, instils a sapiential understanding of the divine infinity. This opening up of avenues beyond postlapsarian consciousness is particularly foregrounded in the never-ceasing quality of the blood flow “in all hevyns,” a phrase that conflates the plurality of the heavenly realms with their near homophone, the Passion’s “hevines,” and the “burdensomeness or oppressiveness of the flesh [and] sin.”²⁸⁵ Since the potentially troublesome aspects of createdness are inverted in the soteriological universe, anguish and “abundance”²⁸⁶ coincide in this life.

The Devil’s Defeat

When introducing the devil in the following Chapter (13), an immense sense of divergence between his diminished arsenal of weapons and the pains that Christ has had to suffer determines the textual *ductus*.²⁸⁷ The dialectics between divine and human love demonstrate the curtailment of any movements diverting from the protective divine embrace:

And after, or God shewid ony words, he sufferd me to beholden in him a conable tyme, and all that I had sene, and all intellecte that was therein as the simplicite of the soule migte take it. Than he, without voice and openyng of lippis, formys in my soule these words: ‘Herewith is the fend overcome.’ These words seyde our lord menening his blissid passion as he shewid afor. In this shewid our lord that the passion of him is the overcomming of the fend. (Chapter 13)

²⁸⁵ MED, hevines(se), n., sense 2b (a). Caroline Walker Bynum explores the soteriological implications of Christ’s blood in Julian’s text as “locus of life and joy. As Julian says explicitly, love is the answer. Blood is love.” In *Wonderful Blood. Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 207.

²⁸⁶ MED, hevines(se), n., sense 1a (b).

²⁸⁷ Mary Carruthers analyses the dynamic routes of reception that medieval works of art create for their audiences in “The Concept of *ductus*, or Journeying Through a Work of Art,” in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 190-213.

Julian proceeds from marvelling about the blood's "pretious plenty" into God's viewpoint when she "behold[s] *in* him,"²⁸⁸ a modality of participatory *oneing* that bridges the chasm between the divine ontology and her mode of being. The multivalence of the phrase "he sufferd me to beholden," which relates Julian's mode of insight to the agonies of the Passion, points to the intense co-suffering with Christ in the contemplative mode.²⁸⁹

Throughout her vision, supremely intricate meaning, "all intellecte," unfolds in a condensed modality attuned to human capabilities, "as the simplicite of the soule migte take it."²⁹⁰ However, the phrase "all intellecte" concurrently relates to the soul's innermost faculties to "recognise the truth."²⁹¹ While the repetition of "all" in "all that I had sene, and all intellect [...] therein" invokes the wealth of spiritual material that Julian has to absorb to grasp the mere margins of the *mysterium tremendum*, the parallelism also connects the routes of her understanding with her visionary *donum*.

The continuity between the soul's "simplicite" and the divine "intellecte" takes place in the utter stillness of *beholding*: "Than he, without voice and openyng of lippis, formys in my soule these words." In the same measure that the soul has been equated with "simplicite" before, it is now (mark the present tense) glorified through the prism of humility as the receptor of the highest form of eschatological illumination, in which intangible and disembodied communication is condensed into its sapiential aggregate and outcome. Imagistic description is merely used to describe what does not exist or take place, a strategy that conjures up and collapses the notion of an anthropomorphic

²⁸⁸ My emphasis.

²⁸⁹ MED, *sufferen*, v., senses 1a and 7-8. In this passage, subtle apophatic processes dissolve time into eternity and language into the Sublime. "The 'conable tyme' is simultaneously the linear time in which the showing happens, the timeless beholding that she experiences within it and the convenient or necessary time at which the passion took place [...]. All that she has seen and understood is also grounded in this divine 'conable tyme' in which all meanings meet and are comprehended" (Gillespie, "Postcards from the Edge," 331).

²⁹⁰ MED, *intellect*, n., sense 1d.

²⁹¹ MED, *intellect*, n., sense 1a.

deity who would use a mouth and vocal cords to communicate. Instead of appealing to her readers' cognitive apparatus, Julian frames formlessness as a model of transmission in which God, transcending the mundane, cannot possibly be mistaken for the world. This loss of form, coupled with the excess of content, intensifies the superabounding blood's soteriological significance, which in turn fosters a response that the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* would call a "naked entent directe vnto God"²⁹² and a "blinde beholdyng vnto þe nakid beyng of God himself,"²⁹³ a conceptual *noughting* that he also conceives of as "onyng wisdom" in *The Book of Privy Counselling*.²⁹⁴

As part of the aporetic apex that the Passion brings about, the devil's defeat is not presented as the result of a bitterly fought psychomachia but as the effect of Christ's kenotic surrender: "Herewith is the fend overcome" is an event that has taken place off-stage. Moreover, the absence of any accompanying explanation and the lack of a definite antecedent for the adverb "Herewith," which gestures to the foregoing apophatic overflow of salvific blood, infinitely intensify the cerebral impasse. Rather than carving out the figure of the devil as a personified and/or theologised projection of dread, the Passion and ensuing miraculous distribution of understanding are interpretational focal points. Just as Julian conceives of the soul as the ultimately unknowable point of convergence of the created and uncreated, this divine *afflatus* effloresces in an entirely anagogical dimension, and in an exponentiated evasion of the mind.

As an epiphenomenon, the section that follows recapitulates the Passion-paradox in two modalities that correspond to the dissemination of creative divine *energeia*: he "shewid [the Passion] afor" and "shewid [...] that the passion of him is the

²⁹² Hodgson, *Unknowing*, Chapter 7, 15, ll. 28-9.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, Chapter 8, 17, l. 33.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 81-82, ll. 40-1.

overcoming of the fend” (Chapter 13). First, Julian is invited to share the deity’s viewpoint of Christ’s sacrificial death and second, its ramifications, the *overcoming* of sin and death, come to the fore. By overlaying the kenotic and eschatological paths towards the interrelated concepts of insight and salvation, Julian illustrates the *deus desiderans*’ continual *oneing* to his creation. Contemplative illumination and the ensuing interpretation *sub specie aeternitatis* are here at their most contiguous.

The declaration “Herewith is the fend overcome” condenses the Passion, exemplifying the reality in the world of evil *and* its simultaneous subjugation in the eternal present.²⁹⁵ The emphasis on the faithful surrender and fundamental vulnerability in which the Passion unfolds acts as an affective script for the audience that purposefully omits Christ’s biblical cries for the *deus absconditus* on the cross.²⁹⁶

This absence in turn allows the readership to adjust their perception from a focus on the freedom *from* the devil’s might to a foregrounding of the freedom *to* transcend worldly woes, and discursive reality, through the divine Other. At the same time, however, the anchoress points out the never-ceasing diabolical dynamics:

God shewid that the fend hath now the same malice that he had aforne the incarnation; and as sore he travilith and as continually he seeth that all sent of salvation ascappyn him worshipply be the vertue of Cristes pretious passion; and that is his sorow, and ful evyl he is attemyd; for all that God sufferith him to doe turnith into ioy and him to shame and wo; and he hath as mech sorow when God givith him leave to werkyn as when he werkyth not; and that is for he may never doe as yvel as he would, for his migte is al tokyn in Godds hand. (Chapter 13)

²⁹⁵ The *Ancrene Wisse* conceives of the Passion as a “heorte scheld ayein the feond,” Hasenfratz, Part 4, l. 1402. For further intertextual references, see Colledge and Walsh, *Showings*, 227, note 28.

²⁹⁶ Julian excludes Jesus’ lamentations, although her audience would doubtlessly have been familiar with the biblical narrative. She substitutes them with Christ’s spiritual “threst” (Chapter 31), foregoing the *deus-absconditus*-motif in the Gospels to focus on the nexus of his outpouring self-sacrifice and love-longing. On the profusion of “affective scripts” in the devotional culture of the later Middle Ages, see Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

While the Passion irrevocably conquers evil and its metaphysical consequences, it does not entirely release the world from misery. From this axiomatic standpoint, Julian argues that while there is no decrease in the intensity of the devil's schemes, the human response's *telos* is fundamentally altered. Therefore, the register in this segment evokes struggles and toils, but instead of referring to those suffering under the fiend's yoke, the imagery is applied to him and, thus repurposed, becomes one of triumph. The way the fiend ceaselessly "travilith," nonetheless perpetually unable to prevent the saved from "ascappyn," renders him a marginal character in Julian's theological cosmos, granted the right to exist only to be shown in his repeated and progressive moment of defeat. Furthermore, the "shame" and "wo" he undergoes, which invoke the register of Christ's agonies, are turned back onto himself. Embedded in this structural and stylistic focus on *turnen*, the figure of the devil functions solely as an apophatic marker of reversal articulating the Passion's infinite potential, and irrevocable promise, continuously to bring about a turnaround from the abyss of death to exhilaration. Thus, the matrix of incarnated *sufferen* ("suffering," "enduring,") progresses into *sufferen* ("permitting"):²⁹⁷ "for all that God sufferith him to doe turnith into ioy and him to shame and wo." To this end, Julian reconfigures the fiend as the deity's inverse, "ful evyl," revealing the divine ontology through profound contrast of action, direction, and outcome: the devil is "attemyd," "subjected" and "humbled"²⁹⁸ because of his hubris, not humbling himself and subsequently glorified.

Moreover, while Julian frequently employs the term *werken* to flesh out the human-divine relationship,²⁹⁹ she points to the other end of the semantic spectrum in this case, and to what lies beyond the divinity's mercy. In this realm, "werken" means

²⁹⁷ MED, *sufferen* v., senses 1(a), 3(a), 6(a), and 7(a)-8(b).

²⁹⁸ MED, *atemien*, v., sense 1.

²⁹⁹ See also pages 71-73.

“to be painful” and “to cause pain.”³⁰⁰ This inversion recreates the Passion’s reversive impact with dramatic force. As part of the fiend’s conceptual equation with existing *nought*, the repetitive allusions to his ineffectual *werken* and *travailen* contrast with Julian’s receptive and received “joy,” which is a contemplative mode, a product of her *beholding* of Christ’s glorified abjectness, and a bridge that links her absorption into the divine to discursive consciousness. In the latter case, it also speaks to the recognition that tribulation will be a frequent occurrence, which is balanced with the assurance of its momentariness in the divine perspective. Throughout these times of affliction, the misery the devil may inflict will be similarly transfigured into the joy of giving “praise”³⁰¹ and celebrating “the glory or majesty of God.”³⁰²

The textual emphasis on reversal is also reflected in the fruits of the devil’s fiendish labours, which yield *nothingness*: “and he hath as mech sorow when God givith him leave to werkyn as when he werkyth not.” Whereas the *malum* is continually hard at work, he can neither escape his inferiority nor the inevitably unsatisfactory outcome of his endeavours. The devil’s predicament thus revolves in futile circularity, emphasised by anaphoric concatenation: the clauses “and as sore he travilith,” “and as continually he seeth that all sent of salvation ascappyn him worshipply,” as well as “and he hath has mech sorrow,” and “and that is for he may never doe as yvel as he would” carefully nuance Julian’s theodicy by attesting to the ceaselessly unsuccessful loop of evil. As she expounds throughout her work, the affective dispositions that lead to salvation are meekness and contrition, two tropological tools that the unrepenting devil cannot access.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ MED, *werken* v. (2), sense 1a.

³⁰¹ MED, *joi(e)* n., sense 5a.

³⁰² MED, *joi(e)* n., sense 5a.

³⁰³ On the devil’s preclusion from salvation, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer. The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 110; on the healing effects of penance, see Daniel

In a clear syntactic break with the causal “and”-series, the deity intercedes, and Julian encodes the complexity of perspective in a play on words. The phrase “for his migte is al tokyn in Godds hand” discloses the divine permission that grants the devil the ability to tempt but invalidates any notion of an interface. The argument is not for a transfer of might or an overlay of the strands of salvation and damnation, but for the latter’s complete elimination because the paragon of evil, as well as the falling into sin he causes, is converted into a spiritual guidepost. Thus, he is a “tokyn,” a “symbol”³⁰⁴ and “proof”³⁰⁵ of his discontinuity. The Satanic is here relegated to the boundaries of faith, while the theocentric act of *overcoming* is central to Julian’s theological perspective.³⁰⁶ To elaborate on this crucial theological breakthrough, the anchoress alters the *Short Text*’s “alle chosene saules” that “eschapes hym worschipfullye” (Chapter 8) into “all sent of salvation” in the *Long Text* (Chapter 13), causing a shift in directional emphasis. The verb “sent” invokes heavenly and human frames of reference and can be interpreted as “sending” and “granting” salvation.³⁰⁷ Moreover, when construed as the truncated form of “assenten,” it implies “consent.”³⁰⁸ Accordingly, the *Long Text* privileges the gift character of redemption and salvation, and the human will’s potential for kenotic transfiguration. In losing the past participle, the Paris

McCann, *Soul-Health. Therapeutic Reading in Later Medieval England* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), 60.

³⁰⁴ MED token, n. sense 1a.

³⁰⁵ MED token, n. sense 4a.

³⁰⁶ The *Short Text* and the *Paris* manuscript respectively give “lokene in Goddys hande” (Chapter 8) and “lokked in Gods hande,” clear proofs of the divine victory rather than the *Long Text*’s complexly layered interpretational possibilities. Watson and Jenkins reference the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, in which Christ shackles the devil in the Harrowing of Hell and Revelations 20, 1-3: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threy him into the pit” (168). The alteration in the *Long Text* could either be a scribal error or a deliberately constructed apophatic knot.

³⁰⁷ MED, senden, v. (2), senses 6a and 7a (a).

³⁰⁸ MED, senten, v. (1), sense 1a.

manuscript's "all sowles of saluacion" (Chapter 13) foregoes any such distinction, or complexity, also remaining closer to the *Short Text*.³⁰⁹

However, Julian decidedly forgoes the simplification of the will's complex psychodynamics into an existential choice between the ultimate good and perpetual evil because any elements of decision-making are completely absent here.³¹⁰ In their place, she locates divine goodness within the soul's *scintilla*, instinctively and naturally aligned with the higher good. Consequently, while there might be little difference between the periods of *sub lege* and *sub gratia* on a surface level because extended states of tribulation still have to be endured, the Incarnation has recalibrated every form of spiritual crisis into an instrument of *oneing*. Julian is thus successively able to interpret all earthly temptations as part of a theodicy of love, framing them within the parameters of her eschatology of unequivocal hope. Her eternally optimistic perspective therefore dissolves any forms of *doubtfull drede* (Chapter 73).

Parallels and Historical Excursus

It has been argued that Julian's theodicy is indebted to Anselm's theory of satisfaction.³¹¹ "The essence of the argument," according to Jeffrey Burton Russell, "is

³⁰⁹ See also footnote 328.

³¹⁰ See also Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 100. In Chapter 65, Julian elucidates the commitment to love and not the choice between the *bonum* and the *malum*: "And thus I vnderstode that what man or woman wilfully chesith God in this life for love, he may be sekir that he is lovid without end; which endless love werkith in him that grace; for he will that we kepe this trosty, that we be all sekir in hope of the bliss of hevyn whil we arn here, as we shall be in sekirnes whan we arn there." In contrast, Jantzen argues that for Julian, "one cannot deliberately and consistently choose evil and still remain human, for to be human means [...] to have a core which longs for God. [...] The deliberate choice of the absence of God is [...] the deliberate choice of hell (*Mystic*, 179). Because the notion of choice is thus purely hypothetical in any case, Julian aims for a "perfection" in the art of love rather than "election" (Baker, *Showings*, 77).

³¹¹ David F. Tinsley, "Julian's Diabology," in *Julian of Norwich. A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Routledge, 1998), 210. Baker, *Showings*, 17-19.

that God's fairness and rectitude restore to harmony a human nature that we had distorted by original sin."³¹² Viewed through this hermeneutical lens, God and the devil form actual presences in the world, which enter into a "cosmic transaction"³¹³ of souls. Anselm conceives of the Passion as a sacrificial offering intended to redeem humankind, and also meant to contrast divine omniscience with the inherent limitations of human understanding. Beyond timebound linear causation, the deity prevents the devil from inflicting any genuine harm on earth: "in the scenario of satisfaction theory, Lucifer has little role."³¹⁴ However, the Anselmian model does not account for Julian's unflinching belief in the essential goodness of creation as a reflection of its divine origin.

The anchoress's conception of the devil more closely aligns with the theodicy proposed by the early Christian bishop and theologian Irenaeus of Lyons, which posits that creation is a bipartite process, at once already completed and still incomplete. According to his exegesis, humans are both created as *imagines Dei* and continue to unfold in his likeness on earth. They are flawed because the second part of the process is still to be undertaken, but within the *not-yetness* of imperfection lies infinite potential to be actualised.³¹⁵ In order to respond humbly to the creative divine impulses and access them fully, profound spiritual growth lets the soul mature into an image of its maker.³¹⁶ In the Irenaeian theodicy, evil and ensuing suffering act as catalysts towards perfection and reconstruct the original *similitudo Dei*.³¹⁷

Nonetheless, speculation about Julian's familiarity with her predecessors' tenets would reduce her text to a repetition of another theologian's form of discourse, and in

³¹² Russell, *Lucifer*, 170.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 170-1.

³¹⁵ John Hick, "An Irenaeian Theodicy," in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 40-42; Lars Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Evil*, trans. Kerri A. Pierce (Champaign, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2010), 51.

³¹⁶ S. Morris Engel, Angelika Soldan, and Kevin Durand, *The Study of Philosophy*, 6th ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 214.

³¹⁷ Svendsen, *Evil*, 51.

the absence of stringent evidence, I do not want to imply a chain of indebtedness, or a discerning selection, on her part. In any case, her theological focus contrasts with the importance Irenaeus accords to the role of the free will, which actively aligns the individual with good or evil.³¹⁸ Centring on the possibility to choose God within the bounds of postlapsarian existence,³¹⁹ he directly relates the distance between the godhead and his creation to the latter's freedom of choice.³²⁰ Julian, on the other hand, believes in a God active in human affairs, who has transfigured the fallen will as a reverberation of his own glorification. Just as she would never attempt to define the mystical love knot's particulars, because it takes place outside of time and linguistic referentiality, a notion as simple as choice would belie the depth and complexity of her *beholding*, which draws her into the *fruitio Dei* within her soul. Hence, the progression into, and continuous *knitting* to, the godhead in the matrix of *oneing* is not a matter of choice but an act of letting go. It is a testament to her theologised confidence that she unshakeably holds her *even cristen's* innate desire for the divine to be so immense that a gravitation towards the devil would contradict their very nature. While several Irenaean principles can thus be mapped onto her work, the textual development of the eschaton through the figure of the ultimately impotent devil eliminates the notion of choice between the *bonum* and the *malum*. To Julian, the belief in the love of God is not a question of choice but a matter of faith.

³¹⁸ Engel et al., *Study*, 214.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Hick, "Theodicy," 41.

The Divinity's "regarde"

The correlation in Julian's work between the godhead's apprehended presence and the absence of any harmful forms of dread speaks to a theology of enlightened darkness that transforms periods of affliction into breeding grounds for authentic communion.³²¹

But in God may be no wreth, as to my syte, for our gode lord endlesly hath regarde to his owne worshippe and to the profite of al that shall be sauid.
(Chapter 13)

Another one of Julian's semantically layered constructions, the phrase "our gode lord endlesly hath regarde to his owne worshippe" once again reprograms the porous membrane between the human mind and the divine supra-essence.³²² Hinged on the interpretational spectrum and directional emphasis of the term "regarde," she exemplifies the hopeful mode of engagement with her God, integrating it with his profound understanding of humanity and their methods of veneration and attachment. The hermeneutic haze she creates also depends on the reading of "to." In its prepositional form as "into" or "towards,"³²³ "to" pertains to the godhead's granting of "favour,"³²⁴ based on his omniscient "judgement,"³²⁵ to those who worship him. On the other hand, this segment also alludes to the individual's reverence of the divine through the vector of high "esteem."³²⁶ Love radiating from and received by both parties functions as a gateway into the beyond.

The judicious divine verdict precedes the knotty phrase "al that shall be sauid," and the evident inconsistency of her argument for a God devoid of wrath with the notion

³²¹ I use the term "experience" here as pertaining to the valleys of darkness outside of contemplation, in which dread might otherwise manifest itself. On the set of problems that this term engenders when applied to contemplative encounters, see footnote 44.

³²² This is a turn of phrase that is also present in the Paris manuscript but does not exist in the *Short Text*.

³²³ MED, to, prep., senses 1a(a) and (j).

³²⁴ MED regard(e), n., sense 1c.

³²⁵ MED regard(e), n., sense 1b.

³²⁶ MED regard(e), n., sense 1c.

of a deity who would exclude parts of his creation from salvation and conform to Christian dogmatics remains an irresolvable conundrum that Julian cannot address. An explanation of this *contradictio in adjecto* would generate another set of incongruities, which would expose the acute dilemma over primacy of visionary content and Church doctrine—the more intense the response, the more glaring the contradiction. Neither would her readers benefit from speculation, because the threat of damnation does not pertain to them. In her salvific cosmos, humans are conceptualised as inherently worthy and spiritually adept, permanently incorporated into the divine embrace. So tremendous is this force that the phrase “al that shall be saved,”³²⁷ in combination with the divinity’s “regarde,” does not allude to exclusion but to humanity’s integration into the Ineffable. At the same time, this phrase once more balances Julian’s visionary truths against any accusations of universalism.³²⁸

The sequential exposition is important for this coincidence of opposites because it alters and revises the hermeneutical focus. When the “gode lord endlesly hath regarde to his owne worshippe,” the phrase also pertains to a form of *latría*, or

³²⁷ The reading in the Paris manuscript is similarly cryptic: “all them that shal be sayvd.” The phrase is not extant in the *Short Text*’s Chapter 8, which, however, refers to “alle chosen saules” that escape the devil.

³²⁸ Bauerschmidt correctly concludes that “any ‘universalism’ in [Julian’s] [...] thought is an implied one.” While he vehemently disagrees with Baker, the thrust of their arguments is strikingly similar because she sees Julian as “alluding to the promise of universal salvation” as well—an impenetrable mystery that the anchoress balances against the difference of the divine and human modes of understanding: “That is impossible to the is not impossible to me” (Chapter 32; *Mystical Body Politic*, 249; *Showings*, 79). Baker and Nuth also engage with Julian’s delicate theological nuancing and intratextual points of reference when they link her “Al shal be wele” to the apocatastatic undercurrents (*Showings*, 79-80; *Wisdom’s Daughter*, 18; See also Sheldrake, *In God’s Sight*, 132-7). Riehle points to the gradation of apocatastasis into “universal hope” (“universale Hoffnung”), in which theologians such as Origen, Ambrose, and Gregory of Nyssa await the eschaton (*Mystik*, 332). According to Watson and Jenkins, the saved are an “unknowable body,” to which the clause “that shalle be saved” refers about 25 times in the *Long Text*. This recurrent phrase “pulls against the universalizing logic” of God’s unquenchable love (*Writings*, 154). The solution to this conundrum lies in Julian’s intentionality. She conceptualises her readership’s faith not only in terms of its potential for maturation but also as already advanced in the present so that the threat of damnation applies only to “the Iewes that deden hym [Christ] to ded,” “those who are “oute of the feith of holy church” (“ethen man”), those who “livith uncristen life,” who “shall be dampnyd to hel without end, as holy church techyth me to belevyn (Chapter 32), as well as “al creatures that arn of the devil’s condition” (Chapter 33). The audience is protected from such a fate because they have proven their worthiness by their choice of reading material—engagement with Julian’s work is an indicator of their inclusion in the divine embrace. In this reading, the consumption of her text acquires apotropaic dimensions.

“regarde”/esteem, that is oriented towards the deity precisely because of his “regarde,” his power to judge benevolently.³²⁹ Julian thus submits to the discerning divine judgement, continuing in its linguistic register:

With might and right he [the deity] withstondith the reprovith, the which of mallice and shrewidnes bysyen hem to contriven and to done agens Gods wille. (Chapter 13).

It is here that her theodicean argument solidifies because when Christ “withstondith the reprovith,” who “bysyen hem to contriven and to done agens Gods wille,” she modulates the subject of universal salvation into a reflection on diabolical damnation. Whereas salvation beckons to “al that shall be savid,” mercilessness is reserved for the handling of the hellish realm only, the subtle switch from a plural to a singular subject in the final sentence disentangling the problem of human immorality by entirely externalising the *malum* as devilish.³³⁰ The wording reduces the fiend to his antagonistic contrariness to the deity without examining his iniquities *per se*, a textual scheme that reduces him to *nothingness* and results in a profound cognitive restructuring.

Laughter, *risus*, *hilaritas*

A rapid succession of chromatic twists and perspectival shifts ensues from the Resurrection, progressively revealing its salvific magnitude from a variety of vantage points. By slowing down the Transfiguration’s instantaneousness to trace an inward and

³²⁹ MED, regard(e), n., sense 1b.

³³⁰ Similarly, Bauerschmidt contends: “For Julian, sin is less like a wilful transgression [...] and more like a sickness or accidental injury that afflicts us, weakening us and blinding us to God’s love (*Mystical Body Politic*, 100). Baker argues that Julian’s “theodicy [is] designed to console rather than condemn her ‘evyn cristen’” (*Showings*, 75). The switch from singular to plural is also extant in the Paris manuscript. The phrase is an addition to the *Short Text*.

heavenwards movement, Julian signposts her absorption into the timeless moment of *beholding* the paradoxical intersection of time and eternity. In accordance with the enigma of the salvation, which defies any rational modes of explanation, the narrative density has to shift fully to harness the power of sustained paradox. As before, Julian foregoes any sense of a tensely actualised battle of the godhead or the soul against damnation, this time by deploying an ingenious type of *imitatio Christi*. His reaction to the fiend determines her affective response, and, avoiding any conventional moralising intended to evoke any tropological forms dread of the fiend, she mimics Christ's scorn: "Also I saw our lord scorne his malice and nowten his onmigte, and he wil that we doe so" (Chapter 13).³³¹ A reversal such as this does not deny the devil's constant presence in the world, but his menacing quality, his "malice," is turned upside-down.

In one of the most dramatic peaks in the entire work, the Resurrection suspends the conventions of cause and effect because alongside the notion of "despis[ing]," the semantic field of *scornen* entails "mock[ery] and ridicule."³³² As part of a theologically complex and linguistically sophisticated and yet simple manoeuvre, therefore, the same emotional complex of shame, scorn, and ridicule that Christ underwent at Golgotha is here again applied to the Satanic realm. This inverse is underscored when Julian sees the deity "nowten his [the devil's] onmigte," a double negation that exemplifies his utter *nothingness*,³³³ as well as the overturn of humanity's subjection. To this end, the overlay of scorn, utter derision, and ontological emptiness abruptly dissolves the Passion's intense misery and moves Julian into a space of awestruck wonder, in which

³³¹ This "demystification of the power of evil" reveals its transitoriness (Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 86). Windeatt interprets scorn as a "lack of reaction," "neither anger nor laughter," which symbolises the extent of the devil's *nothingness* (*Revelations*, 206).

³³² MED, *scornen* v., senses 1a and 4a. Unfortunately, Colledge and Walsh reduce Julian's laughter to this dimension, also establishing parallels to "the Hebrew notion of the contemptuous laughter of enemies" (*Showings*, 348). See also Una Stroda, "Deus Ridens: The Trinity, Laughter and Theology" (PhD diss., The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 2014), 121.

³³³ See also Bauerschmidt, who contrasts divine "fullness" with diabolical "privation" (*Mystical Body Politic*, 85).

she *beholds* the release from death, a multi-layered moment of reversal that centres on the apprehension of *Christus* as *victor* and *salvator mundi*. Embedded within this context, the purpose of Julian's devil is not to signify death but—through his *overcoming*—eternal life.

The *excessus mentis* ensuing from the mystery with which Julian is confronted can only be intuitively understood and abstractly articulated in a fusion of cataphatic expression and apophatic intention. Beyond the bounds of the rational mind, she erupts with laughter, an instinctual embodied reaction rather than a methodical analysis of the event of salvation:

For this sigte I lavhyd migtily, and that made hem to lavhyn that were about me, and ther lavhyng was a likeing to me. I thowte that I wold that al myn evyn christen had ben as I saw, and than should thei al lavhyn with me.
(Chapter 13)

On a surface level, Julian's laughter might seem to pertain to two tangents, namely the realm of theological joy and relief, and the mockery of the devil's foolishness. The late-medieval stage had witnessed a long-standing tradition of rendering the inhabitants of hell ridiculous, a practice continued in the *York Corpus Christi Plays*' "The Creation of the Angels and the Fall of Lucifer:"

[LUCIFER] I sall be lyke unto hym that es hyeste on heghte —
Owe, what I am derworth and defte.
Owe, Dewes, all goes downe!
My mighte and my mayne es all marrande.
Helpe, felawes, in faythe I am fallande. (ll. 91-94).³³⁴

³³⁴ *The York Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), URL <<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/davidson-play-1-the-creation-of-the-angels-and-the-fall-of-lucifer>>.

Here, Lucifer's ridicule is performed in a manner more suited to the stage.³³⁵ To this end, the mocking alliterations "hym," "hyeste" and "hegte" run their full course when his lies dissolve in similarly alliterative fashion as he calls himself "derworth and defte," and exclaims "Dewes, all goes downe!" The arrogance of conflating the divine name *deus* with that of the deuce in a game of dice foreshadows his downfall.³³⁶ Indeed, "Dewes"/Deus functions as a marker of reversal, swiftly severing Lucifer from his might and linguistic playfulness so that the alliterative chain is repurposed, his "mighte" is broken, and his "mayne es all marrande." The play foregrounds stylistic measures and sonic clustering to reflect the reasons behind the devil's fall: "in Faythe I am fallande." Physically and metaphysically falling, his highly concentrated hubris opens him up to the audience's derision. Contrary to Lucifer's hyperbolic claim to wield power in "The Creation of the Angels and the Fall of Lucifer," Julian's fiend is caught in the *nought* of his "onmigte" (Chapter 13), and therefore not given any platform or subjective consciousness. The figure of her devil is entirely nondimensional in and of itself but acquires multidimensional eschatological significance as an apophatic indicator of salvation. For this reason, even though she is at times framing him in terms of the absurd, she retains the cosmological ramifications of his *overcoming* by elevating the topos of laughter to an anagogical plane, communicated through cataphatic excess.

³³⁵ Correspondingly, Michael Camille discusses the devils and demons that frequently inhabit liminal spaces of reversal in medieval art and architecture and accords to them considerable agency to tempt from the periphery, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 9. Within the late-medieval manuscript tradition, devilish *bas-de-page* images in psalters and books of hours often bridge the divide between the sacred and the profane. Two examples from the British Isles include London, British Library, Yates Thompson MS 13, the "Taymouth Hours," produced between 1325-35, and Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 1-2005, the "Macclesfield Psalter," which dates to 1330-40. See also Kathryn A. Smith, *The Taymouth Hours: Stories and the Construction of the Self in Late Medieval England* (London: British Library, 2012) and Stella Panayotova, *The Macclesfield Psalter. A Complete Facsimile* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 2008). The former manuscript comprises a sequence of diabolical images in the *bas-de-page* areas. The latter contains a memorable illumination that depicts the devil roasting a sinner on a spit (fol. 126r) and an image of St Dunstan pinching the devil's nose with a pair of tongs (fol. 140r). The fact that the devil's face has been almost completely erased even though St Dunstan humiliates him speaks to the horror that his image would have been able to evoke. See Raphaela Rohrhofer, "New Perspectives on Selected Images in the Macclesfield Psalter" (MA diss., The Courtauld Institute of Art, 2014).

³³⁶ MED, *deus*, n. (2), sense 1, "a game of dice." See also MED, *deus*, n. (1), sense 1: "Oh God!"

As an expression of Julian's theological joy with which she embraces the *mysterium* of the deity's workings in the world and the beyond, her laughter in Chapter 13 heralds the spiritual security of the messianic age.³³⁷ Her reaction does not undermine the Passion's seriousness, nor does it deny the continued occurrence of suffering—on the contrary, the profusion of wonder only accentuates the scope and significance of the act of *overcoming*. Several other strands of understanding coincide; the consequences for humanity of the *bonum*'s victory over death manifest themselves most profoundly in her spiritually generative laughter, which signals her understanding of the fertile matrix of kenotic vulnerability that is transfigured through the agent of grace. Moreover, her laughter exposes the limitations of referential language and the boundaries of cognitive mechanics, thus expressing exponentiated humanness. It is a maximally reduced symbol that codifies the paradox of Christ as a fool for God who entered the world to die for humankind only to emerge victorious.³³⁸

³³⁷ On the important concept of spiritual "sikernesse" in late medieval devotional culture in England, see Allan Westphall, "Walter Hilton's *The Prickynge of Love* and the Construction of Vernacular 'Sikernesse,'" in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ*, eds. Ian Johnson and Allan Westphall (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 258.

³³⁸ See also Cheryl Exum and J. William Whedbee, "Isaac, Samson, and Saul: Reflections on the Comic and Tragic Visions," in *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible*, eds. Yehuda T. Raddai and Athalya Brenner (Syracuse: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 120 and Aaron Gurevich, "Bakhtin and His Theory of Carnival," in *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, eds. Jan N. Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1997), 54-60. Gurevich analyses the interrelation of joy and fear in late-medieval culture.

The *risus paschalis* and Apophatic Excess

Julian's *hilaritas*, an intuited apprehension of grace, is different from the response of an audience presented with a humorous spectacle of the devil in mystery and morality plays. As readers, we do not at this moment laugh about him but grasp, with Julian, the present of the transcendent. Hilarity does not deny sorrow but transfigures it:

the opposite of joy is not sorrow; sorrow is included in joy. The opposite of joy is unbelief and the lack of faith in the future. It is not un-Christian to laugh: the one who laughs does so not because he or she is blind to injustice and suffering but because they are convinced that these are never ultimate.³³⁹

Whereas its collocation with the conquering of the devil might initially evoke associations with his ridicule on stage, Julian's laughter ultimately bears little resemblance to the carnivalesque.³⁴⁰ Her embodied *and* transcendent hilarity also subtly engages with the longstanding debate on the problematic nature of laughter, which was particularly fought out in the monastic sphere.³⁴¹ Early monastic rules counsel to abstain from it and to focus on grief about the deplorable world and the fallen self instead. In these accounts, laughter is the enemy of sombreness, silence, and humility,³⁴² because worldly *levitas* would neutralise the requisite fear of God.³⁴³ Likewise, exegetes

³³⁹ Stroda. "Deus Ridens," 82. She refers to Conrad M. Hyers, *The Spirituality of Comedy. Comic Heroism in a Tragic World*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2007).

³⁴⁰ See also Jacques Le Goff's discussion of the different forms of laughter in the Hebrew Bible, "Laughter in the Middle Ages," in *A Cultural History of Humour: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, eds. Jan N. Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1997), 48.

³⁴¹ The *Ancrene Wisse* instructs its readers to laugh at the devil: "I-wis, leove sustren, hwen ye neh ow felethhim, for-hwon thet ye habben hardi bileave, nulle ye bute lahhen him lude to bismere thet he is se muchel ald cang, the kimeth his pine to echen, ant breiden ow crune?" (Part 4, ll.1125-8). On the other hand, the Archbishop of York's steward reprimands Margery Kempe for laughing: "Holy foke schulde not lawghe" (267, l. 4525). In the *Incendium Amoris*, Richard Rolle conceives of laughter as "laudabilis" ("praiseworthy") if it is "in iustis" ("in the righteous"), in which case "dicitur iocunditas in dileccione Dei" ("it is called the delight in the love of God"). *The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole*, ed. Margaret Deanesly (Manchester and London: Manchester University Press and Longmans/Green, 1915), 170. These references are culled from Barry Windeatt's elucidating footnotes on biblical, monastic, religious, and anchoritic laughter in the British Isles over the *longue durée* in the commentary to his edition of the *Revelations*, 206, L.13/19; L.13/21.

³⁴² Le Goff, "Laughter," 45.

³⁴³ Irven M. Resnick, "'Risus Monasticus.' Laughter and Medieval Monastic Culture," *Revue Bénédictine* 97, no. 1-2 (1987): 96.

habitually vilify laughter as idleness, a corrupted postlapsarian practice that would be transposed into anguish in the beyond.³⁴⁴ In religious settings that do not explicitly forbid it, it is still condemned, based on the evangelical accounts, in which Christ never laughed.³⁴⁵

The role of laughter in the high and later medieval catechetical and exegetical tradition has proved to be a fertile topic of research in the twentieth century, and particularly since the 1960s, Elton Trueblood's analysis of Jesus' shrewd humour giving way to the work of Conrad Hyers, Jacques Le Goff, and others.³⁴⁶ Several of these studies locate the advent of a change in exegetical attitude towards the spiritually beneficial aspects of laughter in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Prior to this exegetical recalibration, sermons, Bible glosses, catechetical literature, as well as medical and philosophical tracts, display an overt hostility towards laughter, and Christian figurative art associates it with the diabolical realm.³⁴⁷ Yet, the emphasis on a *contemptus mundi*, the recalling of the *poena damni*, and the biblical silence on the subject of Christ's laughter speak to the presence of deep-seated and widespread concerns that the profane engagement with the incarnated wit might predispose the believers to blasphemy.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ Resnick, "Risus Monasticus," 94; see also Luke 6:21: "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for you shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for you shall laugh."

³⁴⁵ Le Goff, "Laughter," 45; see also his article "Jésus, a-t-il ri?" *L'Histoire* 158 (1992): 72-4.

³⁴⁶ See footnotes 339, 345, 348, and 352, and the collection of essays in *Holy Laughter: Essays on Religion in the Comic Perspective*, ed. M. Conrad Hyers (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), particularly Hyers' article "The Dialectic of the Sacred and the Comic," 208-40; Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann-Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Georges Minois, *Histoire du Rire et de la Derision* (Paris: Fayard, 2000); Jean Verdon, *Rire au Moyen Age* (Paris: Perrin, 2001); Stefan Bießenecker, "A Small History of Laughter, or When Laughter Has to Be Reasonable," in *Behaving Like Fools: Voice, Gesture, and Laughter in Texts, Manuscripts, and Early Books*, eds. Lucy Perry and Alexander Schwarz (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 193-222.

³⁴⁷ See previous footnote and Willibald Sauerländer, "Vom Gelächter des Teufels zur Ironie der Philosophen," *Jahrbuch der Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste* 13 (1999): 30-70; Paul Binsky, "The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile," *Art History* 20, no. 3 (1997): 350-74.

³⁴⁸ See also Elton Trueblood, *The Humor of Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 13; Resnick, "Risus Monasticus," 93-4.

As a harbinger of this new valorising tendency, a section of the *Glossa ordinaria* that circulated in the twelfth century refers to the prophets' laughter as an incremental self-loss *en route* to the mystical union.³⁴⁹ Edward the Confessor's uncontrollable mirth when receiving his visionary *donum* and Bernard of Clairvaux's argument for laughter as an expression of divinely inspired joy also pave the way for an incremental appreciation of *hilaritas* as a marker of grace.³⁵⁰ Even so, the contemporary preference for its internal, rather than outward and embodied, manifestation is undeniable. The reappraisal of laughter seems to peak in the thirteenth century, when the mendicants repurpose it as an articulation of soteriological security. Francis of Assisi's promotion of a life with God "hilari vultu," ("with a joyful demeanour/face") results in his followers' embrace of infectious and euphoric laughter, and a collective visualisation as holy fools for God in an altogether joyful conceptualisation of the bond with the divine.³⁵¹ Correspondingly, the Dominicans begin to see laughter as an instrument of devotion, regardless of their rule's explicit ban of it.³⁵² Succeeding St Dominic as the Master General of the order, Jordan of Saxony instructs his novices to laugh joyfully:

Dearest ones, laugh wholeheartedly and do not stop because of that brother. I give you permission, and you truly well must rejoice and laugh because you have escaped from the devil's prison, and broken are his oppressive chains with which he held you bound for many years. Therefore laugh, dearest ones, laugh!³⁵³

³⁴⁹ Peter Jones, "Preaching Laughter in the Thirteenth Century: The Exempla of Arnold of Liège (d.c. 1308) and his Dominican milieu," *Journal of Medieval History* 41, no. 2 (2015): 2; *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria. Facsimile Reprint of the Editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81*, vol. 2, eds. Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), 395.

³⁵⁰ Jones, "Preaching Laughter," 2; *The Life of King Edward Who Rests at Westminster*, ed. and trans. Frank Barlow (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 102-107; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Super Cantica Cantorum*, Sermo 85:11, in *Bernhard von Clairvaux: Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 6, ed. Gerhard Winkler (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1994), 642.

³⁵¹ Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, trans. Christine Rhone (London: Routledge, 2004), 122-3.

³⁵² Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L'Humour en Chaire: Le Rire dans l'Eglise médiévale* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994). However, the practice of laughter for its spiritual benefits could also result in undesirable extremes. For instance, Le Goff reports that England's first Franciscan brothers, who settled in Oxford, were officially chastised for their "mad laughter" ("Laughter," 51).

³⁵³ "Karissimi, ridete fortiter et non dimittatis proper istum fratrem: ego do vobis licenciam; et vere bene debetis gaudere et ridere, quia exivitis de carcere dyaboli, et fracta sunt dura vincula illius, quibus multis annis tenuit vos ligatos. Ridete ergo, karissimi, ridete!" Gerardi de Fracheto, *Vitae Fratrum III* 42,

As part of a pastoral strategy aimed at reducing the distance between the deity and the congregation, preachers in the years following the 1200s increasingly embellish their sermons with humorous exempla. Thomas Aquinas plays a vital role in stimulating this development, arguing in his *Summa* that Aristotle's concept of *eutrapelia*, a refined, carefully balanced wittiness, imbues laughter with a divinely inspired purpose.³⁵⁴

Within this theologically sanctioned development towards an accentuation of the heavenly delights on earth, the *risus paschalis* occupies a special position.³⁵⁵ In the late-medieval liturgy, the *risus* marks the end of the Easter mass, when the priest would leave the altar to share amusing stories or humorous songs with the congregation, mirroring Christ's turnaround from an object of derision to *salvator*: "By being mocked himself, Christ will grant the ridiculed and the mocked their dignity and rights."³⁵⁶ This

Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica I, ed. Benedictus Maria Reichert (Brussels: Lovanii, 1896), 144-5. See also Jones, "Preaching Laughter," 1-3.

³⁵⁴ *Summa theologiae* II, pars II, quaestio 168, in *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, vol. 4 (Rome: S.C. De Propaganda Fide, 1888); Jones, "Laughter," 3. On the historical development of *eutrapelia*, see Lenz Prütting, *Homo ridens: Eine phänomenologische Studie über Wesen, Formen und Funktionen des Lachens* (Freiburg and Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2016), 235-44.

³⁵⁵ Maria Caterina Jacobelli, *Il risus paschalis e il fondamento teologico del piacere sessuale* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1991). Michael O'Connell traces the Easter laugh back to Peter Abelard's fifteen hymns to be sung over the course of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, which all end with the same stanza:

Tu tibi compati sic fac nos Domine
 Tuae participes ut simus gloriae,
 Sic praesens triduum in luctu ducere,
 Ut risum tribuas paschalis gratiae.

"Lord, make us suffer with you so that we may be partakers in your glory, so to think of the present three days in mourning that you may grant the laugh of Easter grace." Quoted from *Peter Abelard's Hymnarius Paraclitensis: An Annotated Edition with Introduction*, vol. 2, ed. Joseph Szövérfy (Albany: Classical Folia Editions, 1975), 106. In his article, O'Connell furthermore remarks that "the phrase *risum paschalis gratiae*, the 'laughter of Easter grace,' in the final stanza is surprising; we would expect *consolatio*, *laetitia*, or *gaudium* rather than *risus*." This lexical choice probably goes back to Adam of St Victor's Easter sequence *Zyma vetus expurgetur*, which typologically links *risum* with *Yitschak*, the Hebrew name for Isaac, meaning "he laughs." Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Isidore of Seville, as well as the *Glossa Ordinaria* comment on these etymological resonances, "Mockery, Farce, and Risus Paschalis in the York *Christ before Herod*," in *Farce and Farcical Elements*, eds. Wim Hüsken, Konrad Schoell, and Leif Søndergaard (Leiden: Brill/Rodopi, 2002), 50-1.

³⁵⁶ Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Laughter: A Theological Reflection*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 1994), 90. See also Jolanta Rzegocka, "Being Serious About Laughter: The Case of Early Modern Biblical Plays," in *Humour and Religion: Challenges and Ambiguities*, eds. Hans Geybels and Walter van Herck (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 158.

reversal honours the incarnate deity as *Christus victor* “over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin, death, and the devil,”³⁵⁷ and the excess of *risus* voids the preceding excess of death just as the magnitude of the Paschal *gaudium* demonstrates the finiteness of suffering. Correspondingly, the apostle Paul incorporates the certain expectation of eternal life into a play on paradoxes in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. [...] But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong.³⁵⁸

The Easter laugh does not merely denote an absolute confidence in salvation but fully unfolds as a hermeneutical structure within which to intuit the implications of Christ’s Resurrection in the present. Neither is the potentiality of redemptive laughter relegated to Easter alone. Michael Bakhtin lists several closely related dramatic performances and celebrations linked to liturgical observance, such as the *festa stultorum*, the *risus natalis*, the *parodia sacra*, the feast of the ass, the *indulgentia* festivals, and soties,³⁵⁹ though the redemptive qualities of laughter would have peaked in the Paschal *risus*. Similarly, the genre of the *joca monachorum*, collections of humorous riddles and jokes presented in question-and-answer format, encourages the speculation that the rule of monastic silence was not always enacted as strictly as the extant documents might suggest.³⁶⁰ The gradually rising interpretational option according to which the biblical Jesus was occasionally humorous, ironic, and witty in his exempla, at times employing the rhetorical technique of *reductio ad absurdum* to argue against his enemies,³⁶¹

³⁵⁷ Gustav Aulén, *Christus Victor: A Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, 2nd ed., trans. A.G. Herbert (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 20.

³⁵⁸ Verses 25-27.

³⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), 5; 13-14.

³⁶⁰ Le Goff, “Laughter,” 49.

³⁶¹ This could be construed as a nod to his incarnated, human nature. For Jesus’ use of the mode of *reductio ad absurdum* in Matthew 12:25-27 and 22:41-46, see Douglas Groothuis, *On Jesus* (South Melbourne and Belmont: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003), 33-35.

reframes the role of *hilaritas*: “theologians increasingly c[ome] to imagine a laughing Christ, laughing not at jokes, but with a divine ‘interior light.’”³⁶² The identification of the individual as *homo risibilis* runs parallel to the debates on the spiritual value of laughter. Based on the Aristotelian argument that conceived of the ability to laugh as a distinctively human trait, this enduring tradition correlates laughter with the fundamentals of being in the world.³⁶³ Accordingly, medieval theologians accessing Aristotle through Boethius identify it as a “*proprium*,” a characteristic trait, of humanity, which “*risus capax*.”³⁶⁴

While we can only hypothesise about Julian’s familiarity with this tradition, the semiotic nature of laughter as an indicator of humanness *simpliciter* is the essential crux of its occurrence and narrative function. Once more, her decidedly human faculties enable her to enter into a dialogue with the enigma, which the constraints of a rigidly linguistic framework could not encompass. Her *risus* thus bridges the distance between her embodied spatio-temporal existence and the apprehension of salvation, the complexly synthetic quality of laughter as a marker of immanent transcendence responding to the *maximum absolutum* by recourse to the *maximum contractum*.³⁶⁵ Therefore, Julian’s *hilaritas* allows her to articulate the triumph of light over dark and

³⁶² Jones, “Laughter,” 2.

³⁶³ LeGoff, “Laughter,” 43.

³⁶⁴ “Capable of laughter,” quoted in Resnick, “Risus Monasticus,” 90-100. In his translation of Boethius’ *De Consolatio Philosophiae*, Chaucer seizes the notion of laughter as an important part of the spiritual suit of armour. His Philosophy laughs about and scorns her enemies: “Of whiche schrewes al be the oost nevere so greet, it es to despise; for it nys governyd with no ledere (*of resoun*), but it es ravysched only by fleetyng error folyly and lightly; and yif they somtyme, makyng an oost ayens us, assayle us as strengere, our ledere draweþ togidre his riches into his tour, and they ben ententyf aboute sarpleris or sachelis, unprofitable for to taken. But we that ben heghe above, syker fro alle tumolte and woode noyse, warnstoyrd and enclosed in swiche a palys whider as that chaterynge or anoyng folye ne may nat atayne, we scorne swyche ravyneres and henteres of fouleste thynges.” *The Riverside Chaucer*, 400, ll. 67-81.

³⁶⁵ Colledge and Walsh’s argument that “laughter is not a part of Christ’s ‘wit,’ [because] it is not a Christ-like characteristic” (*Showings*, 348, footnote 28) is reductive. Laughter as the “*proprium*” of humans connects Julian to the potentialities of the Incarnation, and to the eternal joys of salvation. Colledge and Walsh seem to imply that it contradicts divine “sothfastnes,” but it expresses its implications for the world. While Christ may not laugh in Julian’s text, because that would anthropomorphise his transfigured nature, he is the source of her *hilaritas*.

the fundamental absurdity behind her fallen existence's glorification. It is a laugh of surprise and instant confidence, unmediated by rationality.

“Benedicite domine!”³⁶⁶

Throughout her work, Julian uses the confines of language not as a mould in which to retain her audience or fix the concepts with which she engages but to illustrate that the concrete and material function as mere springboards for the contemplation of the *mysterium*. Her laughter, erupting as a symptom of visionary overflow at the pinnacle of an already abundantly complex visionary architecture, aptly showcases this cross-fertilisation because it signifies her *beholding* of salvation. The ensuing theological joy is a reverberation without concrete verbalisation of her reaction to Christ's profuse bleeding after her miraculous deliverance from certain death in Chapter 4:

And I said: ‘Benedicite domine!’ This I said, for reverence in my meneing, with a mighty voice; and full gretly was astonyed for wonder and mervel that I had that he that is so reverend and dredfull will be so homely with a synfull creture liveing in wretched flesh. This I tooke for the time of my temptation, for methowte by the sufferance of God, I should be tempted of fendes or I dyed. With this sight of the blissid passion with the Godhede that I saw in myne understanding, I knew wele that it was strength enow to me, ya and to all creturers leving, ageyn all the fendes of hell and ghostly temptation.

Through her momentary diglossia, Julian harnesses the heightened symbolism of Latin as the language of theology, existing at the intersection of divinity and humanity, as

³⁶⁶ The MED lists the following references under *benedicite*, n.: “a short prayer used as grace before eating” (sense 1a), “a prayer recited before confession” (sense 1b), “a blessing, deliverance from evil” (sense 2a); as an interjection, *benedicite* pertains to “a pious greeting” (sense 1a) or “an exclamation: bless us, bless my soul, my goodness” (sense 1b). On the practice of *lectio divina*, see Dan Merkur, *Crucified with Christ. Meditation on the Passion, Mystical Death, and the Medieval Invention of Psychotherapy* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 34-9.

well as containing and answering to the word of God. With the help of code-switching, she responds to, and briefly accesses, an analogical level too enigmatic to be conflated with the vernacular. Julian's intention is to communicate her reverence of the godhead in a form adequate to this transcendental "orgasmic" encounter.

The manner in which "Benedicite domine" is uttered, namely "for reverence in my meneing, with a mighty voice" captures her awe when confronted with the paradox of the Ineffable, "so reverend and dredfull," yet "so homely with a synfull creture liveing in wretched flesh" (Chapter 4).³⁶⁷ The aporetically transcendent immanence that the deity inhabits thus releases her from the shackles of the fallen world into her "wonder and mervel" (Chapter 4) about the *dona Dei*. Julian collocates this chasm with the insight that she "should be tempted of fends or [...] [she] dyed" "by the sufferance of God" (Chapter 4). Thus, in the very moment that follows her *beholding* of eternal life, the teleology of tribulation as an echo of Christ's *overcoming* of death divests the *malum* of any tangible power, though not of its ontological reality. This disjunction at the heart of the post-Resurrection devil places the central focus on God's apotropaic love, in which affliction is turned into a medium of mutual confluence.

The phrase "Benedicite domine" could be contextualised within the milieu of a Latinate Church that had excluded women from theological and scientific discourse for more than a millennium.³⁶⁸ In this interpretation, Julian's unmediated access to the divine in contemplation would preclude any societal filters, and "God decides what humans need to know, not a Latinate elite."³⁶⁹ A link between her authorship and

³⁶⁷ Gillespie and Ross comment on the "syntactical looseness" of the phrase "liveing in wretched flesh," elucidating the ambiguity of its antecedent, which could be Julian or Christ ("Apophatic Image," 63).

³⁶⁸ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), 113; Susan Kirtley, "Medieval Diglossia and Modern Academic Discourse," *Rhetoric Review* 26, no. 3: 253-261.

³⁶⁹ Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England, Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409," *Speculum* 70, no. 4 (October 2005): 851.

authority, particularly as a female writer, might also be readily established and used to demonstrate her straddling of the boundary between scholarly Latin and the “humble” vernacular.³⁷⁰ In line with the argument put forth by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne *et al.* of the vernacular’s function as “a sign of the natural, of truth, plainness, and emotional directness, of the physical or embodied and the socially situated itself,”³⁷¹ Julian’s Latin eruption would thus suggest an advanced level of erudition and education. In this reading, her response would speak to her *accessus ad auctores* and to (the history of) biblical exegesis.³⁷² While all these interpretive frames resonate on a meta-level, it is doubtful whether the anchoress would have intended such a self-referential reading—especially at this point in the text. Her revision of the *Short Text* into the *Long Text* eliminates most personal points of reference,³⁷³ and showcasing her learnedness in the context of salvation would undermine her guiding principle of humility. The tradition of invoking the divine name to ward off the devil, and evil in general,³⁷⁴ is important to consider in this context and was so prevalent that “one has to speak of a downright permanence of the incarnation in the name of Jesus [...]. The formula ‘in the name of

³⁷⁰ On the power of the vernacular to accommodate complex theological arguments, see Vincent Gillespie’s “Vernacular Theology,” in *Middle English. Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 401-20.

³⁷¹ *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle-English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 330.

³⁷² See also Nicholas Watson, “The Idea of Latinity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Latin Literature*, eds. Ralph Hexter and David Townsend (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 125. On Julian’s use of constructions reminiscent of the *ablativus absolutus* as an indication of her knowledge of Latin, see Michael J. Wright, “Julian of Norwich’s Early Knowledge of Latin,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 94, no. 1 (1993): 37-45. Sister Anna Maria Reynolds also considers “Some Literary Influences in the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich,” *Leeds Studies in English and Kindred Languages* 78 (1952): 18-28. Conversely, Colledge and Walsh argue “that this passage provides no evidence for or against her being ‘a woman that could no letter.’ [...] Before she began to compose the short text, Julian already knew all the Vulgate; especially, she can be seen to be deeply familiar with all four gospels, the Pauline and Johannine epistles and Hebrews, the Psalms, the sapiential books and Deutero-Isaias. [...] when young [...], Julian had received an exceptionally good grounding in Latin, in Scripture and in the liberal arts, and [...] thereafter she was able and permitted to read widely in Latin and vernacular spiritual classics” (*Showings*, 43-4). See also the discussion and footnotes on the following page.

³⁷³ See footnote 176.

³⁷⁴ Peter Dinzelbacher, *Angst im Mittelalter. Teufels-, Todes- und Gotteserfahrung: Mentalitätsgeschichte und Ikonographie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1996), 59-60; Friedrich Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1961), 275.

Jesus' renders prayer more efficacious and answerable."³⁷⁵ Yet, this reading would confound temporal planes because Julian's "Benedicite domine" is a reaction rather than a projection.

In Colledge and Walsh's interpretation, the phrase could indicate a "blessing, thanking or praising."³⁷⁶ Watson and Jenkins construe Julian's ungrammatical Latin as referencing "the greeting formula between Benedictine monks and nuns, by which the junior religious says, 'Benedicite' (Bless me), and the senior replies, 'Dominus te benedicat' (May the Lord bless you) [...]."³⁷⁷ "Repetition," they argue, "might cause 'dominus' to be heard as a vocative, 'domine,' so that the phrase would be felt to mean 'bless me, O Lord!'"³⁷⁸ Consequently, they take Julian's exclamation as "evidence [that] makes it likely she was a nun" prior to her enclosure.³⁷⁹ Windeatt repeats this theory but balances it with the argument that she might have been a devout laywoman at the time of her encounter.³⁸⁰ Norman Tanner, in favour of the latter hypothesis, puts forth the contention that if Julian had been a nun, she would have been referred to as "domina" or "dame."³⁸¹ According to Gillespie, the composition of the *Short Text* might have been prompted by Julian's entering the anchorhold, where it would have been examined by a team of experts, serving as evidence of her orthodox belief system.³⁸² Likewise, Annie Sutherland considers Julian's profound familiarity with Holy Scripture to have been

³⁷⁵ Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen*, 277: "Man muß geradezu von einer Permanenz der Inkarnation im Namen Jesu sprechen [...]. Die Formel 'im Namen Jesu' macht das Gebet wirkungsfähig und erhörbar."

³⁷⁶ *Showings*, 211, footnote 17. They also speculate that because Julian seems to have been well-versed in biblical and spiritual literature, she would most likely have been attached to a religious house from her teenage years into middle age, when she would have entered the anchorhold (*Showings*, 43-4).

³⁷⁷ *Writings*, 4.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 134, footnote 13.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁸⁰ *Revelations*, 187. See also Benedicta Ward, "Julian the Solitary," in *Julian Reconsidered*, eds. Kenneth Leech and Benedicta Ward (Oxford: SLG Press, 1988), 11-35.

³⁸¹ *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532*, Studies and Texts LXVI (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), 60.

³⁸² "Pastiche," 196. See also Annie Sutherland, "'Oure feyth is groundyd in goddes worde'—Julian of Norwich and the Bible," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England. Exeter Symposium VII. Papers Read at Charney Manor, July 2004*, ed. Eddie Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 4.

attained through the means available to the laity, “both preaching and her own devotions.”³⁸³ If Julian was indeed still a devout laywoman when she received her visions, another possible explanation for her Latin “Benedicite domine” would be her echoing of the “words at the end of Prime—V. Benedicite. R. Dominus—the Sarum equivalent of the Roman V. Benedicite. R. Deus.”³⁸⁴

Whereas the synapse of biography and narrative has to peter out, the intricate textual web of associations that the anchoress and her audience would have acquired through the *lectio divina* yields more immediate results. The textual-typological correspondence according to which Julian is framed in direct correlation to the Marian precedent elucidates her momentary diglossia, although allusions to her joining the ranks of the apostles and followers of Christ at Pentecost, to whom the spirit descends, remain as an undercurrent as well.

Ancilla Dei, sedes sapientiae

The most immediate analogue to Julian’s encounter is the Virgin’s response to the archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation, a parallel the text highlights by appending the biblical scene. Her *imitatio Mariae* and adherence to the biblical example allows Julian to map out the coordinates of her own spirituality.³⁸⁵ Both women are filled with *reverent dread*, a conduit to, and result of, a revelatory form of instantaneous insight. Points of divergence from the biblical text revolve around the role of embodiment. While in the Gospels the archangel manifests in front of Mary, who will give birth to

³⁸³ Sutherland, “Julian,” 4.

³⁸⁴ E. I. Watkin, *On Julian of Norwich, and in Defence of Margery Kempe* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1979), 7; see also Windeatt, *Revelations*, 187.

³⁸⁵ See also Gillespie and Ross, “Apophatic Image,” 64.

the incarnated deity in her role as *theotokos*, Julian's visionary landscape is devoid of any such concreteness.³⁸⁶ The fact that in the *Long Text* neither of the two women perceives the godhead, or its messenger, with their bodily eyes when they answer his call invokes his disembodied, glorified, and salvific form of being. By modifying the biblical narrative and intratextually imitating her role model's intuited understanding, Julian's ever-increasingly symbolic *beholding* of the Passion once more culminates into her apprehension of grace.

The Virgin serves as Julian's prefiguration and aspirational projection not only because of her humble surrender, but because of the mutual pouring out of humanity and divinity that she represents. She epitomises the momentous indwelling of sapience:

In this he browght our blissid lady to my understanding. I saw hir ghostly in bodily likeness, a simple mayde and a meke, young of age and little waxen above a child, in the stature that she was wan she conceived with child. Also God shewid in party the wisdom and the trueth of hir soule, wherein I understood the reverend beholding that she beheld hir God and maker, mervelyng with greate reverence that he would be borne of hir that was a simple creature of his makeyng. And this wisdom and trueth, knowyng the greteness of [her] maker and the littlehede of herselfe that is made, caused hir sey full mekely to Gabriel: 'Lo me, Gods handmayd.' (Chapter 4)

As the paragon of attainable perfection in this life and a paradigm of the *dona Dei* conferred on the humble, the figure of the Virgin validates the foundational principles on which Julian has built her theological argument. Iconographically and iconologically, Mary's attributes at once accentuate her innocent childlikeness and her transcending of it; she is "little waxen above a child" *and* about to "conceiv[e] with child." Mary's "wisdom and the trueth of hir soule," a phrase repeated twice with slight variation, is accordingly collocated with the meekness of a "simple mayde" and "simple creature." The interrelatedness of kenotic purity and insight creates a matrix for

³⁸⁶ See also Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 161.

the *sapientia amoris* that Julian attributes to the Virgin and for the fragments of understanding to which she has been privy herself.

Mary's depiction is not sufficiently detailed to allow for a systematic analysis of her physical form, and any visual pleasure of definition or completion is restricted by hazy vagueness. In a carefully directed effort to move beyond imagistic and historicising representation and reception, Julian combines the biblical with the apophatic. Thus, she alludes to the Virgin's age and height merely as outward manifestations of her inward disposition while withholding specificities, a hermeneutical tangent from the literal to the spiritual that corresponds to her role as a link between humanity and divinity. Rather than enticing the audience associatively to fill the gaps with recourse to their affective imagination, a trajectory in line with numerous contemporary devotional works, the stress lies firmly on the relation of sign (age, height) to signified (childlike openness and surrender).³⁸⁷ Accordingly, the anchoress does not set herself up as a parallel to the Virgin but locates herself on a subordinate tier because the latter's correlation of "wisedam" and "reverend beholding" surpasses Julian's so that it is only shown to her "in party."³⁸⁸ Mary's reaction interweaves her receptivity and self-abandonment with divine providence, and the extent of her "worthyness and grace" unfolds through her instantaneous growing into the deity's will. Consequently, the reward for her faith matches its intensity:

In this sight I undestoode sothly that she is mare than all that God made beneath hir in worthyness and grace; for aboven hir is nothing that is made but the blissid [manhood] of Criste, as to my sight. (Chapter 4)

³⁸⁷ "This sense of priority of the inner over the outer in relation to the Virgin is linguistically reinforced through an idiom of filling and fulfilment" in Chapters 4 ("full mekely") and 7 ("fulfilled [...] of reverend drede [...] [and thus] fulfillid of grace"), (Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 161.)

³⁸⁸ While Gillespie and Ross argue that Mary and Julian's responses "are twinned just as the vocabulary of reverent dread at God's homeliness with creatures has also been subliminally twinned ("Apophatic Image," 64), the parallelism is not equating them but seeks to convey Julian's approximation of the Virgin's ideal of *beholding*. The modality is shared, but the outcome is not equal, or equalising, although she imitates the Virgin's "suspension of [...] hermeneutic preconceptions" (Gillespie, "Pastiche," 193).

As a spiritual mother to all, the Virgin is “aboven” creation, exceeding the limitations of earthly motherhood, and therefore able to intercede on behalf of all her spiritual children. Before leaving the subject of Mary, Julian drives home two important principles: the declaration of her own meekness as she subordinates herself to the Virgin, and the interface of humility and exaltation.

The Transfigured Moment “without chongyng of his blisful chere”

A succession of intricate narrative transitions that surround Christ’s victory over death flows into Julian’s brief partaking in the divine perspective, in which she is suspended between intimacy and distance:

But I saw not Criste lawhyn; for I understode that we may lavhyn in comforting of ourselfe and ioying in God, for the devil is overcome. And then I saw him scorne his malice, it was be ledyng of myn understandyng into our lord, that is to sey, an inward sheweing of sothfastnes, without chongyng of chere; for, as to my sight, it is a worshipfull property that is in God, which is durabil. (Chapter 13)

The incrementally layered sequence of inversions in which the salvation unfolds instantly comes to a halt when Julian’s *beholds* the godhead’s “sothfastnes,” the “reality,” “certainty,” and “steadfastness” of divine “righteousness.”³⁸⁹ This extra dimension of *participatory sapience*, into which Julian’s “understandyng” is integrated, opens her intuitive consciousness to the deity’s permanent, “durabil” ontology and its manifestation in every moment. Moreover, the paradox of the divine *loin et près* is articulated in the contrast between the glorified Christ, who is not shown to engage in the impermanence of laughter,³⁹⁰ and Julian and humanity’s laughter of “ioying” in

³⁸⁹ MED, sothfastnes(se), n., senses 1a, 2a, and 3.

³⁹⁰ According to Watson and Jenkins, the “scorn of the devil is an honorable quality of God, which is permanent. Thus, it is not expressed as laughter, which is temporary” (*Showings*, 170). Nonetheless, Julian’s laughter, which erupts within the constraints of time, allows her to express her vision of eternity. See also Colledge and Walsh, 348.

God.” At the same time, the sonic similarity of “joying” (“to rejoice,” “enjoy,” and “honour”)³⁹¹ and “joyning” (“to unite”)³⁹² lessens the gap.

The divinity’s “sothfastnes, withoute chongyng of chere” (Chapter 13) as a signifier of the Resurrection’s eternal ramifications is revisited and contraposed in the Passion sequence in Chapter 21:

And ryth in the same tyme that methowte, be semyng, the life myght ne lenger lesten and the shewyng of the end behovyd nedis to be, sodenly, I beholdyng in the same crosse, he chongyd his blissfull chere. The chongyng of his blisful chere chongyd myn, and I was as glad and mery as it was possible.

Read against the biblical Passion narratives, Julian adds imaginative detail without resorting to graphic concretisation, in the process subtly raising the stakes on spiritual sight and challenging any obstinate tendencies to visualise affectively without progressing to the receptivity of *beholding*. As a semi-permanent porous boundary between the modes of devotion and contemplation, Christ’s *chere* lures her, and the reader, into the vision but bars them from entering under wrong parameters. The initially persuasive illusion of the real-world sight of the Passion from the perspective of Julian as a “historical” witness finally dissolves in the ambiguity of *chere* as pertaining to both “face” and “presence,”³⁹³ the nexus between these meanings invoking the incarnated deity’s nature. Theologically and narratively, her apprehension of the triune ontology substitutes referential sight with the visionary revelation of the “transfigured,” “full of the bliss and glory of heaven.”³⁹⁴ Crucially, the syntactic parallelism and tight collocation of Christ’s transfiguration with its effects on Julian (“he chongyd his blissfull chere. The chongyng of his blisful chere chongyd myn”) emanates into

³⁹¹ MED, *ioyen*, v., senses 3a, 4a, and 6a.

³⁹² MED, *ioinen*, v. (1), sense 3.

³⁹³ MED, *chere*, n. (1), sense 1a.

³⁹⁴ MED, *blisful*, adj., sense 2a.

anagogical and soteriological dimensions, generating a conceptual space for the reality of salvation within the world. It is the culmination of the entire process of reciprocal kenotic *oneing*.³⁹⁵

The *chongyng* replaces the biblical account of Christ's death, also omitting the hopelessness into which his disciples and followers fall. This substitution eliminates the time between his death on Good Friday up until his resurrection on Easter Sunday, as well as the period's resounding silence and sorrow of abjection. As a corollary, Julian forgoes any revelling in the immediacy of grief that visual and verbal depictions of the Pietà, Deposition, and Entombment intend to evoke because her central visionary theme is the Transfiguration. By abolishing the concepts of time and space after Christ's death, she centres on his triumph, although, corresponding to her mode of union, it is a silent and inward victory, and one whose unfurling encodes salvation in impressive brevity—once more, the realm of the symbolic is more suitable than linguistic definiteness to generate wonder and awe. Because the *chongyng of chere* is located in a liminal space that condenses demise and defeat into *nothingness*, supplanting them with the eternity of salvation, it reframes death as exponentiated life: divine “sothfastnes, withoute chongyng of chere” (Chapter 13). Following a series of threshold crossings from death/sin/sorrow to bliss, the succession and juxtaposition of opposites are shown to coinhere harmoniously in the divinity.

³⁹⁵ Windeatt traces Julian's reaction to 2 Corinthians 3:18: “But we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord” (*Revelations*, 216, footnote L.21/7-10). Marion Glasscoe attests to the significance of this reversal: “Julian's remaining revelations unpack what is concentrated in this changing of *chere*. [...] the outward shows of time have dissolved into a solution of joy. Changing of *chere* is the quick of the whole revelation, “Changing ‘Chere’ and Changing Text in the Eighth Revelation of Julian of Norwich,” *Medium Aevum* 66 (1997): 117. By the same token, Nuth argues that “this realization does not take away the reality of earthly suffering. Humans still suffer, and must deal with that as an important part of earthly life, since this is not yet the life of glory. [...] In fact, Christ himself continues to suffer on earth through human suffering [...]. We are one humanity with Christ [...]” (*Wisdom's Daughter*, 144).

Kinetic Stillness: “[g]ame, scorne and arneste”

In the penultimate narrative pivot, Julian lets the continually unfolding salvific act and the devil’s humiliation sit side by side:

And after this I fel into a sadhede and seid: ‘I se iii things [g]ame, scorne and arneste. I se [g]ame that the fend is overcome. I se scorne that God scornith him and he shal be scornyd. And I se arneste that he is overcome be the blissfull passion and deth of our lord Iesus Criste that was done in ful arneste and with sad travelle.’ (Chapter 13)

In the movement through “game, scorne and arneste,” Julian successively encapsulates the series of perspectival shifts she has undergone. These range from universal joy (“I se [g]ame”), to the godhead’s handling of the devil—phrased both as an indication of the former’s omnipotence and as an exhortation to imitation (“God scornith him and he shal be scornyd”)—to the “arneste” of divine eternity and the remembrance of the Passion’s “sad travelle.”³⁹⁶ At this point in her text, Julian puts a halt to the foregoing evolutionary sequence of reversals and collapses the rhythmic momentum she has created, in favour of displaying the correlative and mutually enforcing simultaneity of irreconcilables that present themselves in the Passion paradox. The phrase “[g]ame, scorne and arneste” denotes a kinetic stillness that juxtaposes and combines the metaphysically melodious with the diabolically discordant.³⁹⁷ This concentrated overlay of only seemingly antithetical affective responses closely resonates with the idiom “in earnest or in game(n),” meaning either “seriously or light-heartedly (playfully)” or “under all or any circumstances,”³⁹⁸ an allusion that intensifies her eschatological

³⁹⁶ In his erroneous translation of the passage, Tinsley incorrectly attributes sadness to Julian (“Julian’s Diabology,” 228.) However, her “sadhede” is a sign of her “constancy,” “seriousness” and the “gravity” of the encounter (MED, sadness(se), n., senses 2a and b).

³⁹⁷ Elizabeth Dutton’s analysis, according to which the phrase is “highly organized and rhetorical,” fails to grasp the apophatic intentionality behind its pithiness, *Julian of Norwich: The Influence of Late-Medieval Compilations* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 140.

³⁹⁸ MED, earnest., n., sense 1a.

topography's soteriological colouring.³⁹⁹ To cultivate an awareness of the gravity and vehemence of reversal in the wake of the Passion, Julian heightens her readers' identification with and as the saved by divorcing them from the necessity to choose between the structural components of the "[g]ame, scorne and arneste" conglomerate, at the same time deliberately consolidating the notion of miraculous *overcoming* in a verbal play on "game" as both "joy" and "jest."⁴⁰⁰

At this juncture in the text, Julian is able to dissect the devil into his temporal dimensions:

And I seid 'He is scornid', I mene that God scornith him: that is to sey, for he seeth him now as he shall done withoute end; for in this God shewid that the fend is dampnid; and this ment I when I seid 'He shall be scornyd': at domysday generally of all that shal be savyd, to hose consolation he hath gret invye; for than he shall seen that all the wo and tribulation that he hath done to them shal be turnid to ences of their joy without ende, and al the peyne and tribulation that he would a brougte hem to shal endlesly goe with him to helle. (Chapter 13).

In the divine point of view, the post-Resurrection devil's significance lies in his reconfiguration into a target for scorn, who is subjected throughout eternity. His *overcoming* happens in the past and present, where "God scornith him," the present, where "He is scorned" and the eternal present, where "he shall be scornyd." At the same time, the dual existence of the already defeated and simultaneously still to be annihilated *malum* positions him at the threshold of *noughting*, whose totality Julian and her *even cristen* will witness "at domysday."⁴⁰¹ She accents this mutual enfolding of the divinity and humanity in an explanatory gloss of the phrase "He shall be scornyd" by eliminating the subtext of the moral imperative (see page 170), therefore divesting the

³⁹⁹ MED, *ernest* n., sense 1b.

⁴⁰⁰ MED, *game*, n., senses 1a and 4a.

⁴⁰¹ Once more, the text remains ambiguous as to whether "all that shal be savyd" pertains to everyone or merely refers to an unfathomable percentage of the faithful. This is simply not Julian's kind of theology. Rather than evoking a crushing need for tropology or penitential cries for forgiveness, she aims to cultivate an apprehension of the magnitude of the divinity's love. See also footnote 328.

phrase of its connotations to metanoia. In this construction, the fiend will not be “scornyd” in a co-creative, though hierarchically graduated, effort of herself and the deity in this life, but humanity’s final triumph over evil amounts to their *beholding* of his temporality through the prism of God’s endlessness, “for he seeth him now as he shall done withoute end.”

In a final turnaround, Julian accentuates the redemptive aporia and splits the perspective as she depicts all postlapsarian agonies not only as punishments reflected back onto the devil (“and al the peyne and tribulation that he would a brougte hem to shal endlesly goe with him to helle”) but as permeable salvific membranes: “for than he shall seen that all the wo and tribulation that he hath done to them shal be turnid to ences of their ioy without ende” (Chapter 13). Because the *malum* is entirely externalised and actualised in the devil, any human impulses towards evil are absent in this segment.⁴⁰² Consequently, instead of invoking the *poena damni* at doomsday, her vision of the eschaton relegates the fiend alone to hell, whereas eternal life awaits those who have been purified by earthly suffering. This theologically imaginative outcome—not a resolution corresponding to Christian dogmatics—leaves no doubt that the transfigured result of creatural frailty is the devil’s destruction rather than the annihilation of the self. Julian thus closes the loop of consecutive reversals that the Passion has unleashed with the inevitable certainty of salvation.

⁴⁰² See also Bauschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 100.

The *poyn*te of Coincidence

In the progression of the *chongyng of chere*-passage in Chapter 21, the elimination of suffering goes hand in hand with the abrogation of dread: “Than browte our lord merily to my mynde: ‘Where is now ony *poyn*te of the peyne or of thin agreefe?’” As Gillespie and Ross, Baker, and Masson have demonstrated, Julian’s concept of *poyn*te is a recurring motif that paradoxically manifests the divinity:⁴⁰³

A vernacular rendering of the Latin *apex mentis*, Julian uses *point* to refer to the locus of the *imago Dei* enclosed within the soul. [...] As with any commonplace word, *point* has several meanings for Julian. Her most memorable use of the term comes at the beginning of the Third Revelation in the *Long Text* [...]: “And after this I saw God in a *poyn*te, that is to say, in my vnderstandyng, by which syght I saw that he is in althyng.”⁴⁰⁴

“Amongst the English mystics,” Wolfgang Riehle likewise argues, “it is only Julian who draws on this tradition in her famous image ‘I saw god in a *poyn*te,’ which she interprets as meaning that the deity is ‘in the myd *poyn*t of allthynges’ and will lead his creation back ‘in to the blessyd *poyn*t from thens it cam. that is god.”⁴⁰⁵ Julian’s *poyn*te follows a longstanding tradition that stretches back to the antique mystery religions and their use of the circle, as well as its midpoint, to signify divine infinity.⁴⁰⁶ These apophatic ciphers would subsequently also appear in the Pseudo-Dionysian school.⁴⁰⁷

In their explanation of *poyn*te, Colledge and Walsh offer a time-centred definition:

⁴⁰³ Gillespie and Ross, “Apophatic Image,” 72-3; Baker, “*Showings*,” 38-41; Masson, “Point of Coincidence,” 162-8.

⁴⁰⁴ Baker, “*Showings*,” 38. Her references are to Colledge and Walsh’s edition, which uses the Paris manuscript. Sloane reads: “And after this I saw God in a *poyn*te, that is to sey, in myn vnderstandyng, be which sight I saw that he is in al things” (Chapter 11).

⁴⁰⁵ (Sic). *The Middle English Mystics*, trans. Bernard Standring (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 83. Riehle cites from the Paris manuscript as edited by Sr Anna Maria Reynolds, “A Critical Edition of the Revelations of Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416), Prepared from all the Known Manuscripts with Introduction, Notes and Select Glossary” (PhD diss., Leeds University, 1956). The text in Sloane is: “I saw god in a *poyn*te” (Chapters 11, 52, 81); “mydde *poyn*t of allthyng” (Chapter 11); “to the blissid *poyn*t fro whens it came, that is God” (Chapter 63).

⁴⁰⁶ Riehle, *Mystics*, 83.

⁴⁰⁷ Reynolds, “Influences,” 24.

it has been suggested that Julian meant that she saw God as the centre of a circle, the universe, that the image is geometrical and the idea philosophical. This may be so; but it seems more probable that she meant ‘in an instant of time.’”⁴⁰⁸

Baker refutes this description and argues for a “spatial rather than [...] temporal” interpretation,⁴⁰⁹ citing a passage from Chapter 52, “And he is with vs in erth, vs ledyng; and that was shewde in þe thyrde, wher I saw god in a poynt,”⁴¹⁰ as well as the following segment from Chapter 81:

Owre good lorde shewde hym to his creature in dyverse manner both in hevyn and in erth; but I saw hym take no place but in mannis soule [...] he shewde hym in erth, where I seyde I saw god in a poynt.⁴¹¹

Yet, to attest to Julian a preoccupation with spatio-temporal dimensions would disregard her continued gesturing beyond any such finite categories. Her notion of *poynte* foregrounds the deity’s unfathomable limitlessness and fragments it into an apophatic *minimum*. As Masson states:

In the case of God being in the ‘myd point’ of all things, Julian suggests a space within the created where the Creator resides; likewise, in the case of seeing ‘god in a poynte’, Julian suggests a space in which she, a human being, can locate God, the divinity. In each instance, Julian’s ‘poynt[e]’ acts as a point of access to the divine [...] Julian’s “poynt(e)” can be understood as a point of access to the apophatic realm.”⁴¹²

Consequently, when the divinity invites Julian to ponder the question “Where is now ony poynte of the peyne or of thin agreefe?” (Chapter 21), he absorbs her into the *transfigured* moment because the concept of *poynte* evokes his infinitude and resonates

⁴⁰⁸ *Showings*, 336, footnote 3.

⁴⁰⁹ “*Showings*,” 38.

⁴¹⁰ Sloane reads: “and he is with us in erth us ledand, and that was shewid in the thrid, wher I saw God in a poynte.”

⁴¹¹ Sloane gives: “Our good lord shewid him in dyvers manners, both in hevyn, in erth, but I saw him take no place but in mannys soule. He shewid him in erth in the swete incarnation and in his blissid passion. And in other manner he shewid him in erth wher I sey: ‘I saw God in a poynte’ (Chapter 81).

⁴¹² “Point of Coincidence,” 163.

with the *soden* reversal of his incarnational suffering.⁴¹³ Thus, the unifying principle of *poynte* interweaves the depths of the human life with the deity, who transcends death. In this reading, any worldly anguish functions as a catalyst towards the apprehension of grace but is otherwise ontologically non-existent. By using a questioning modality, Julian omits the central biblical outcry “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”⁴¹⁴ and turns it on its head to model a methodology of seeing physical and spiritual pain, as well as sin and death, exclusively in terms of the eternal life.

The universal and the particular meet in the combination of the definite article and the personal pronoun in “the peyne” and “thin agreefe.” Furthermore, the operational word that multiplies *and* fragments the *poynte* is “now,” which questions the linearity of time and reinterprets it *sub specie aeternitatis*, in which it gestures towards the membrane between *sub lege* and *sub gratia*. “Now” that the agonies of the Passion have imbued suffering with salvific significance, the distressed will be rewarded for their agonies “in a poynte”— at any moment and endlessly. Christ’s transfiguration thus functions as the *poynte* of coincidence that modulates and *noughts* immense sorrow and pain, as well as any related types of dread.

Instead of dwelling on the nadir of deep sorrow, profound doubt, and silent desperation that marks the *triduum sacrum*, the time of anguish is condensed into the *transfigured/transfigurative poynte* of Christ’s *chongyng of chere* (Chapter 21), which is co-eternal with his “sothfastnes, withoute chongyng of chere” (Chapter 13). Where others might linger with the arresting images of Christ’s passing and its aftermath, Julian’s vision harnesses the didactic potential of eliminating the temporal linearity between death and eternal life. Consequently, she instructs her audience to interpret

⁴¹³ According to Gillespie and Ross, “The question [...] triggers a passover experience of overpassing understanding” (“Apophatic Image,” 76).

⁴¹⁴ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

periods of affliction as *poyns* within the divine perspective, fleeting moments, and personalised stations of the cross.

As part of the anchoress's intense commitment to the Passion-paradox, the personal and existential woes that go hand in hand with her *imitatio Christi* flow into the promise of her own transcendence, which is brought about by the divinity's initiative:

I understode that we be now, in our lords menyng, in his crosse with hym in our peynys and our passion, deyng; and we wilfully abydyng in the same cross with his helpe and his grace into the last poynte, sodenly he shall chonge his chere to us, and we shal be with hym in hevyn. Betwix that one and that other shal be no tyme, and than shal al be browte to ioy; and so mente he in this shewyng: 'Where is now ony poynt of thy peyne or thyn agreefe?' (Chapter 21)

Abstracted *poyns* of time extended (eternal/transfigured "now") and time eradicated (fallen "now") sustain the textual *telos* of reversal from the human to the divine perspective, and, therefore, Julian begins with a reference to the sapiential divine indwelling ("I understode") that is based on the deity's "intention,"⁴¹⁵ "mediation,"⁴¹⁶ and the "fellowship" with him⁴¹⁷ ("in our lords menyng"). The two present participles "deyng" and "abydyng" exemplify the ongoing matrix of co-suffering "in the same cross," but the syntax is purposefully ambivalent. "His helpe and his grace" could be the postcedent of "abiding in the same cross" or the antecedent of the shared "last poynte," and, consequently, suffering, dying, and eternal life coincide.⁴¹⁸ This promise illustrates the co-occurrence of the *chongyng of chere* with its "sothfastnes," (Chapter 13), hazed

⁴¹⁵ MED, mening(e), ger. (1), sense 1.

⁴¹⁶ MED, mening, (ger.), sense 1.

⁴¹⁷ MED, meninge, ger. (3), sense 1.

⁴¹⁸ *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* also discusses Christ's healing properties: "Here to acordyng spekeþ Seynt Austyn þus, Goddes son toke man & in hym he soffred that longeþ to man & was made medycyne of man. & this medycyne is so mykell þat it may nouzt be þouzt. For þer is no pryde bot [þat] it may be heled þruze [þe] mekenes of goddis sone. Per is no Couetyse bot þat it maye be heled thorgh is pouerte. [No] Wrath bot [þat] it may be heled throw his pacience. [No] Malice bot þat it may be heled þrowze his charite." In Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Critical Edition*, ed. Michael Sargent (London: Routledge, 2005), 9, ll. 21-28.

beyond the confines of transience because there is “no tyme” “betwixt that one and that other.” Accordingly, the hallmarks of the divine *coincidentia oppositorum* manifest themselves in the world, which is turned into the momentary and infinite beginning—a *poynt*—of the *fruitio Dei*.

When Christ’s apophatic embodiment in Julian’s vision surmounts the self-contained aspects of spiritual and physical woundedness,⁴¹⁹ she starts to be absorbed into the transcendent and unknowable *poynte* that the incarnated divine body signifies. Amy Hollywood, drawing on Drew Leder, maintains that the deity’s material absence is bridged by Christ’s lacerated body, whose very wounds suggest the divine presence. The godhead is particularly understood as immanent in the incarnated body’s divergence from the constraints of created experience,⁴²⁰ such as in Julian’s anagogical abundance of blood.

Because she is still in the world but now able to intuit the beyond, the anchoress engages with the incarnational enigma through a densely layered insertion of herself, and the readership, into the threshold between embodiment and transcendence. Accordingly,

if he shewid now us his blissful chere ther is no peyne in erth, nor in other place, that should us agrevyn, but al things should be to us ioy and blisse. But for he shewith to us time of passion as he bare in this life and his crosse, therefore we arn in desese and travel with hym as our frelete askyth. And the cause why he suffrith is for he wil of his godeness make us the heyer with hym in his bliss; and for this litil peyne that we suffre here we shal have an hey, endles knowyng in God, whych we myght never have without that. And the harder or peynys have ben with him in his cross, the more shall our worshippe be with hym in his kyngdom. (Chapter 21)

⁴¹⁹ On the intimately personal nature of pain, see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 256.

⁴²⁰ *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 13; Drew Leder, *The Absent Body* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).

Julian's return to the complexities of *chere* enhances the depth of her apophatic *poynte*. Once more, she converges time and eternity, in this instance through a series of repetitions of "with him/hym" (four times), bliss(e)(ful) (thrice), "heyer"/"high," and "he shewid/shewith," which is reiterated twice to further illustrate the deity's initiative to share his perspective. Composing theology with the stylistic and structural means of parallelism, she speaks to the theological simultaneity and congruence of co-suffering ("with hym as our frelete askyth") and salvation ("with hym in his bliss"). Because she understands pain in terms of its (ontological, not conceptual) absence through Christ's "blissful chere," "al things should be to us ioy and blisse."⁴²¹ When the segment does invoke creatural weakness, it contrasts "this litil peyne that we suffre here" with the "hey, endles knowyng in God:" Julian correlates *participatory sapience* and suffering, as well as temporality and the beyond, reinterpreting the *via dolorosa* as a *via unitiva*.⁴²²

A dual possibility of interpretation of the phrase "as our frelete askyth" reveals the benefits of tribulation: this type of *imitatio Christi* could be intended as a necessary purgation, while suffering also provides the readership with points of access into the Passion's magnitude. Creatural frailty is here considered from every angle, and it is not merely a matrix for the apprehension of the godhead but is indeed the *conditio sine qua non* for any engagement with the ineffable. The essences of humanity and divinity coincide in the *transfigured poynte*.

⁴²¹ For this reason, she appends: "ther is no peyne in erth, nor in other place, *that should us agrevyn*" (my emphasis), an allusion to the *noughting* of Hell.

⁴²² As always, lexis is important. The "endless knowyng in God" (my emphasis) does not refer to a certain knowledge of the transcendental Signified but to his kenotic outpouring.

The Linguistic and Theological Dissolution of the Diabolical Manifestations into *Nothingness*

As a sophisticated thematic expansion on Chapter 13, Chapters 66 and 68, which detail Julian's first and second devilish temptation, trace her grappling with an entirely differently realised, and more physically pronounced, formulaic fiend. Whereas in the foregoing, he is swiftly and repeatedly undermined in the abstract to reveal his theological *nothingness*, her personal encounters with the *malum* necessitate a more vigorous response, and an intricate series of linguistic manoeuvres that theologically deconstruct him. At the same time, her maximum eschatological confidence is grounded in the certainty that the devil has already been *overcome for her*—therefore, the figure of the fiend merely constitutes a narrative substructure that constantly and powerfully alludes to the godhead's grace.

Throughout these tribulations, Julian uses her personal example to instruct her readers in the technique of kenotic self-effacement,⁴²³ swiftly segueing from a penitential to a soteriological mode, and reversing her spiritual and physical anguish by adopting the divine perspective.⁴²⁴ This type of wisdom, however, has to be acquired through suffering.⁴²⁵ To Julian, despair as a venial sin and misguided response to affliction is a fundamentally postlapsarian wound that only true faith can cauterise. Thus, she recognises that its detailed declension would be detrimental to her text's

⁴²³ The detachment from the ego is, of course, a commonplace in the literatures of tribulation, which enjoyed great popularity in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Julian's emphasis on soteriology instead of self-vilification is, however, remarkable. For the genre of tribulation, see Douglas Gray, "Books of Comfort," in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature. Essays in Honour of G.H. Russell*, eds. Gregory Kratzmann and James Simpson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1986), 209-221; Ellen M. Ross, *The Grief of God. Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 33; Sarah Macmillan, "'Well Saved in Suffering': Male Piety in Late-Medieval Tribulation Texts," *Reading Medieval Studies* 43 (2017): 58.

⁴²⁴ On penitential elements in Julian's text, see Lynn Staley, "The Penitential Psalms: Conversion and the Limits of Lordship," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 237-44; Jill Sirko, "Making 'Penance Profytable': Julian of Norwich and the Sacrament of Penance," *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures* 41, no. 2 (2015): 163-186.

⁴²⁵ See Haas, *Mystik als Aussage*, 341.

teleology. Conversely, the inclusion of her steadfastness within the textual architecture of tribulation discloses a series of efficacious strategies and routes of understanding that heighten the work's mystagogical and pastoral import, as will be explored below.

At these points of crisis, the narrative demands an additional dimension of readerly engagement by supplying a carefully nuanced mode of unification with the divine during, and through, times of adversity. At the forefront of these chapters lies the provision of a template that allows for the infusion of potentially troublesome periods with *sekir truste* (Chapter 1) in the godhead's loving presence. Because despair is an affective reaction that Julian collocates with *doubtfull drede* and *acedia/sloth* projected onto the divinity (Chapter 73), ignoring this human tendency would disregard the readership's real-life struggles, whereas any such doubts are burned in the fires of enduring and *overcoming*. By trusting in the deity's benevolent presence, Julian develops a resilience of *kynde* and utilises her divinely bestowed faculties to face any calamity that might befall her. Ultimately, this hermeneutical framework releases her from the devil and his effects in the world and the afterlife, which altogether amounts to a potent detachment from the eternal *malum* and sin.

Precisely through the modality of the physical, and especially through its abundance, Julian transcends it—an apophatic strategy *par excellence*. The topos of the Three Enemies of Man, pertaining to the world, the flesh, and the devil, thus receives a differentiated treatment, whereby only the latter is regarded as intrinsically vile. Her task in Chapters 66 and 69, then, is not to pursue love, but to internalise that it is already given abundantly and hold it dear, seeking to expose the barriers she has built within herself against it. In the process, she hands her audience the seeds of holistic

illumination that transfigures the human experience in the fallen world.⁴²⁶ The following is a ruminative study of Chapters 66, 69, and related parts.

The *ludus amoris* and the Anagogical Perspective: The First Diabolical Encounter and the Recalibration of Suffering

Julian refers to her first encounter with the devil as borne out of her “febilnes, wretchidnes and blindness” (Chapter 66) that lets her question the veracity of her visions.⁴²⁷ As causes and effects of her perceived sinfulness, the emphasis of this triad on deficiency suggest a disconnect with the godhead,⁴²⁸ and yet, these conditions are integral to creatural existence, not the least because they necessitate a transfigurational perspective. The concept of *soden* reversal plays an intrinsic part in Julian’s theological universe.⁴²⁹ Even though the textual focus lies on the dissolution of any spiritual restrictions, they have to be undergone first before they can be overcome. As they transport the individual from scratching the surface of their being to digging deep into the bedrock, they pose two existential questions: what is the purpose of life, and can the self be known? These fundamental queries, which ultimately illustrate the limits of the discursive mind, cannot be solved simply by ignoring or denying times of difficulty, pain, and failure but acquire deep resonance through their inclusion and resolution within Julian’s theology of an omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and

⁴²⁶ See footnote 321.

⁴²⁷ Riehle’s contention that “in contrast to other visionaries, she never has the faintest doubt in the authenticity of her visions” (“im Gegensatz zu anderen Visionärinnen [hegt sie] nie den leisesten Zweifel an der Authentizität ihrer Gesichte”) is factually incorrect (*Mystik des Mittelalters*, 300).

⁴²⁸ For the notion of sin as an inversion of the natural order, see Haas, *Mystik als Aussage*, 330.

⁴²⁹ For a similar sentiment, see Claire Banchich, “A hevynly joy in a dredfulle soule:” Julian of Norwich’s Articulations of Dread,” in *Fear and its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 326. Amy Appleford speaks of the “urgent knowledge of the self as human, naturally corrupt, a fragile, weak, finite being whose sinful nature is essential to bone and body” that tribulation instills in *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 104.

omnibenevolent God.⁴³⁰ To this end, self-knowledge and the faculty of the will are invoked, only to be discarded as detrimental in the matrix of *noughting*, in which the human will melts into the *voluntas Dei*.

However, as a ploy counteracting the fallen mind's unceasing quest for knowledge, Julian withholds any taxonomic step-by-step plans, opting instead for a series of carefully constructed, though adequately vague and multidimensional, remedies, which will be discussed below. Whereas this initial type of strategic curtailment activates an intuited understanding of the godhead's magnitude, the focus is simultaneously steered away from the devil's potentially fascinating hideousness. Consequently, the endless generation of questions that her apophatic textualisation of the divinity engenders starkly contrasts with the fiend's decisive textual truncation. Systematically, he is turned into an unexpected apophatic signifier himself, an absent presence and a black hole that absorbs any cognitive efforts, instead redirecting them to the deity.

As discussed above, the *Long Text* increasingly privileges the symbolic over the referential, and Julian's multimodal representation of the devil follows a similar interpretational course, though one that results in a markedly different outcome. The key to this reading is embedded in a passage in Chapter 66 that immediately precedes his appearance, in which he is already caught in the process of deconstruction:

I have seid in the begynnyng 'And in this al my peine was sodenly taken from me'; of which peyne I had no grefe, no disese, as long as the xv shewings lested folowand; and at the end al was close and I saw no more. And sone I felt that I shuld liven and langiren; and anon my sekenes cam agen: first in my hede, with a sound and a dynne; and sodenly all my body was fu[l]fillid with sekenes like as it was afor, and I was as baren and drye as I never had comfort but litil. And as a

⁴³⁰ There is an argument to be made for classifying Julian's text as a book of comfort. Gray, however, distinguishes between works that contain "consolatory elements," among which he counts Julian's, and treatises that are "designed expressly for 'comfort'" ("Books of Comfort," 210). This classification fails to grasp the intricate dynamics between tribulation and its dissolution in the perspective that "al shal be wel" (Chapter 27).

wretch I moned and hevyed for felyng of my bodily pey[n]es and for fayling of comfort, gostly and bodily.

As Julian exits her fifteenth showing, the distinction between wretched human existence and the godhead's ontology becomes temporarily more pronounced. This seeming dichotomy plays out as a fall from highest to lowest, and from supreme joy to the excruciating pain of perceived divine absence. The profound realisation in this segment that living entails, and even equals, "langiren" is in principle not far removed from the devil's Sisyphean pursuits in Chapter 13, and yet opposes them in directional emphasis. On the level of register and lexis, the combination of "werken" and "travaillen" firmly situates the devil in the world,⁴³¹ whereas the human "langiren" refers to the creatural potential to transcend it.⁴³² The longing for God, therefore, saves the soul from destruction, whereas the desire to corrupt souls leads to *nothing*.

In concordance with Julian's abstracting tendencies, the multi-layered and endless desire for Christ is encapsulated in extreme brevity in the verb "langiren." Not only does the alliterative connection in the phrase "liven and langiren" create a mnemonic shorthand that merges the two,⁴³³ but the preceding "shuld" expresses her duty to utilise the here and now for the cultivation of a deep desire for the *fruitio Dei*. Two further foundational principles are contained in the compounding of "liven and

⁴³¹ MED, werken, v. (1), senses 5ab, 7a, 15, and 16. Also note the overtones of pain that "werken" and "travaillen" encompass. MED, werken, v. (2), senses 1a, b, and c. and "travaillen," senses 4a-4c.

⁴³² Pelphrey argues that Julian's "'longing' actually means more than conscious longing or desire. It refers to a deep *need*" (*Love Thee*, 281, original emphasis). See also Domenico Pezzini, "The Language and Doctrine of Desire in Julian of Norwich's Revelations," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 46 (2011): 305-35. Longing for God is naturally a foundational pillar of the contemplative life and plays a prominent role in Richard Rolle and Walter Hilton's works. See also Glasscoe, *Games of Faith*, 79-81; 126. On the erotic dimensions of the term and practice, see Riehle, *Mystics*, chapter 3 and MED, longen, v. (1), sense 1a. There is, however, little eroticism in Julian's devotion to Christ, whose body she *beholds* as a transcendent signifier. Rowan Williams' explanation is elucidating: "Signs are signs of what they are not; they are transformations of the world by reordering it, not destroying it, so that the tension of 'otherness' remains, itself part of the fluid and dynamic nature of sign-making. The object relocated and worked at in the process of making sense does not disappear in the process: it is still itself in the new context." *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 207. See also footnote 518 for Pelphrey's analysis of Julian's modes of prayer.

⁴³³ On the mnemonic function of abbreviation, see Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought. Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 117.

langiren;” these are the notion of a gulf between human and divine modes of presence and understanding as well as the conceptualisation of the postlapsarian life as a permeable membrane between the heavenly and earthly realms.

Julian’s spiritual drought following an abundance of illumination reimagines the final moments of Christ’s life, when all preceding glory seems to have vanished. As in the biblical account, the connection to the godhead seems to be lost, and she therefore contends that “al was close” and she “saw no more.”⁴³⁴ A phase of experiencing God, like Christ on the cross, as *absconditus* follows, in which she becomes “as baren and drye” and “never had comfort but litil.” This reverberation of Christ’s “drye and blodeles” face (Chapter 16) already buries a textual lead into the generative matrix of woe.⁴³⁵ Since his d(r)ying configures him from figural to non-figural and transfigured,⁴³⁶ the deity’s perceived hiddenness at this point in the text does not indicate his actual absence: “Christ, the Perfect Lover [...],” contends René Tixier, “delights in joining this game of hide-and seek, whetting his beloved’s desire by delaying the sweet moment of encounter.”⁴³⁷

Julian’s barren dryness thus not only signifies a physical collapse but a momentary standstill of transcendental procreation that nonetheless already carries the

⁴³⁴ On the importance of the sense of sight in Julian’s revelations, see Roland Maisonneuve, “The Visionary Universe of Julian of Norwich: Problems and Methods,” in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England. Papers Read at the Exeter Symposium, July 1980*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1989), 86-98; Catherine Willits, “The Obfuscation of Bodily Sight in the *Showings* of Julian of Norwich,” *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 8, no. 1 (2014): 81-96. See also footnote 14.

⁴³⁵ See also Frances Beer, *Women and Mystical Experience in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1992), 148.

⁴³⁶ Gillespie and Ross, “Apophatic Image,” 62-77.

⁴³⁷ Tixier, “Good Gamesumli Pley,” 236. Underhill’s definition in *Mysticism* (227) is enlightening: “The mystics have a vivid metaphor by which to describe that alternation between the onset and the absence of the joyous transcendental consciousness which forms as it were the characteristic intermediate stage between the bitter struggles of pure Purgation, and the peace and radiance of the Illuminative Life. They call it *Ludus Amoris*, the ‘Game of Love’ which God plays with the desirous soul. [...] The ‘Game of Love’ is a reflection in consciousness of that state of struggle, oscillation and unrest which precedes the first unification of the self. It ceases when this has taken place and the new level of reality has been attained.” See also Barry Windeatt, *English Mystics of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 288, note 6.

seeds of reversal. Furthermore, the paradox of “never” having any comfort but still having “litol” alludes to the laws of the *ludus amoris*, which suffuses any hardships with love. Instead of casting the body and the flesh as entirely abject and perturbing—though necessary—components of life that have to be annihilated, her somatic breakdown acts as a dynamo that sets off the textual reconfiguration of abjectness into its opposite. Suffering, according to Amy Appleford, necessitates “a controlled form of self-loss,”⁴³⁸ and Julian’s divinely willed period of cleansing, which is only about to begin, requires an incremental effacement of the self. The anagogical interpretation of the complexities of embodiment thus reenvisions Julian’s body as a *corpus mysticum*—an instrument and a signifier of grace.⁴³⁹

Sekyn, suffrin and trosten

Julian’s descent into sickness in Chapter 66 initially takes place on an auditory level, as “a sound and a dyne.” A mockery of the sacred truths she has received in silence, their indefinite but loud and boisterous character obscures the preceding contemplative stillness.⁴⁴⁰ As a sign of her affliction, she responds in kind and “moned and hevye” in pain, echoing the Servant’s “monyng” in Chapter 51. Both are vexed with the discomfort that follows the loss of unmediated love and insight previously enjoyed.

⁴³⁸ *Learning to Die*, 118.

⁴³⁹ On the confluence of text and body in the concept of *corpus mysticum*, see David E. Salomon, “Corpus Mysticum: Text as Body/Body as Text,” in *Intersections of Sexuality and the Divine in Medieval Culture. The Word Made Flesh*, ed. Susannah Mary Chewning (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 142. See also Bauerschmidt, *Mystical Body Politic*, 197.

⁴⁴⁰ The connection between stillness and silence should not be taken as a reference to *nothingness*, or absence. Quite on the contrary, contemplative silence is “not the opposite of turmoil but the ground of both turmoil and tranquility.” It is “formative and developmental,” because it tames the discursive mind.” Martin Laird, *A Sunlit Absence, Silence, Awareness, and Contemplation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47.

Julian's temporary acoustic and affective approximation of the soundscape of hell demonstrates the sudden shift from the exclusively divine to the diabolic.

In Chapter 10, she has already provided her readers with a remedial framework for enduring the challenges that the perceived shift from the *deus revelatus* to the *deus absconditus* entails:

the continual sekynge of the soule plesith God ful mekyl; for it may do no more than sekyn, suffrin and trosten, and this [is] wrought in the soule that hath it be the Holy Ghost; and the clernes of fyndyng is of his special grace whan it is his will. The sekynge with feith, hope and charite plesyth our lord, and the finding plesyth the soule and fulfillith it with ioy. And thus was I lernyd to myn vnderstandyng that sekynge is as good as beholdyng for the tyme that he will suffer the soule to be in travel.

In this reading, even times of apparent separation from God offer their rewards because they afford Julian the opportunity to put into practice the tenets of her unwavering faith. The tripartite modality of “sekyn, suffrin and trosten” functions as a blueprint for a spiritually profitable game with the divinity, who continually observes his creation's progress towards him. At the same time, a distinction into the phrase's constituent parts integrates all aspects of lived reality, where tribulation awaits and suffering will test the individual's loving devotion. Once more, Julian creates theology by recourse to the stylistic device of alliteration: since the soul is the place of convergence between the deity and the created, the “sekynge of the soule plesith God,” and “sekynge” and “suffrin” are inscribed into and “wrought in the soule.” The invocation and simultaneous suspension of the will, to which “sekyn” “suffrin” and “trosten” gesture, exemplify the continual *knitting* together through these categories.⁴⁴¹ Moreover, a variant of the verb “werken” again reveals a concentration of meaning. In this case, the passive form mingles the envisioned human *modus agendi* with the godhead's intentionality. The illumination that “sekyn, suffrin and trosten” are “wrought in the soule” refers to the

⁴⁴¹ On the overlay of suffering and consenting in *The Cloud*, see Tixier, “Good Gamesumli Pley,” 238-9.

soul's divine origin, its anagogical potential, and its intrinsic desire to return to the deity through these very means.

Subtly utilising the sonic similarity of *sekyng* with the conditions of “sekenes” and “sekirnes,”⁴⁴² Julian merges her fallen embodiment with its metaphysical elevation. It is, however, essential to calibrate the method of play, or *sekyng*, to avoid a broad spectrum of misleading responses that stretches from an aimless search to the curiosity of the wits. Alongside the important concept of *beholding*,⁴⁴³ *seeking* “to the beholding of him”⁴⁴⁴ (Chapter 10) “goes beyond normal human modes of inquiry and analysis. [...] Seeking into ‘beholding’ is the core work of Julian’s response to her showings. It is also a viable critical methodology for reading Julian’s account of her work.”⁴⁴⁵ As a hermeneutical dynamic, *seeking* is realised through the three theological virtues “feith, hope and charite,” which are divinely infused and further require the exercise, and surrender, of the will.⁴⁴⁶ In the paradox of intention, the technique and the *unio* to which it can lead thus reflect one another.

Subsequently, the kenotic self-loss is abstracted even further because it emanates from the “Holy Ghost.” Though it might be a challenging undertaking, it is no gruelling work,⁴⁴⁷ because the focal point rests on the fulfilling mutual embrace, to which Julian

⁴⁴² Gillespie, “Seek, Suffer and Trust,” 142.

⁴⁴³ See footnote 14.

⁴⁴⁴ Gillespie calls attention to the different reading in Paris: “seke into the beholding of hym” would necessitate a systematic and methodical approach to *beholding*. “[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 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer: 2008), 194.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ See Martin Waldron, “Virtue,” in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles Herbermann (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), URL <<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15472a.htm>>.

⁴⁴⁷ While the *Contemplations* advises to suffer with gladness as well, it contrasts with Julian because it demands a self-reflexive accusation that emphasises the gulf between humans and the deity: “What time þou art trauailed sore wiþ temptacions and grucchist not aʒenes God, but wiþ a glad herte and þonkinges to God þou suffrest hem loueliche, and þenkest wiel it is chastesing to þe for þi sinnes, þan is þi wil stable. And whan þou desirest non hie reward in blisse for þi goode liuinge or gostliche trauaile whiche þou hast her in erþe, but onliche at Godis wil what he wol dispose for þe, and noþing at þi wil, þan þou hast a resonable wil” (28, ll. 85-91).

alludes through the adoption and interpenetration of her God's ontology ("charite") and the human vocabulary of love ("feith" and "hope").

In times of tribulation, Julian thus counsels, "sekyng is as good as beholdyng," because this type of divestment implies an unabated devotional focus on the godhead. She thus constructs a route not *around* but *through* (in its double sense as "across" and "by means of") the challenges that her audience will have to undergo. Contrary to the enigmatic arts of *beholding* and *seeking*, "the clernes of fyndyng" promises certainty,⁴⁴⁸ though Julian immediately subdues any impulses towards the concrete with a reference to indeterminacy. Such clarity will only be bestowed "of his special grace whan it is his will."

The collapse of the sensory and bodily, namely Julian's barren dryness and her inability to apprehend the presence of the transcendental Signified at the beginning of her diabolical vexation, indicate a crisis of referentiality and a breakdown of all hermeneutical modes that do not centre on *seeking*, suffering, and trusting. However, whereas she fleetingly falls prey to a form of *doubtfull drede* in her visionary gifts,⁴⁴⁹ she never questions the deity's existence—a position that would have been unthinkable to her⁴⁵⁰—but deconstructs her temporary psychology of lack because it opposes her theology of abundance.

The theme of God-inflicted suffering as a purgative device that enables the afflicted to cross the threshold to the immeasurable Other reverberates throughout the centuries in the literatures of contemplation, devotion, and catechetical instruction. In

⁴⁴⁸ Gillespie interprets this phrase as a reference to the illumination through the infinite *lux Christi*: "Colours of Contemplation," 22.

⁴⁴⁹ The MED expounds that doubt and dread can perform similar semantic functions: *dout(e)*, n. senses 3 and 4 relate to fear.

⁴⁵⁰ Only for the sake of scholastic argument was God's existence ever disputed publicly. For Aquinas's two *quaestiones*, see Dorothea Weltecke, "Doubts and the Absence of Faith," in *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, ed. John H. Arnold (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 358-9.

William Flete's *Remedies Against Temptations*, this form of *ludus amoris* requires the relinquishment of any fear-based attitudes:

O 3e goddis childern þat scharply ben vexed with tribulacions and temptacions, comforte 3e 3ou in 3oure benynge fadir, þat seyth to 3ou in holy writ be his profete: My childern, þou3 3e go in the feir, drede 3ou not, for the flaume schal not dere 3ou, as who seyth, 3e my chyldern þat ben cristen people and in good wil to do weel, þou3 3e go in the feer of tribulacion and tempacion, drede 3e not, for it schal be arettid to 3ou for no perel of soule, but þoru3 my goodnesse and the merites of my passyon, it schal turne to 3ou to gret helpe and profyfte of soule.⁴⁵¹

Similarly, *The Chastising of God's Children* speaks of the "sharpe dartis of his love"⁴⁵² with which "god woundip his chosen children, whan he wondip þe soule inward and cesith of his betyng outward, for þanne he smyteþ þe hardnesse of oure herte wiþ his desire; but whanne he smyteþ he helip."⁴⁵³ While Flete invokes the imagery of flames as a tripartite signifier of hell on earth, the fire of judgement, and cauterisation to make sense of suffering, *The Chastising* uses the register of warfare.⁴⁵⁴ Yet, further on in the text, *The Chastising* overlays the figure of the punitive deity with that of the loving divine mother:

And whanne oure lord suffrith us to be tempted in oure bigynnyng, he pleieþ wiþ us as þe modir with hir child, whiche sumtyme fleeth awei and hideth hir, and suffreþ þe child to wepe and crie and besili to seke hir wiþ sobbyng and wepyng. But þanne comeþ the modir sodeinli wiþ mery chier and lauzhyng, biclippynge hir child and kissyng, and wipeþ awei þe teeris: þus fariþ oure lord wiþ us, as for a tyme he wiþdraweþ his grace and his comfort from us [...].⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵¹ *The Third English Version of William Flete*, eds. Edmund Colledge and Noel Chadwick (Rome: ABDE, 1968), 229, ll. 25-32. This text circulated widely in the original Latin, and several English editions. For its influence on Julian, see Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, 126, 212, 216, 242-4, 260, 272, 278, 340-2, 344, 350-2; Gillespie, "Ese and Disese," 130-141, esp. footnote 7.

⁴⁵² *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, eds. Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 146, l. 19.

⁴⁵³ 146, ll. 8-11.

⁴⁵⁴ The *Contemplations* codify the efforts behind earthly restlessness similarly: "For what of oure owne freltee, what bi þe malice and envie þat þe fend haþ to ous, we ben euer in þis world in gostliche batail, more or lasse, bi þe suffrans of God" (29, ll. 8-10).

⁴⁵⁵ *Chastising*, 98, ll. 3-10. Colledge and Walsh also see parallels between this passage and Julian's theology (*Showings*, 604, footnote 35).

This maternal analogy smooths over the painful junction between abandonment/*seken* and the pleasures of being found again/*biclippen*. Likewise, Flete makes use of the affective symbolism of relation, but he again differs in collocation—tribulation is brought about either by “þe feend” who “putte in 3ou ony þou3t of dispeir” or by the “chastysyng of god.”⁴⁵⁶ By expanding on the particulars of punishment, he heightens the play between physical and metaphysical scourging:

For oure lord god dooth lyke a lovyng modir; a louyng modir þat is wys and weel tau3t, sche wole þat here childern be vertuouse and weel norischid, and if sche may knowe ony of hem with a defau3te, sche wole 3eue hem a knocke on the heed, and if thei haue don a gret defaute, sche wole 3eue hem a buffet yndir the cheke, and if thei haue don | a grettere trespas, sche wole bylasche hem scharpely.⁴⁵⁷

Julian herself utilises the topos of motherly castigation as well, though she differs starkly in tone and theological underpinning when she writes that a:

moder may suffre the child to fallen sumtyme and be disesid in dyvers manners for the owen profitt, but she may neve(r) suffre that ony maner of peril cum to the child, for love. And thow our erthly moder may suffre hir child to perishen, our hevenly moder Iesus may not suffre us that arn his children to perishen; for he is almyty, all wisdom and al love; and so is non but he. (Chapter 61)

While the child is left to cry in *The Chastising* and hit repeatedly to bring about tropological betterment in the *Remedies*, Julian’s God causes the child “to fallen” just like Adam: fortunately, “for the owen profitt,” and without “ony [...] peril.” In this interpretation, tribulation becomes a paradigm for fully realised love on both sides, leaving no room for dread of physical pain, and casting out desolation and anguish. A clear distinction between “erthly” and “hevenly” motherhood leads into the symbolic

⁴⁵⁶ *Remedies*, 234, l. 38; 235, l. 7.

⁴⁵⁷ *Remedies*, 235, ll.8-13 *The Chastising* adopts the motherhood of God symbolism from the *Stimulus Amoris*, whereas Flete’s earlier *Remedies* modifies the *Ancrene Wisse*. See Colledge and Chadwick’s introduction to *Remedies*, 205.

territory of the deity and, by extension, into divinely inflicted suffering.⁴⁵⁸ Affliction is here located beyond, and yet including, worldly pains because “moder Iesus may not suffre us that arn his children to perishen.” The crux of these three passages above, however, is the convergence of the intensely personal procedures of *purgatio* and *simplificatio*. Only the self-conceptualisation as a child prepares the reader to respond to the heavenly mother with the simplicity that the internalisation of profound awe requires.

Variations on Resounding Silence

With this frame of reference in mind, the exploration of Julian’s wretchedness in Chapter 66 engages with the psychological ramifications of “fayling of comfort, gostly and bodily.” This is achieved by opening the divide between the earthly, ecclesiastical, and contemplative realms:

Than cam a religious person to me and askid me how I ferid. And I seyde I had ravid today, and he leuhe loud and inderly. And I seyde: ‘The cross that stod afor my face, methowte it blode fast.’ And with this word the person that I spake to waxid al sad and mervelid. And anon I was sor ashamid and astonyd for my recleshede, and I thowte: ‘This man takith sadly the lest word that I myte seyen than saw I no mor therof.’ And whan I saw that he toke it sadly and with so gret reverens, I wepid, ful gretly ashamid, and wold have ben shrevyn; but at that tyme I cowde tell it no priest. (Chapter 66)⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ The topos of God as mother often includes “discipline and testing,” which leads to a “balance of justice and love, distance and intimacy:” Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother. Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 190. The play of the divine near and far is thus acutely realised in the maternal God. On the important theme of God as mother in Julian’s work, see pages 51-52, 68-69, and footnote 98.

⁴⁵⁹ On the importance of confession, see Thomas Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 104–33. For Margery Kempe’s reticence to be shriven because of priestly overzeal, see *Book*, 52-4, ll. 183-201. In contrast to Julian, she blames the devil for keeping her from confession. The resulting hopelessness leads to further temptation.

The religious initially mimics her denial, though in a more benevolent manner, by breaking out in a type of laughter that is a mirror reaction to her scepticism.⁴⁶⁰ Since the object of his reaction is her contention that she “ravid” rather than the content of her vision itself, his reaction juxtaposes the brief break in the anchoress’s resolve with his belief in her. The instability of judgement she suffers points to the essential inbetweenness of the contemplative in the world and exemplifies the swiftness with which the connection to the divinity can be lost in the *game of love* if the frame of reference is merely human.

More impactful, however, is the sudden reverse, and the religious’s awe after hearing about the bleeding cross. This is a reimagining of the topos of laughter giving way to reverent silence (Chapter 13) but with modified coordinates and a different outcome. Though parallel in form, with both the religious’s and Julian’s reaction structured around communication/communion and its result, the former’s transition from disbelief to belief and the anchoress’s doubts diverge in function: the religious erupts and falls silent because he has presumably slipped into rapture or rumination, whereas the textualisation of Julian’s disclosure is infinitely more complex. As a central pillar of her apophatic leanings, silence has acted as a breeding ground for divine illumination, but in this case, the religious adopts her key hermeneutical mode, is overcome with wonder, and his quietness is thus reverential, while her silence is reconfigured as penitential. This reaction is further complicated by the divergent reading in the Paris manuscript: “this man takyth sadly the lest worde that I myght sey,

⁴⁶⁰ Felicity Riddy interprets the religious’s laughter as approval as well, arguing that as a member of the clerical community, he would have been familiar with the literature and language of the visionary realm: “‘Women Talking About the Things of God:’ A Late Medieval Sub-Culture” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 115. Colledge and Walsh argue that “he must have been in her confidence for her to have mentioned the matter to him at all” (Introduction to *Showings*, 168). Windeatt even makes the case for the priest as the “origin of her subsequent career and text. His earnest, reverent response [...] helps renew her faith” (*Revelations*, 270). Windeatt, however, zooms in on the second part of the priest’s response without explaining the sudden change from uncontrolled response to ruminative reflection, and from worldly absorption of knowledge to transfigured *beholding*.

that sawe no more therof” (Sloane reads: “*than saw P*”).⁴⁶¹ We are offered two explanations: Paris prefers a straightforward line of interpretation, in which Julian’s sense of contrition is set in motion because even someone who has not climbed the contemplative heights with her takes her account seriously.⁴⁶² Sloane, on the other hand, inserts a pun, using the ambiguity of “saw” as meaning “seeing” and “saying” to confound her visionary barrenness with her reticence to expound on her revelations.⁴⁶³ The wording in the *Short Text* conflates these layers: “this man takys it sadlye, the leste worde that I myght saye, *that says na mare perto*” (Chapter 21, my emphasis) seems to have given rise to the these diverging foci on saying and seeing as well as to the different emphases on Julian or the religious in Sloane and Paris. The underlying theme of the two silences is the anchoress’s gradual regaining of her anagogical *telos*, which is masterfully contrasted with the priest’s sudden abundance of insight—participatory understanding of *kynde*.

We must, however, also bear in mind another facet of the purely interpersonal dimension. Temporarily, the psychological complexities of opening up and speaking about the *magnum mysterium* prove too much, and Julian collapses under the responsibility that her revelations entail to understand and disseminate. Though she does not concretise whether doubt, dread, or a resulting excess of purely egocentric self-loathing were the cause for her corrupted *discretio spirituum*, she recognises it as a “venial synne” (Chapter 66) and ignites the process of true repentance.⁴⁶⁴ To her, the religious’s silence goes to the core of contemplation itself: now situated in everyday consciousness, she has briefly failed to disentangle transcendence retrospectively. On

⁴⁶¹ Colledge and Walsh agree (633, note 22; my emphasis).

⁴⁶² This crisis *and* denouement is a testament to the importance Julian places on ecclesiastical approval.

⁴⁶³ MED, *sen*, v. (1), sense 1a; *seyen*, v. (1), senses 1a, b.

⁴⁶⁴ On the related techniques of *discretio spirituum* and *purgatio*, see the respective entries in the glossary that Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie provide in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 292; 296.

the other hand, God's creative *energeia* has continued to express itself through her not despite but *because of* her uncertainties so that a mere fragment of her visionary *donum* moves the religious towards *reverent beholding*, which in turn leads to her change in judgement. It would be misleading to construe this as an emphasis on the cognitive process of rationalisation, because the religious's silence activates faith, Julian's fullest creative potential.

Whereas the Paris manuscript is more outspoken on the topic of her unbroken connection to God, Sloane encapsulates it in a sophisticated play on the verb "leven."⁴⁶⁵ When Julian wants to be absolved of her *lapsus*, she asks herself: "How should a preist levyn me? I leve not our lord God" (Chapter 66).⁴⁶⁶ In an interpretation of "leven" as "believing in," "loveing," or "relying on," its negation bifurcates her doubts but lets them originate from the same source.⁴⁶⁷ Because she did not believe/love/rely on the divinity, no priest (as a vicar of Christ on earth) could ever reciprocate these principles according to the virtue of his ordination. Julian's questioning of her visions is here combined with the uncertainty of successful proliferation and *doubtfull drede* projected onto their originator. In the midst of her retroactive anxieties, however, the homophone also asks how a priest could ever "leve" ("abandon," "reject") her (implying that this will never happen) because she evokes her conviction never to "leave" God in the second sentence.⁴⁶⁸ By applying the ambiguity of "leven" to the entire segment, she poses and answers a dual question, masterfully sustaining the paradox throughout. These two sentences merge the impossible: first, Julian concentrates on the breakdown

⁴⁶⁵ Paris reads: "how shulde a preste belieue me when I by seaying, I ravid I shewed my selfe nott to belyue oure lorde god? Nott withstanding I beleft hym truly for the tyme."

⁴⁶⁶ This wording is almost identical to the *Short Text*, Chapter 21.

⁴⁶⁷ MED, leven, v. (4), senses 1a and 2a; leven, v. (5), sense 1.

⁴⁶⁸ MED, leven, v. (1), senses 2a and b; 4b.

of trust and meaning, and second, on the notion that she will never be alone if she remains steadfast.

Because she can never deny, nor ever entirely leave behind, her visionary parameters, confronting the religious with the apophatic abyss that is anchored in the bleeding cross brings to a head the two utterly different modalities, of contemplative absorption and the world, that she can *and* cannot make converge at this moment.

With the benefit of hindsight, Julian rebukes herself:

This was a gret synne, grete onkindness, that I for foly, of feling of a litill bodily peyne, so onwisely lost for the time the comfort of all this blissid shewing of our lord God. Here may you sene what I am of myselfe; but herein wold our curtes lord not leve me. (Chapter 66)

By reconfiguring sin as “foly,” a “cognitive failure”⁴⁶⁹ and yet another form of *doubtfull drede* negating the mutual unfolding in the modality of *kynde*, she portrays weakness as an intrinsically human trait, albeit one in which the deity will “not leve” (not leave) her. The divergence between the stasis implied in “what I am of myself” and the teleological kinesis of “herein wold our curtes lord not leve me” goes to the heart of spiritual maturation. It retrospectively reactivates the *sensus plenior* and intended interpretation of “leven” discussed on the previous page as no priest ever leaving the anchoress because she remains faithful. Yet, the paradox of this *loin-et-près* does not only reveal itself as assisted tropology. Later in the text, when Julian has weathered the diabolical temptations, she returns to her momentary lapse, glossing it with the wisdom that only the experience of her fall, divine intercession, and an anagogically oriented interpretation can confer:

For on the selfe day that it was shewid, what time that the syte was passid, as a wretch I forsoke it and openly I seid that I had ravid. Than our lord Iesus of his mercy wold not letten it perish, but he shewid it al agen within, in my soule, with mor fulhede, with the blissid lyte of his pretious love, seyand these word full

⁴⁶⁹ Abbott, *Autobiography and Theology*, 173.

mytyly and full mekely: ‘Witt it now wele, it was no raving that thou saw this day’, as if he had seid: ‘For the syte was passid fro, the lestist it and coutheist not kepe it; but witt it now, that is to sey, now that thou seest it.’ (Chapter 70)

Crucially, Christ does not counter Julian’s uncertainty with wrath but with “mor fulhede” of the “blissid lyte of his pretious love,” collocating illumination, love, and resplendence. Her fall turns out to be a fortunate one and neutralises any uncertainty by conflating it with the textual-theological method of *mise-en-abîme*. Not only is her God’s love never-ending, but, administered to any sense of dread or doubt, his *maximum* reconfigures the bare *minimum* to which her faith has sunk: instead of personal annihilation, there is spiritual amplification. This sense of infinity creates an intricate sapiential dynamic, rendered even more elusive by its combination with the text’s characteristic fragmentation. The “fulhede” that Julian receives is acutely abbreviated in the deity’s authentication to “Witt it now wele,” repeated twice with slight alteration.⁴⁷⁰ What is more, the adjective “now” acts as a point of sudden reversal, restructuring the past in favour of an endlessly progressing future. With the benefit of hindsight, having undergone and overcome temptation, Julian can “now” live in “mor fulhede,” an assertion that combines a sense of achievable plenty in this life with the defamiliarising divine abundance that delays (not withholds) perfection.

The *verba Dei* enable Julian to merge faith and discernment. They demonstrate the progress she has made and consequently validate her authorial position.⁴⁷¹ This is an immensely personal and pastoral kind of learning, achieved in the trenches of opposition. When she subsequently glosses her God “as if he had seid,” she already directly applies her new-found clarity to the source of her inspiration, thus illustrating her regained contemplative confidence. To this end, she paraphrases his declaration that

⁴⁷⁰ See pages 7-9 and footnote 13.

⁴⁷¹ On the instrument of *discretio* as acutely related to the faculty of reason, see Glasscoe, *Games of Faith*, 18. For Julian, on the other hand, it happens by way of illumination and subsequent rumination—this is no ratiocinative process but an abandonment of the self into God’s will.

she did not rave by retracing the steps that led to her failure. The breakdown of trust originated from a process of incremental loss, which began with the collapse of sight and led to a loss of insight: “For the syte was passid fro, the lestist it and coutheist not kepe it; but witt it now, that is to sey, now that thou seest it” (Chapter 66). By textualising the deity’s explanation, Julian brings home her mystagogical legitimation and the security she has acquired through weathering tribulation.

Nonetheless, before she reaches this conclusion in Chapter 70, she still has to undergo the diabolical temptations in Chapters 66 and 68, in which the devil’s contrariness to the godhead is encoded in the language of excess. The principles underlying the divine *excessus mentis* and the infernal bombardment with detail, however, differ. While a focus on the deity’s love and Christ’s divinity fosters a response that transcends the binary separation between humanity and the divinity, the fiendish *excessus* does not entail the mind’s evacuation above mundane thought. The devil’s successively interrupted textual arc and the continuous disbanding of his manifested fragments effectively minimise his potency, as will be explored below.

The Formulaic Fiend

As I have already discussed, the godhead as the source and *exemplum* of creation forms its ontological foundation, and for this reason, Julian’s work sketches multiple hermeneutical avenues that facilitate an endless readerly engagement with him. To demonstrate his immeasurability, any taxonomies and anthropomorphic particularities applied to him falter. Likewise, the dissolution of spiritual materiality, a gradual progression into the apophatic void that pervades the text and is most memorably demonstrated in the hazelnut-allegory, reveals the *sensus mysticus*. While the linguistic

treatment of the devil naturally has to diverge from that of the divinity because of a fundamental difference in theological signification, the routes Julian treads towards establishing his *nothingness* are not unfamiliar because they too cancel out the definite in favour of the symbolic. Throughout his visceral first assault on her in Chapter 66, his imagistic features and the sensory overload he elicits are juxtaposed with his deconstruction. The devil is, and paradoxically ceases to be, in the detail:

And in the slepe, at the begynnyng, methowte the fend set him in my throte, puttand forth a visage ful nere my face like a yong man; and it was longe and wonder lene; I saw never none such. The color was rede like the tilestone whan it is new brent, with blak spots therin like blak steknes, fouler than the tilestone. His here was rode as rust, evisid afor, wti syde lokks hongyng on the thounys. He grynnid on me with a shrewd semelant, shewing white teeth; and so mekil methowte it the more oggley. Body ne hands had he none shaply, but with his pawes he held me in the throte and would have stranglid me, but he myte not. This oggley shewing was made slepyng, and so was non other. And in all this time I trostid to be sauid and kepid be the mercy of God.⁴⁷²

Among the most pronounced visual evocations in her entire work, the itemised description of the fiend appeals to his cultural history and to Julian and her audience's social, theological, and artistic conditioning. And yet, it would be reductive to relegate her figure of the devil to a textual manifestation of his representations in coeval illuminated manuscripts, paintings, stained glass, to sculpture on the margins of the ecclesiastical realm, folklore, or his costumes in miracle and mystery plays, because the crux of his presence is his going beyond purely imagistic portraiture.

⁴⁷² Jay Rudd's thesis that Julian's fiend shows "*undesirable* 'feminine' qualities" (his emphasis) and "embodies negative characteristics of both genders" is a thoroughly reductive reading that starts and stops with the gender-divide: "I Wolde For Thy Loue Dye" in *Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Routledge, 2012), 200-1. Liz Herbert McAvoy emphasises the gender aspect as well but conversely interprets Julian's devil as a "hyperbolic embodiment of an intensely realized and dangerously uncontrolled *masculinity*," which is contrasted with Christ's "redemptive femininity" (original emphasis). She analyses the devil's problematic masculinity without incorporating him into Julian's theology of salvation: "Monstrous Masculinities in Julian of Norwich's *A Revelation of Love*," in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, eds. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 61-2. Rudd and McAvoy apply their gender methodologies to a text that profits from thinking beyond such concrete—and human—taxonomies.

Barry Windeatt and Claire Banchich have perceptively commented on the devil's attempt to suffocate Julian constituting an endeavour to stop her from passing on her revelations—a “Pentecostal inversion.”⁴⁷³ Even though the narrative proximity to Julian's doubts about her visionary *donum Dei* affirms this thesis, the threat of authorial silencing is merely the end point of a textual trajectory that instructs the anchoress's audience in and through a complex meditation on matter, detachment, and discretion. In fact, the profusion of sensations and visual stimuli that she lists cancels itself out. When she writes: “And in the slepe, at the begynnyng, methowte the fend set him in my throte,” she inserts several distancing measures, embedded to question not only the assault's spatio-temporal location, but, by their challenging, contesting the fiend's tangible power. First, he appears to her while she is asleep, which she furthermore filters through the concession “methowte,” which suggests a qualifying statement here, and only “at the begynnyng”—for a short period of time at the onset. This assault does not progress as an event but as its intimated or rationalised side effect, because she “cogitates”⁴⁷⁴ or “forms a mental image” about it⁴⁷⁵ within the brackets of her dream-vision, as opposed to undergoing it at once without subsequent reflection. From the start, the threat is simultaneously synthetic of her apophatic work itself and sensorially removed.

While prior to Chapter 66, the devil “works mostly on the margins,”⁴⁷⁶ the initially cataphatic exploration of his physical form brings him centre stage, where his attributes progressively vanish. He is so close that his “visage” is “ful nere [Julian's] face,” which allows her closely to examine his appearance. She subsequently classifies it as simultaneously singular and ephemeral, the double negative in “I saw never none

⁴⁷³ Claire Banchich, “A hevynly joy,” 336; Windeatt, *Revelations*, 270.

⁴⁷⁴ MED *thinken*, v. (2), sense 1a.

⁴⁷⁵ MED *thinken*, v. (2), sense 2a.

⁴⁷⁶ David F. Tinsley, “Julian's Diabology,” 210.

such” framing him as the exteriorised but transitory materialisation of sin, which she is not shown either (Chapter 34). The ontological basis of the *malum* and its effects in the world seem to be precarious in equal measure. At this point, Julian’s gaze rests entirely on the devil’s face and the elements that surround it. And yet, in the beginning of this description already lies the major clue as to his *nothingness*.

According to Jay Rudd’s interpretation, the devil’s skin invokes Muslim features, and his sidelocks, which he construes as reminiscent of a payot, could have alluded to medieval Jews, adherents of faiths envisioned as outside the realm of a Christian God.⁴⁷⁷ Liz Herbert McAvoy, on the other hand, reads the devil’s “blak spots,” “blak steknes,” and red face as references to leprosy—a sin connected to the flesh.⁴⁷⁸ It is essential to note, however, that the devil’s manifestation is not at all meant to be overanalysed. His features are merely transitory notes in an entirely cacophonous piece, and they establish visual correlations that *might* have been intended to resonate briefly before they peter out. He is here best understood as a profusion of negativity and sensory excess that has to be suffered in its particularity to reveal its purpose. Consequently, Julian’s readers have to visualise their concretised fear and the consequences of sin before both can be deconstructed.⁴⁷⁹

Parallels to contemporary portrayals of the devil as beastly are clearly drawn,⁴⁸⁰ but while Julian’s text allows for analogues to be found in the world, a reading centring

⁴⁷⁷ “Dye,” 199.

⁴⁷⁸ “Monstrous Masculinities,” 199. See also Peter Richards, *The Medieval Leper and his Northern Heirs* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 98. McAvoy’s socio-historical analysis links what she interprets as the outward signs of the devil’s leprosy to his voracious sexual appetite. While the analogy to leprosy is sound, I do not agree with her argument that the fiendish assault has a sexual dimension. Likewise, the foul smell traditionally attributed to the devil does not automatically “convey [...] his lecherous intent,” as McAvoy and Tinsley, based on Gregory the Great’s equation of unpleasant demonic odours with fleshly sins, argue (McAvoy, “Monstrous Masculinities,” 60; Tinsley, “Julian’s Diabology,” 215). Writing a sexual dimension to this attack into existence is an overstretching of the intratextual evidence.

⁴⁷⁹ While it is true that Julian is neither shown hell, nor damnation, nor sin’s ontological status, the devil is the personified *malum*, and to face him means to disavow evil affectively, cognitively, and physically.

⁴⁸⁰ Julian’s portrayal has a parallel in the focus on the mouths of the beastly devils and the hellfire in Margery Kempe’s *Book*, 54-55, ll. 202-220. In the contemporary iconography of the Harrowing of Hell, the fiendish mouth becomes an affective commonplace. See, for instance, London, British Library, Yates

on the mundane diminishes his full theological trajectory. Linguistic analysis shows that the affective colours she evokes in this part of Chapter 66 are those of the hellfire, combined with the infernal offense to the olfactory sense. For example, the devil's hair, which is "rode as rust," and his red face, "like the tilestone whan it is new brent," imaginatively conflate his manifestation within the dream vision, his appearance in the world by reference to parts of it, and his goal to see the afflicted burn in hell. At the same time, he is "fouler than the tilestone," a comparison that collapses the foregoing analogy.

Moreover, in the moment of closest proximity, immediately following the deconstructive double negation discussed on pages 199-200, she analyses the devilish face as "longe and wonder lene." This might be parsed as a modification on the collocation "long and lene"⁴⁸¹ but implies the diabolical void through the homonym "lene" that references his "ephemeral, transitory, temporary" dimension.⁴⁸² Julian intriguingly codifies her response to the fiend's absent presence in the adverb "wonder," her central response to the divinity's mysteries. The awareness of her deity's intervention, however impenetrable it might be, therefore goes hand in hand with a comprehension of the devil's *nothingness*, even if it is encoded in a pile of sensory stimuli. A further sense of the adjective "lene" should not be disregarded. In its meaning as "mortal," Julian frames this passage as a temptation to forego the eternal life, like the devil.⁴⁸³ Paradoxically, she thus touches on the divine by a recourse to diabolical excess and creatural frailty.⁴⁸⁴

Thompson MS 13, the "Taymouth Hours," f. 142r. Dinzelbacher contends that in contrast to the devil's depiction in legends and the arts, descriptions of him as a "perverted anthropomorphic figure" ("pervertierte[...] menschliche Gestalt") are rare in first-hand accounts but proliferate on the late-medieval stage (*Angst im Mittelalter*, 103; 114).

⁴⁸¹ MED, lene, adj. (1), sense 1a.

⁴⁸² MED, lene, adj. (2).

⁴⁸³ MED, lene, adj. (2), sense 1.

⁴⁸⁴ See also Turner, *Julian*, 25.

In a didactic series of steps that are similar to, and yet far removed from, the apophatic textual strategies she employs when trying to activate an apprehension of the godhead, human modes of understanding that originate in the world lead into the beyond of language and certain knowledge—and into the realm of faith. Yet, while the intuitive internalisation of the divine Other can proceed from worldly objects, it never persists in this modality. In contrast, limitation and curtailment of thought is exactly what Julian’s description of the devil sets out to do. He is caught up in detail and contained in worldly matter instead of developing any further. From the outset, his manifestation aims at *nothing* and gets there because it reduces him to particularity and fossilises him in temporality. The theological, linguistic, and cognitive dissolution of his formulaic fragments could also be interpreted as an inversion of the meditation on the *arma Christi*, a topos whose heightened symbolism also requires iconographical simplicity and poignancy to generate maximum devotional impact. In contrast to the symbols of the deity’s suffering *in carne*, which would have encouraged expressions of awe, the devil’s fractured beastly anthropomorphism accurately prevents his glorification.

As a travesty of Julian’s *risus paschalis*, the devil’s grinning furthermore convulses his semi-human form into a diabolical grimace.⁴⁸⁵ Playing on the figurative connotations of grinning, “trick, stratagem, deceit, and temptation”⁴⁸⁶ reverberate as associations. Equally ambiguous is his “shrewd semelant,” a reference not only to his corrupt “shape” and “form” but fraudulent “guise” and “deceptive appearance” that Julian immediately identifies as “oggly” (Chapter 66).⁴⁸⁷ In effect, the intuitive perception that the devil’s physical hideousness implies spiritual depravity and

⁴⁸⁵ Consider also the notions of “entrap[ping]” and “ensnar[ing]” in MED, *grenen*, v. (3), and the semantic associations between mouth, grave, and Hell: MED, *grennen* v., sense 2a.

⁴⁸⁶ MED, *grin(e)*, n., sense 1b.

⁴⁸⁷ MED, *semblaunt*, n., senses 1a and b. All quotations from the *Long Text* on this page refer to Chapter 66.

denigrates him to *nought* forms the essence of this visual stimulation. The phrase “Body ne hands had he none shaply” operates like his previous attributes, in which repulsiveness is combined with a sense that the details given do not piece together an actual being. Because Julian considers large parts of his manifestation as not “shaply,” she designates his body as not “correct,” appropriate,” or “suitable,” verdicts that essentially rescind any concretised mental images her readers would have associatively constructed before.⁴⁸⁸

The anchoress’s strategy of repeatedly letting the devil vanish culminates in her assessment that he truly has no power over her: “with his pawes he held me in the throte and would have stranglid me, but he myte not.” The final two words serve as a pun on his unmight,⁴⁸⁹ as does the renewed declaration that the “ogglye shewing was made slepyng,” and thus did not expose her to any real danger. Moreover, the statement that “and so was non other” exemplifies the distinct nature of this showing as without par: alongside the use of Julian’s characteristic formal and stylistic features to different ends, the implications of their employment must, therefore, differ as well.

Overall, the most potent and paradoxical textual-theological strategy underlying this temptation revolves around the notion of reversal. Just like in Christ’s transfiguration, death (or, in Julian’s case, the threat thereof) functions as the catalyst for life, and the conventional fiendish iconography is dismantled through its very means. The devil’s presence in her spiritual formation moreover draws attention to the fact that few may truly believe in God without the threat of dying. Within the structure of the temptation, “drede of afray” and “drede of peyne” (Chapter 74) are thus considered parenthetically but evaporate before long.

⁴⁸⁸ Both quotations refer to the MED, *shapli*, adj., senses 1b and c.

⁴⁸⁹ MED, *unmight*, n., senses 2(a) and (b): “spiritual infirmity or weakness,” “powerlessness.”

In an allegorical reading, this episode didactically interrelates the calamities of life and the weaknesses of the fallen self. The fiend's deconstruction, however, teaches Julian that an existence cut off from the challenging aspects of the spiritual life is impossible, whereas the resolute exercise of *discretio* (realised in the adoption of God's will) and detachment will recalibrate her resolve. By the same token, the audience will be able to sustain periods of great peril, safe in the realisation that a kenotic surrender to their deity will dismantle any fleeting tribulations. This vital security transforms a crisis into a matrix for growth, integrating ephemeral states of misery into the relationship to the divinity. To underscore the marvellously swift oscillation between life, death, and redemption in which the faithful are invited to partake, and to emphasise the deity's omnibenevolence, which causes the instructional threat, Julian ends this segment with the declaration that "in all this time I trostid to be sauid and kepid be the mercy of God. And our curtes lord gave me grace to waken, and onethis had I my lif." The remedy of *sekir truste* has suffused this temptation, transfiguring doubts and harmful dreads into faith.

In the early stages of the *Long Text*, Julian explains her agonies as co-suffering:

This I tooke for the time of my temptation, for methowte by the sufferance of God, I should be tempted of fendes or I dyed. With this sight of the blissid passion with the Godhede that I saw in myne understanding, I knew wele that it was strength enow to me, ya and to all creturers leving, ageyn all the fendes of hell and ghostly temptation. (Chapter 4)

"By the sufferance of God," meaning as part of the *ludus amoris* throughout which she will be brought to the limits of her creatural and spiritual suffering, Julian has to replicate Christ's passion.⁴⁹⁰ The notions of reciprocal loving, suffering, enduring, and

⁴⁹⁰ See my discussion of the multiplex meanings of "sufferen" on pages 105, 138, and 141, as well as footnotes 211, 289, and 297.

allowing all reverberate in this labour of love.⁴⁹¹ This multi-layered friction, between God as the agent and subject of suffering, and Julian as the object on whom it is inflicted, is captured in her understanding that her tribulation happens within the continuum of divine love. In a further shift towards the symbolic, her immense potential for humility parallels Christ's self-sacrifice, enabling her to endure all agonies and proceed, safe in the knowledge that no part of the human experience can be final in the deity's perspective. Amy Appleford aptly characterises "suffering [...] as *productive*: [...] to sharpen one's perception of the relationship between divine and human and to encourage disengagement with the world."⁴⁹² For Julian, contrition, self-knowledge, and suffering, as well as the devotion to and apprehension of her God's redeeming love, are correlative vortices.

The insight of co-suffering "the blissid passion with the Godhede" moreover takes place within the revelation, a powerful stacking of anagogical discourses that further diminishes the force of the devilish descriptors. By linking the hypothetically threatening attack to the godhead and his *goodness*,⁴⁹³ and by providing an interpretive angle that identifies the Passion as "blissid," Julian reverses the force of her suffering. To this end, she harnesses the knowledge that she "should be tempted of fends or I dyed," reframing it within the soteriological "Al shal be wele" (Chapter 34). Retelling the infernal attack with the deep insight accorded to someone who has overcome it gives rise to a powerful hermeneutic, namely the potential of reversal towards the good that every situation contains.

⁴⁹¹ On this confluence of love and suffering, see also Susan Arvay, "Private Passions: The Contemplation of Suffering in Medieval Affective Devotions" (PhD diss., Rutgers Graduate School New Brunswick, 2008); Sarah Macmillan, "Well saved in suffering," 68.

⁴⁹² Original emphasis (*Learning to Die*, 103).

⁴⁹³ On the unity of divinity and *goodness*, see also pages 213 and 223-224.

While the layers of reciprocal suffering and loving are twinned throughout her work, the diabolical attack in Chapter 66 virtuosically illustrates the doctrine that Christ's self-sacrifice has *already* brought the devil to *nought*. Yet, the complexities of this event do not allow for the construction of an argument along the lines of a strict separation between the physical and the spiritual, because Julian establishes a dialogue between these two dimensions, furthermore confounding the elements of her suffering in the emblematic mode of her "understanding." While her agonies, and her tempter, are expressed in bodily terms, whereas the implications and conclusions she draws are not, the physical functions as the initial locus of theological exploration. It is merely the first step, or the battleground for anagogical signification, where her faith can prove itself.⁴⁹⁴ Compartmentalising divine love and the human response into one or the other would disregard their potential to emerge in any shape or form, whether in practice or in theory, in embodied, or symbolical form. Given Julian's spiritual blindness at the beginning of the temptation, the fact that her mortal body remains as an analytical tool for her to internalise grace connects her physical form with her surrender in humble obedience. Finally, this revelation contains a sophisticated commentary on a recurrent theme in her work, the deconstructed devil drawing attention to the basic premise that because the divinity cannot be limited into language, his metaphysical opposite, which is entirely contingent on him, should not, therefore, be mentally concretised either—just like overzealous acts of egocentric penitence, the fascination with the *malum* would draw attention away from the kenotic devotion to God.

Sleep as the framework for this episode situates Julian's account between this world and the next, and on a continuum between the spiritual and the problems of

⁴⁹⁴ Maria Lichtmann discusses Julian's bodily experience as "an epistemology of the divine in "I desyrede a bodylye syght: Julian of Norwich and the Body," *Mystics Quarterly* 17 (1991): 13. See also Gina Brandolino "'The Chiefe and Principal Mene: Julian of Norwich's Redefining of the Body in *A Revelation of Love*," *Mystics Quarterly* 22 (1996): 102-110.

embodiment as epitomised by the afflictions that begin to vex her.⁴⁹⁵ Nonetheless, while the distinction between oneiric or contemplative access to understanding might be fruitful to consider in theory, the anchoress seamlessly incorporates her dream into the rest of her revelations because it is intrinsically divinely inspired, thus containing the same truth content. However, situated at the intersection between reality and the visionary, the genre of the dream vision affords the reader the opportunity to meander between the devil's attributes, in the process temporarily creating a personal prototype of manifested evil without the possibility of repercussion. Since the text depicts Julian's tribulations within this distinct spiritual architecture, the literary form fosters reflection on itself, and is brought to bear on its content.

Steven Kruger defines these dreams as "middle visions" that foreground the margins of consciousness, truth, and the physical, as well as the oneiric potential to connect the heavenly and earthly realms. Exterior *revelatio* and the individual's *cogitatio* interlace these insights, and "the tension between the transcendent and the mundane, central to medieval dream theory, creeps into even the most fully divine or earthly dream visions."⁴⁹⁶ An intricate body of discourse debating the validity and interpretation of dream visions forms the socio-cultural backdrop to this revelation. Therefore, Julian's fleeting insecurity and failure to recognise the source of her revelations is heightened by the ambivalence intrinsic to the format of the deity's response. Alongside divinely inspired dreams imbued with revelatory content as well as psychological and physiological causes, the dangerous potential of dreams to give rise

⁴⁹⁵ The topoi of sleep, night, and the dark night of the soul/tribulation are interconnected. For an introduction to the theme of the dark night of the soul, which was coined by John of the Cross, see Underhill, *Mysticism*, 380-412. For an overview on mystical sleep and the night in medieval contemplation, see Riehle, *Mystics*, chapter 10 and the collections of essays in *Die dunkle Nacht der Sinne: Leiderfahrung und christliche Mystik*, ed. Gotthard Fuchs (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1989).

⁴⁹⁶ Steven Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 129.

to irrelevant visions was well established.⁴⁹⁷ Accordingly, Julian is instructed in the technique of *discretio* by recourse to a medium known for its instability, though still paradoxically permitted to emerge with an unwavering certainty in God's grace.

Given the significance of the medium of instruction, healing is once more located in a detachment from the world and the material. Even so, Julian is challenged to investigate the defects in her spiritual armour as points of importance, and to use her doubt and dread as part of her theological methodology to explore the fundamentally apocalyptic question "What if?" Will the *malum* irrevocably grasp her in her darkest hours and lead her to perdition or will the mutual enfolding of the divine and human keep her secure?⁴⁹⁸ For this reason, this episode is not happening *to* her but *for* her, and it is merely a bend in the path that teaches her to operate from a transformational perspective within her theology of becoming. Moreover, the cyclical nature of insight and blindness, and of indwelling and spiritual drought, betrays a non-linear helical procedure that dynamically moves between "wele" and "wo" (Chapter 1). Every moment truly bears the potential for reversal.

And yet, when Julian wakes up and is about to leave the oneiric encounter behind her, it transgresses the boundary between dream and reality:

And anon a lyte smoke came in the dore with a grete hete and a foule stinke. I said: 'Benedicite domine! It is al on fire that is here!' And I wened it had ben a bodily fire that shuld a brent us al to dede. I askid hem that wer with me if thei felt ony stynke. Thei seyde nay, thei felt none. (Chapter 66)

⁴⁹⁷ See Gwenfair Walters Adams, *Visions in Late Medieval England. Lay Spirituality and Sacred Glimpses of Hidden Worlds of Faith* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 183; Windeatt, *Revelations*, 270; Watson and Jenkins, *Writings*, 332. Kruger, *Dreaming*, 83-122; For a contemporary perspective, see chapter 27 in John Trevisa's 1398 translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' work: *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum: A Critical Text*, vol. 1, ed. M.C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

⁴⁹⁸ For the notion that fear brings Julian closer to Christ, see also Pelphrey, *Love Thee*, 374.

Aside from their status as conventional attributes of the devil and hell, the smoke, stench, and fire trace the continuity of the infernal into Julian's awoken mind. This in turn accords with her received insight that the devil does indeed exist in the world, even though, similarly to sin's double-interpretation as "behovabil" (Chapter 27) and "no dede" (Chapter 11), his ontological standing is precarious.⁴⁹⁹ As a necessary deterrent, he is unavoidable to engender perfect meekness, but he is simultaneously reduced to *nothing*. In an analogue to her "Benedicite domine" in Chapter 4, a verbal heightening that marks the apprehension of the crucifixion's redemptive efficacy, her present release from the consequences of sin once more inspires a sense of overwhelming awe that has to be codified in Latin. This linguistic doubling articulates a correlation with Christ's agonies, which are rewarded with eternal life, an intratextual parallelism that further reconceptualises Julian's period of suffering within the same schema. Additionally, this segments' *sensus mysticus* also briefly invokes her seeing the fallen world on fire, consequently necessitating a detachment through Christ in this uroborotic moment that is stretched out between two eternal moments of deliverance.

The anchoress cultivates this lesson, tracing her sapiential growth from withstanding the "bodily fire" she "wened," or "supposed,"⁵⁰⁰ to kill everyone congregated around her sickbed to the absolute security that she "wist [...] wele" that "the fend [...] was comen to tempest [her] (Chapter 66)," although his vanishing materialisation is accorded only a minor part in her theological cosmos. Once more composing theology through intricate linguistic nuances, the difference between "wenen" (conjecture) and "witen" (divinely infused understanding) relates to her dearly bought confidence in the *ludus amoris* as a salutary method for spiritual evolution.

⁴⁹⁹ On the aporetic confluence of sin and suffering as *nothing*, see Haas, *Mystik als Aussage*, 336.

⁵⁰⁰ MED, *wenen*, v. (2), sense 2a.

This fundamental sense of safety allows her to grasp the rules of the game, and to view both hardships and the deity's unwavering love through the same lens: "for I beheld it is bothen one, and fled therto as to my comforte" (Chapter 66). God's love is here the instrument of *purgatio* and the remedy for spiritual unrest. Julian's intricate linguistic strategies, which undermine the fiend's ontological actuality, establish that tribulations are not to be understood as his effects in the world but as integral components of the human-divine labour of love. Since this temptation was divinely inspired, there is no self-reflexive need for finding further fault with herself either, and physical and metaphysical health coincide: "And anone al vanishid away, and I was browte to gret rest and peas withouten sekenes of body or drede of conscience" (Chapter 66).

Feyful overcoming

The turnaround from an acute *stimulus conscientiae* to its resolution reveals the temptation's purgative efficacy and the individual's unification with the godhead it has brought about. Julian's dread of fraudulent visions is dissolved in Chapter 68, where she is assured of her revelations' heavenly origin:

And he gave me knowing sothfastly that it was he that shewid me al afor. And whan I had beholden this with avisement, than shewid our good lord words full mekely withouten voice and withouten openyng of lipps, ryte as he had done, and said full swetely: 'Wete it now wele that it was no raveing that thou saw today, but take it and leve it, and kepe the therin and comfort the therwith and troste thou therto, and thou shalt not be overcome.'

The divinity's impetus to "[w]ete[n] it now wele,"⁵⁰¹ received in her understanding "withouten voice and withouten openyng of lipps," contrasts with the foregoing noise and abundance of materiality, corresponding instead to the silence of *beholding* "with avisement." By counselling to "take it and leve it, and kepe the therin," the homophonic qualities of "leve" once more overlay one another, modifying the pronoun "it" in the process. In one reading, Julian is told to believe in what she saw, in another she is urged to leave the constraints of tribulation behind. This pattern of effacement is complemented by the various semantic levels of "kepen," whose most pertinent examples in this case are "abiding" by the tenets of her illumination and being "on guard," so that *doubtfull drede* will never overpower her again.⁵⁰²

In Chapter 70, Julian glosses the final part of this passage with reference to faith and fear:

In these vi words that folowen, 'Take it', his menyng is to festyn it feyfully in our herte; for he will that it dwell with us in feith to our lifes end, and after in fulhede of ioy, willand that we have ever sekir trost in his blisfull behests, knowyng his goodness.⁵⁰³

With recourse to the homophonic ambiguity of "feyfully" as an overlay of "faithful" and "ferful," the anchoress conveys the temptation's dual nature as inducing several kinds of dread but ultimately requiring absolute faith. But this is not where her deepening into stillness stops, because the modality of "feyfully" also initiates an inward movement of *reverent* awe and loving devotion owed to her God. Nonetheless, the emphasis on "feith," "ioy," "sekir trost" and "goodness" in the rest of this passage

⁵⁰¹ See also footnote 13 and my discussion on pages 6-9.

⁵⁰² MED, *kepen*, v., senses 22a (a) and 8a.

⁵⁰³ Banchich perceptively comments on the catena of "inarticulation: from curtailed speech—Julian's inability to confess and the dream-fiend at her throat—to God's speech without words, to devilishly tormentful bodily speech doublefold, to God's comforting and unified bodily speech, to Julian's imagining herself, like God, speaking words of comfort to a fellow distraught soul" ("A hevynly joy," 336).

leaves behind *any* forms of dread in favour of stressing the “blisfull behests” of grace in an apophatic activation of potentiality.⁵⁰⁴

To this received wisdom she adds an antidote for spiritual blindness, which causes sin:

for our feith is conntried in divers manners be our owne blin[d]hede and our gostly enemy, within and without, and therefore our pretious lover helpith us with gostly syte and trew teching on sundry manners, within and without, wereby that we may know him. And therefore in what manner he techith us, he will we perceivyn him wisely, receivyn him swetely and kepin us in hym feithfully; for aboven the feith is no goodnes kept in this life, as to my sight; and beneath the feith is no helpe of soule; but in the feith: there will the lord that we kepe us. For we have be his goodnes and his owne werkeing to kepe us in the feith and, be his suffrance, be gostly enmyte we are assayed in the feith and made myty. (Chapter 70)

Four iterations of “kepen,” this time entirely focused on the godhead’s *godenes*⁵⁰⁵ and individual “goodness,” interlace this segment as references to the will, perseverance, and the stability required and extended. On the other hand, blindness as the failure to see his presence as well as the cause and consequence of sin functions as a commentary on the fiend’s attack. In the foregoing, the role of spiritual sight in apprehending the deity has been demonstrated by Julian’s seeing, asleep and presumably with her eyes closed, the devil’s incremental dematerialisation. And yet, the “gostly syte and trew teching” takes place “within and without,” a phrase that she repeats twice, initially as a reference to wholeness, and then as pertaining to fragmentation because the “gostly enemy” attacks in the same way. In the second reiteration, interwoven degrees of inside and outside constitute the *loci* of assault, rendering the world, the body, the mind, and the soul as prime targets. However, because these are now steeped in the spiritual sight of “perceivyn him wisely,” a response to the “manner he techith us,” any supposed

⁵⁰⁴ On the translation of grace into personal security, see Louth, *Origins*, 117.

⁵⁰⁵ This concept is discussed on pages 213, 223-4, 229, and 230.

battle against the devil is transformed into an internalised act of human-divine rapprochement.

Through faithful endurance, and its extensive cultivation in testing times, God promises to keep Julian safe—not separate from the world, or removed from physical and spiritual ordeals, but ultimately unharmed by them. In her references to “aboven the feith,” “beneath the feith,” and “in the feith,” she constructs a concrete spiritual architecture for an ungraspable concept, writing the ineffable into existence with the help of mnemonical situatedness.⁵⁰⁶ This indefinite spatial construct is where the deity resides, and where he expects Julian to live as well-detached from the mundane and the constraints of language but open to their didactic potential. Since “his suffrance,” the Passion, took place within the coordinates of the world but points beyond it, the resulting permission to tempt and test reconfigures her creatural existence. Instead of fighting the devil, the readership is accordingly invited to take part in the *ludus amoris*, whereby the parallelism in the phrases “be his goodnes and his owne werkeing to kepe us in the feith” and “be his suffrance, be gostly enmyte we are assayed in the feith” corresponds to the rules of the game: the concepts of *godenes* and “suffrance” are interchangeable.⁵⁰⁷ Finally, the segment engages with the conundrum of worldly existence: while spiritual threats persist, suffering makes “myty.” Human frailty and moments of contemplative transcendence necessitate one another.⁵⁰⁸

A recourse to Chapter 68 allows for a fuller consideration of this interplay:

And ryte as in the first worde that our good lord shewid, menyng his blissfull passion—‘Herwith is the devill overcome’—ryte so he seid in the last word with full trew sekirness, menand us all: ‘Thou shalt not ben overcommen.’ And all this leryng in this trew comfort, it is generall to all my even cristen as it is aforneid,

⁵⁰⁶ See also Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 7th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16, 44, 51, 89-98, 274. The *Cloud*-author employs a similar strategy in Chapter 38, 42, ll. 1-3: “Þe euerlastyngnes of God is his lengþe; his loue is his breed; his miȝt is his heȝt; & his wisdam is his depnes.”

⁵⁰⁷ See Tixier, “Good Gamesumli Pley” and MED, *sufferaunce*, n., sense 5(b): “permission.”

⁵⁰⁸ On the potential to access the divinity via the attributes of fallenness, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Silence. A Christian History* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 120.

and so is Gods will. And these words: ‘Thou shalt not ben overcome’, was seid full sharply and full mightily for sekirness and comfort agens all tribulations that may comen.⁵⁰⁹

This section traces Julian’s narrative-theological principle of sustained paradox by starting from death and the Passion as “the first worde” and ending with “full trew sekirness” as “the last word,” which is uttered instead of, and in spite of, death. In line with Christ’s narrative arc that begins with the Passion and culminates in redemption, the notions of subversion and overturning are crucial to the understanding of the salvific act, as demonstrated above. Yet, there is no tropological turnaround envisioned “to all my even cristen” here, because the Passion has already brought about the ultimate reversal. In its place, an indwelling of “sekirness and comfort” functions as an apophatic instrument dismantling “all tribulations that may comen.” This profound security echoes in the nuanced use of the passive voice. While the devil “is [...] overcome,” Julian “shalt not ben overcomen” because of Christ’s self-sacrifice.⁵¹⁰ Yet, three overlapping effects spring from this construction: the promise that she will remain unharmed, the activation of her will to not let herself be overcome, and the shrouding in darkness of the act of *overcoming*.⁵¹¹ In a play on expectations, the phrase “thou shalt not” is also closely reminiscent of the ten commandments but progresses from the biblical

⁵⁰⁹ Though Catherine of Siena’s *Dialogo* similarly zooms in on the act of overcoming, its focus lies on tropology and personal responsibility: “The feend is a mynystre ordeyned of my riztwisnes to turment soulis whiche greuously offenden me. And I ordeynede hem in þis liif þat þei schulden tempte and do greuance to my creaturis; not for my creaturis schulden be ouercome, but for þei schulden ouercome þe feend, and þat þei schulden resceyue of me þe glorie of victorie þoru þe vertu þat is preuyd in hem. And þefore no man schal drede þe temptaciouns of þe feend, for ony batel þat schal falle hym, for I haue ordeyned men to be strong, and I haue 3oue hem þe strengþe of a wille which is maad myyti in þe blood of my sone. Which wil may no feend ne creature remoue, for 3oure wille is ioyned to 3ou of me wiþ a free choys” (*Orcherd*, 100, ll. 9-19). This is a close rendering of the medieval Italian: “Egli è fatto giustiziere mio dalla mia giustizia per tormentare l’anime che miserabilmente ànno offeso me. Ed in questa vita gli ò posti a tentare, molestando le mie creature; non perchè le mie creature sieno vinte, ma perchè esse vincano e ricevano da me la gloria della vittoria, provando in loro le virtù. E niuno in questo debba temere per veruna battaglia nè tentazione di dimonio che lo’ venga, però che io gli ò fatti forti e datolo’ la fortezza della volontà, fortificata nel sangue del mio Figliuolo. La quale volontà nè dimonio nè creatura ve la può mutare, però che ella è vostra, data da me col libero arbitrio” (*Dialogo*, 92).

⁵¹⁰ Colledge and Walsh detect Johannine allusions in the term “overcomen” (Introduction to *Showings*, 170).

⁵¹¹ The miraculous nature of the act of *overcoming* is stressed in the first iteration of “Herewith is the fend overcome,” in Chapter 13 as well. See my discussion on pages 137 and 140.

prohibition into a deeply optimistic declaration extended to those who have advanced far beyond the mere observance of God's laws.

The point to be understood is clear: adherence to the godhead leads to everlasting bliss, which is already begun in the world because the phrase "Thou shalt not ben overcommen" affirms his presence throughout the fallen life, just as it assures Julian of the life to come. It is crucial for our understanding of the sophisticated theology that she is formulating here to note that the correlation between "Thou shalt not ben overcommen" and "Herwith is the devill ovrcome" (Chapter 68) holds the Passion's two pivotal inflection points in balance, the latter putting an end to the act of *overcoming*, while the former stretches the present redemptive moment into eternity. Just as the wound left by Longinus' lance enables the anchoress to enter the divine mysteries (Chapter 24),⁵¹² the first-hand enduring of the wound of (embodied) human frailty is a critical contribution to her spiritual formation.

Thus, the *fruitio Dei* takes places in moments of contemplative synergy *and* in periods of calamity, which inspire the creation of an even closer connection. Yet, while the divinity is *knitting* himself to the individual, he is not a personalisable deity but one whose *games of love* prove to be substantially advanced and challenging. A result of the devil's "gret power to vexin hir ner to deth" (Chapter 66) without inflicting actual harm is Julian's grasp of the essential difference between herself and her benevolent God.

Placing the focus not on sinfulness but on her readers' goodness, which imbues them with an unbreakable connection of *kynde* to their creator, Julian seeks to establish a principle that Bonaventure would have referred to as *pondus spirituale*, the

⁵¹² "Than with a glad chere our lord loked into his syde and beheld, enioyand; and with his swete lokyng he led forth the understandyng of his creture be the same wound into his syde withinne." Mark the absence of any erotic undertones, which are prevalent in Lutgart von Tongeren's or the Monk of Farne's affective semiotics (Riehle, *Mystik des Mittelalters*, 528; *Mystics*, 46-7).

psychological and natural human inclination towards the good.⁵¹³ As a result of this orientation, the deity operates through her to prevail against the devil. And yet, at the end of Chapter 68, she appends a delicately differentiated concession. Enduring misery until *it is overcome for her* will be a complex undertaking:⁵¹⁴

He seid not ‘Though shalt not be tempestid, thou shalt not be travelled, thou shalt not be disesid’, but he seid: ‘Thou shalt not be overcome.’ God will that we taken heede at these words, and that we be ever myty in sekir troste, in wele and wo; for he lovith and lekyth us, and so will he that we love him and lekin him and mytily trosten in him; and al shal be wele.⁵¹⁵

Nullifying the import of the hardships that she will have to endure from the start while still expressing them under erasure, Julian’s textual construction proceeds by doubly negating them. In her gloss of the deity’s declaration, she engages with affliction but immediately curtails its hold on the postlapsarian mind, anticipating and correcting any oversimplifying interpretations by specifying what he did *not* say. The adversities are separated into five-word structures of the same syllabic length, and their internal rhythm remains a constant. The formal and syntactic similarity and the incremental addition illustrate that the near alliterations to be “tempestid,” “travelled,” and “disesid” are undeniably integral components of the fallen life. At the same time, these conditions lose their grip on Julian’s experiential reality because they have been reframed in the anagogical perspective. By collocating their ontology with their *nothingness*, they dissolve while (and linguistically even before) they are enumerated. “The growth of

⁵¹³ Bonaventure derives this notion from Augustine’s “Pondus meus amor meus” (“My weight is my love”) (Prentice, *Psychology of Love*, 37-8).

⁵¹⁴ For a contrasting view, namely that “Christ’s battle against evil must be her own,” see Brad Peters, “The Reality of Evil Within the Mystic Vision of Julian of Norwich,” *Mystics Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (December 1987): 200.

⁵¹⁵ Nuth’s focus on the *malum* in her interpretation of this segment fails to engage with its textual intricacies: “Temptation to sin is part of the mystery of evil which continues to be something humans suffer, as long as earthly life lasts” (*Wisdom’s Daughter*, 126).

spiritual maturity,” Marion Glasscoe discerningly observes, “comes only by means of falling [...]”⁵¹⁶

The consecutive alliterative and parallel arrangements, “wele and wo,” the reassurance that God “lovith and lekyth us,” and his desire that “we love and lekin him” further exemplify the salutary purpose underlying the *ludus amoris*. This symbiosis of tribulation and love shades into the narrative as a foretaste, aftertaste, and promise that flourishes in *sekir troste*, which is the modality corresponding to the spiritual certainty that “al shal be wele.” Once more, the oscillation between hardships and unification is put to a halt and the corresponding paradox sustained: whereas “wele and wo” coexist, the guarantee that “al shal be wele” fundamentally reinterprets “wo” and incorporates it into the life *sub gratia*. Similarly, this enclosing invites a sequence of theological and linguistic reciprocity: the godhead intends his creation to “be ever myty in sekir troste,” because they “mytily trosten in him.” After this cathartic exploration, Julian’s illumination can only recede: “al was close and I sow no more.” Having explored the matrix of “wo” by configuring herself as an *imago Christi*, the penetration of “wele” still goes beyond her human means.

Apophatic Prayer and the Demonic Temptation to Despair

In Chapter 13, Julian introduces the devil’s *nothingness* by carefully establishing his curtailed existence (Chapter 13). In his first manifestation, in Chapter 66, she furthermore dissolves the minutiae of his physical form, invalidating his ontological position and curtailing any engagement with him, whether it be affective and fear-based

⁵¹⁶ *Games of Faith*, 254.

or purely analytical. *Doubtfull drede* as a spiritual illness, self-reflexive accusation, and distrust in the source of her visions plays a critical role in this confrontation. As a coda, Julian paradoxically strengthens her readers' steadfastness by more fully immersing herself in creatural infirmity throughout the *malum*'s second manifestation, in Chapter 69.⁵¹⁷

In an alternative, but parallel, substructure to the continuous theme of understanding the divine enigma, this demonic assault seeks to put into question ostentatious and mechanised methods of prayer but reaffirms the purpose of authentic prayer as the synapse of desire fastening together humans and the divinity.⁵¹⁸ To Julian, Riehle astutely remarks, the loving descent of God into her soul and theocentric prayer are inseparably linked.⁵¹⁹ Prayer is thus the contemplative nexus that ties together her arts of *seeking* and *beholding*, and the surrender of her will through her kenotic *noughting*.⁵²⁰ The didactic strategy is not to put any hermeneutical pressure on the practice of prayer itself, but to use tribulation as an opportunity for inward and outward devotional recalibration. Instead of operating on a level of self-vilification, therefore, Julian's *glissando* from the demonic provocation, to *doubtfull drede*, to fundamental

⁵¹⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes in this chapter refer to Chapter 69 in the *Long Text*.

⁵¹⁸ Pelphrey separates Julian's prayer into three categories, which are ultimately unified: "kind longing", which we may think of as petition; 'beholding', or 'inward prayer', which is contemplation; and 'thanksgiving', or praise. These three modes of prayer describe a movement of the soul from petition, to contemplation, to praise. At the same time the three are intertwined, so that for the mature lover of God they cannot be separated, and each leads into the others" (*Love Thee*, 277-8). In their introduction to *Shewings*, Colledge and Walsh contend that Julian's development of prayer from the *Short Text* (Chapter XIX) to the *Long Text* evolves from a consideration of "her own case" to being "more concerned with God's intention. [...] The prayer which she is now describing is [...] the contemplation of God's righteousness and the participation in his 'blessed harmony'" (116). This shift in perspective accords with the self-effacement required of those who undertake the contemplative path, and it centres on the purpose of prayer as a unitive force. For a perspective that contrasts with Colledge and Walsh's, see Ritamary Bradley, *Julian's Way: A Practical Commentary on Julian of Norwich* (London: Harper and Collins, 1992), 27.

⁵¹⁹ *Mystik des Mittelalters*, 302.

⁵²⁰ Pelphrey's argument is similar: "God wills for us what is best for us, and even makes us to desire it, so that God's will is really our will" (*Love Was His Meaning*, 227). See also Riehle, *Mystik des Mittelalters*, 302.

security allows her to unfold her spiritual potential because this type of dread is a membrane for the cultivation of its opposite and yet another vortex into the apophatic:

Doutfull drede, in as mech as it drawith to dispeir, God will have it turnyd in us into love be the knowing of love; that is to sey, that the bitternes of doubt be turnyd into sweteness of kinde love be grace. (Chapter 74)

Among the four kinds of dread listed in Chapter 74, *doutfull drede* is the only one whose usefulness Julian explicitly denies, and the alliterative series at the beginning of this segment illustrates the difficulty of escaping its kinetic pull. Consequently, it is not merely disintegrated but twice inverted, or “turnyd,”—mark the passive construction. The double reworking, from “dispeir” to “love,” and from “the bitternes of doubt” to “the sweteness of kinde love” is contingent on “the knowing of love.” This is not a definite kind of knowledge, but an elusive *afflatus* communicated through corresponding means: “be grace.” The phrase “the knowing of love,” however, is ambiguous and could also pertain to God’s understanding of the human psyche and the inner workings of the reception and offering of love. In this more complex reading, the shackles of doubt are not only “turnyd” into fertile soil for the apprehending of the godhead but were always intended as a pathway to him. This mutually amplified exchange of love leads Julian to the intuitive, or “kinde,” understanding that love is “sweteness,” a lexical choice that combines the mundane with the *fruitio Dei*.⁵²¹

In the confrontation with the *malum* in Chapter 69, the attack is again twofold, comprising a physical/literal and an anagogical dimension. To this end, the revelation itself is cast in deliberately horrific and visceral imagery. This time, “the fend” manifests himself in demonic form, reduced to the metonymic signifiers of hell, “his

⁵²¹ Concretised metaphors of feeling and sensory perception pointing towards the ineffable famously abound in the late-medieval contemplative literary canon. For an excellent analysis, see Riehle, *Mystics*, chapter 8. On Rolle’s *dulcor*, see Renevey, *Language*, 67, 79, 107-8, 134. The related tradition of the spiritual senses is discussed in *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, eds. Paul Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) and Rudy, *Mystical Language of Sensation*.

hete” and “stinke” rendering Julian “full besy.” Yet, while her narrative references the unsettling effect the apparition has on her, she strategically refrains from delving into a taxonomy of dreads they elicit, nonetheless imaginatively evoking the time of her temptation: “the stinke was so vile and so peynfull, and also dredfull and travellous.” In these lines as well as in the entire chapter, she employs variations of being *besy* and “travelled” to convey her struggle.⁵²² The torture she undergoes initially takes place on a cataphatic level:

Also I heard a bodily iangeling as it had be of two bodies, and both, to my thynkyng, ianglyd at one time as if they had holden a parlement with a gret bysynes; and al was soft muttering, as I vnderstode nowte what they seid.
(Chapter 69)

The “bodily iangeling” at the beginning of this segment is worded as a simile, “as it had be of two bodies,” a deliberate method that removes any actuality by confining the altercation to a space of abstraction. Likewise, the two “bodies” are only defined by the sound they produce, whereas their embodiment *per se* never occurs. Correspondingly, the simile “as if they had holden a parlement” might allow for inferences as to their speech patterns, but nevertheless, the two entities remain entirely elusive and devoid of a permanent structure. Such tactical narrative manipulation once more initially allows the reader to ruminate and project onto the unknown, filling the textual gaps with imaginative detail. And yet, the superimposed sensory imagery cancels itself out when the participants speak “at one time,” investing “gret bysynes.” Despite their efforts, their speech cannot be decoded, because it is all “soft muttering.”

At the core of this self-contradictory and layered conversation, however, lies a moment of real conceptual and narrative clarity. The demonic is minimised because it is *nought*. In its sense as “weak,” the adjective “soft” provides a commentary not only on

⁵²² For the same sentiment, see Brad Peters, “Julian of Norwich and Her Conceptual Development of Evil,” *Mystics Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (December 1991): 186. The concept of *bysynes* will be explored below.

the volume of the sound produced, or on Julian's ensuing lack of comprehension.⁵²³ It altogether repeals the force of the "muttering," invalidating the "grumb[ling] or complain[ing] about God"⁵²⁴ as a result. This impious conversation's abundant and vague wordlessness exposes neither the anchoress nor her readers to great peril, but from the axiomatic standpoint that the tribulation was sent "to stirre [...] to dispeir," the audience is once more given the opportunity vicariously to participate in Julian's progression from "oftentymes felyng" "wo" to "wele" (Chapter 15). This is achieved without substantiating the malefactors into being, which would merely entrench the demonic (language) in Julian and her readers' minds.⁵²⁵ In contrast to the divine silence of potentiality, this is the demonic noise of *nothingness*, and detachment from it is best achieved without any previous attachment that concrete verbose vitriol could generate. What could have been an unsettling disturbance once more unfolds its pastoral significance by relinquishing the material in favour of the spiritual.

Crucially, this revelation, even though it is brought about by Julian's momentary lapse, rationalises and externalises despair instead of localising it within the inadequacies of the self. To this end, the text roots the demonic mockery and rejection of prayer not in her personal failure but in an agenda-driven performance:

And al this was to stirre me to dispeir, as methowte, semand to me as thei scornyd bidding of beds, which arn seid boistrosly with mouth, failing devowte entending and wise diligens the which we owen to God in our prayors. (Chapter 69)

As opposed to internalised devotion, the accent on the mouth and the heightened volume indicate blasphemous inauthenticity, which contrasts with heartfelt *seeking*. Nevertheless, the participle "semand" (another qualifying and abstracting simile), and

⁵²³ MED, soft(e), adj., sense 9a.

⁵²⁴ MED, moteren, v., sense 1a.

⁵²⁵ Conversely, the devils' concrete suggestions that torment Margery Kempe evoke a palpable response: *Book*, 54-5, ll. 202-221.

its combination with “methowte,” retrace Julian’s subsequent hermeneutical process, which results in a critique of those types of performative and audience-driven prayer that make use of external means (rosary beads) when they should privilege the internalisation of humility. In the scene depicted, the body is irreversibly connected to practices of neglectful behaviour or devout reverence because spiritual praxis and theory are necessarily intertwined.⁵²⁶

Julian’s minimalistic approach to *oneing* prayer, which coincides with the paradox of intention and the associated loss of methodical consciousness,⁵²⁷ starkly contrasts with the demonic chatter:

And in that time the custome of our prayeing was browte to mende: how we use, for lak of understanding and knowing of love, to make many menys. Than saw I sothly that is more worshippe to God, and more very delite, that we faithfully pray to himselfe of his goodnes and clevyn thereto be his grace, with trew understandyng and stedfast be love, than if we made all the menys that herte can thinke; for if we make all these menys, it is to lital and not full worshippe to God, but in his goodnes is all the hole, and there failith right nowte. (Chapter 6)

According to this illumination, the most desirable form of prayer is receptive stillness because it paradoxically aligns the minimal and abstract mode and means of prayer with the divine *maximum*.⁵²⁸ Any other disposition would be detrimental because it would make use of anthropocentric forms and images, anthropomorphising the divinity in the process. For this reason, the underlying model of ascent in this passage develops from “lak of understanding and knowing of love,” to “not full worshippe,” and “more

⁵²⁶ See also Ross, *Silence II*, 76.

⁵²⁷ See also Ross, “Apophatic Prayer.”

⁵²⁸ The *Cloud*-author’s famous exhortation to divest the language of heartfelt prayer of its hold on the mind by reducing it to its simplest and most spiritualised terms falls in a similar vein: “& ri3t as þe meditations of hem þat contynouely worchen in þis grace & in þis werk risen sodenly wiþoutyn any menes, ri3t so don þeire preiers. I mene of þeire specyall preiers, not of þoo preiers þat ben ordeynid of Holy Chirche. [...]. & 3if þei ben in wordes, as þei ben bot seldom, þan ben þei bot in ful fewe wordes; 3e, & in euer þe fewer þe betir. 3e, & 3if it be bot a lityl worde of o silable, me þink it betir þen of to, & more acordyng to þe werk of þe spiryte; siþen it so is þat a goostly worcher in þis werk schulde euermore be in þe hi3est and þe souereynest pointe of þe sp[i]rit. [...] & raþer it peersiþ þe eres of Almy3ty God þan doþ any longe sauter vnmyndfully mumlyd in þe teep. & herfore it is wretyn þat schort preier peersiþ heuen” (Chapter 37, 40-41, ll. 39-2; 8-13; 26-8).

worshippe”—although it is a testament to Julian’s familiarity with the *usus mundi* and the contingencies of the human condition that these phases challenge the notion of a linear heavenwards progression: perfection in this life remains an illusion.

The highest form of prayer is the entire person’s kenotic surrender, though this type of devotion, however bare and symbolic Julian makes it out to be in theory, is multiplex. To this end, she twice collocates the sense of efficient production with its effacement, instructing her readers neither to “make many menys” nor to “make all these menys.”⁵²⁹ Through her understanding of “the nature of prayer-as-relationship,”⁵³⁰ she unifies the *seeking* with the *beholding*, and the human with the infinite Other. Therefore, “God of his godenes hath ordeyned meanys to helpe us [...], of which the chiefe and principal mene is the blissid kinde that he toke of the mayd” (Chapter 6). Because of the Incarnation, and the confluence of *humanitas* and *divinitas* in the modality of *kinde*, the faithful have been endowed with a natural and intuited type of prayer that suffuses them with the divinity (God’s *godenes*). Simultaneously, however, the deity creates a vector through the very same *menys*, namely his *godenes* (meaning his goodness). Therefore, Julian is able to merge the two fundamental aspects of *godenes*:

Wherefore it pleaseth him that we seke him and worship be menys,
understandyng and knoweing that he is the goodness of all; for the goodness of
God is the heyest prayer and it comith downe to the lowest party of our nede.”
(Chapter 6)

The need to connect to the godhead outside of moments of illumination delights him when apophatic prayer that concentrates on his *goodness* becomes the modality through

⁵²⁹ Likewise, the *Cloud*-author counsels to infuse prayer with the self-forgetfulness that follows divine illumination, instead of deriving inspiration from the perceptible world. He privileges “sodein conseites & blynde felynges [...] wipoutyn any menes of redyng or heryng comyng before. [...] Þees sodeyn conseytes & þees blynde felynges ben sonner lernyd of God þen of man” (Chapter 36, 40, ll. 16-21). Gillespie and Ross argue that “‘Making means’ is an idiom that refers to the making of a complaint or petition (MED, sv mene n. (2).) Thus, Julian is criticising the usually selfish and acquisitive nature of petitionary prayer as well as the inadequacy (or meanness) of many of the intermediary and intercessory techniques commonly employed” (Gillespie and Ross, “The Apophatic Image,” 67, footnote 39).

⁵³⁰ Sheldrake, *In God’s Sight*, 139.

which “we seke him.” In a logical impasse, *seeking* and *beholding* in stillness are thus put in balance because they express themselves through the divine *menys*. “Trew understandyng” (Chapter 42), therefore, evolves “in and through our relationship of prayer.”⁵³¹

Spiritual *bysynes*

When applying the parameters of the apophatic *menys* to the scenario in Chapter 69, the humility and “wise diligens” that is owed to the deity is contrasted with the demons’ inaccessible soundscape. In fact, they not only perform an outright rejection of profane prayer itself but also a deception,⁵³² intended to trick Julian into replacing her *reverent dread* with despair and *doubtfull drede*, which would put the focus on humanity’s shortcomings and the resulting delusion of God’s absence. Yet, since it has by this point been firmly established that his powers by far surpass the fiend’s, the latter merely allowed to tempt by the former’s permission, the possibility of loving the deity and still existentially dreading the devil has been *a priori* removed from the spectrum of responses.⁵³³ In a peripeteia that defies expectation, the tribulation thus harnesses the demonic scorn as a pastoral means of instruction in meekness and the apprehension of grace. Any other course of action, such as projecting the temptation onto the conceptualisation and performance of *oneing* and petitionary prayer, would open the gates to despair and in turn make the audience fall prey to the fallacy that the relationship to the deity could potentially be broken beyond repair. Consequently,

⁵³¹ Sheldrake, *In God’s Sight*, 141.

⁵³² MED, *scornen*, v., senses 2b and 5.

⁵³³ See also Nigel G. Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side. Putting the Power of Evil in its Place*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), 60.

instead of prompting a self-accusatory amalgam of shame and guilt, the irreverential practices of worship miss the performing subject: they “*arn seid boistrosly*,” whereas “*we owen to God in our prayors*” the envisaged course of action,⁵³⁴ which is “*devowte entending and wise diligens*” (Chapter 69).

Like the first diabolical temptation in Chapter 66, the second fiendish ordeal ingeniously displays Julian’s faithful steadfastness through their opposite, just as it unveils the godhead’s omnibenevolence by conjuring up the hellish realm. Correspondingly, the transition between tribulation and divine assistance is fluid and the sentence structure analogous. In the passages quoted on pages 220 and 221, the clauses are strung together with an anaphoric “and,” a catena that syntactically seamlessly concludes in the declaration:

And our lord God gave me grace mytyly for to trosten in him, and to comforten my soule with bodily speech as I shuld have don to another person that had ben travelled. (Chapter 69)

The repeated clause structure and the dynamic interplay between discomfort and relief through grace combine three ideas. The swift reversal from hardships to glory, and the confluence of the human and the divine in the modality of faith when they “mytyly [...] trosten in him” lead over to the significance of Julian’s own voice, which is God-given and therefore constitutes an effective instrument to defeat the demonic entities. The anchoress points to a foundational theological argument that is made here: any potential threat of or to the flesh (harking back to the attempted suffocation in the first encounter in Chapter 66, to the linguistically dissolved “bodily iangeling” in Chapter 69, or to the “drede of peyne” [Chapter 74] in general) unravels through these very categories because the temptation is resolved through “bodily speech.”

⁵³⁴ My emphasis.

In a further reevaluation of the created body that links her to the incarnated deity,

Julian appends:

Methowte that bysynes myte not be likenyd to no bodily bysynes. My bodily eye I sett in the same cross wher I had ben in comfort afor that tyme, my tonge with spech of Crists passion and rehersing the feith of holy church, and myn hert to festen on God with al the trost and the myte. (Chapter 69)

“Material” and “physical”⁵³⁵ aspects are entirely absent in the agents of evil’s “bysynes,” and the double negative in the first sentence underscores their insubstantiality. The metaphysical dimension, on the other hand, incorporates the human *menys* into the reciprocal love knot so that Julian’s centring of her “bodily eye” on the cross, the single element in this temptation that is in fact visible, raises her to a contemplative level that transcends her hardships. Simultaneously, her recounting of the Passion and religious doctrine is intended as a tactical activation of a state of flow, perfected throughout countless years of practising the *lectio divina*. This autopilot mode evacuates Julian’s mind above her current struggles and puts a halt to conscious thought processes, a strategy that in turn allows her to restructure the present via a recourse to the anagogical potential of theocentric speech.⁵³⁶

Her ensuing self-talk truncates the demonic attack and carves out a moment for critical analysis:

And I thowte to myselfe, menand: ‘Thou hast now grete bysynes to kepe the in the feith, for thou shuldst not be taken of the enemy; woldst thou now for this time ever more be so bysy to kepe the fro synne, this were a good and soverain occupation’; for I thowte sothly were I saf fro synne, I wer full saf fro all the fends of helle and enemys of my soule. (Chapter 69)

The crux of this passage again revolves around two versions of *bysynes*, one pertaining to Julian’s current struggle (“Thou hast now grete bysynes”), and the other illustrating

⁵³⁵ MED, *bodili(ch)*, adj., sense 3.

⁵³⁶ It is important to note the difference between this automatic recitation, which frees Julian from her mind, and a robotic and/or ostentatious saying of beads, which is ego-driven.

the start of a countermovement against the demonic insinuations based on the abstinence from sin (“woldst thou now [...] ever more be so bysy”). Not only are these strands of the anchoress’s intimately personal *bysynes* fully connected to her will, but because of the unbroken continuity of perspective between the past, the present, and the future, the focal point is placed on her continued efforts and steadfast conduct.

Especially amid the threat towards despair and Julian’s collocation of it with sloth in Chapter 73, the term *bysynes* masterfully integrates the register of coeval remedial discourses on the deadly sin. *Acedia*/sloth undergoes several shifts throughout the Middle Ages, from its monastic origins into the public sphere, and from an initially metaphysical meaning to its integration among the sins of the flesh. “*Acedia*,” Siegfried Wenzel notes of its position in the later Middle Ages, “has become synonymous with spiritual idleness or indolence. [...] the essence of this popular form of sin is weariness, torpor, or plain laziness [...] in performing spiritual acts [...].⁵³⁷ To be overcome by *acedia* thus meant to surrender to the contingencies of the world and lose confidence in divine providence.

Alongside the established antidotes of theocentric fortitude and joy, a third remedy for sloth emerges at this time in devotional examinations of the topos, as a personification in allegories and on the stage: “*busyness*.”⁵³⁸ When Julian administers the efforts of her *bysynes*, she fights back the demonic “*bysynes*” just as she resolves the temporary distrust in her visions that she has exhibited before. Doubts and the devil are dissolved with fervent love, the opposite of sloth. In other words, God’s grace and Julian’s will to surrender to him work in tandem in a process of *gratia cooperans*.

⁵³⁷ Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 88; original emphasis. The anchoress’s use of this term alludes to her situatedness within a wider devotional and catechetical discourse.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

Whereas her *bysynes* alludes to the ongoing labour of love, Julian's vocabulary evolves into "occupation" when dwelling in the blissful state of sinlessness, in which she most closely resembles her creator. Both linguistic choices, *bysynes* and "occupation," are also linked to the register of economy. However, as the catechetical utilisation of *bysynes* exemplifies, these concepts are tripartite signifiers that allude to Julian's inbetween-ness,⁵³⁹ simultaneously situating and pulling her from the material world, which becomes the locus where "soverain," or theocentric, devotion grounds her in the intended mode of being. In this conceptualisation, full rest is reserved for the hereafter, whereas the work of *bysynes* is the paradoxical *sine qua non* of contemplative stillness in this life. For this reason, Julian is able to reassure herself categorically that "sothly," in case she were able to relinquish sin entirely, no "fends of helle" could ever assail her.

This moment of crystal clarity, however, has to be contextualised within the complexities of fallenness. While Julian attains the certainty that the absence of sin would lead to the devil's annihilation, the denial of its presence within herself would ennoble her beyond measure and promote equality with the divinity. Thus, the human will veers between the catechetical knowledge of sin's depravity on the one hand and the inescapable inclination to sin on the other, tipping the scales in a repetitive dance. As a result, the godhead has to rekindle the *scintilla*: "God keypyth his chosen ful sekirly althowe thei synne, for in these is a godly will that never assayed to synne" (Chapter 37).⁵⁴⁰ This instructive trajectory allows Julian, like Boethius, to see, once more, one in

⁵³⁹ The frame of reference of these terms also includes the diabolical realm, see: "that [demonic] bysynes myte not be likenyd to no bodily bysynes" and "he occupied me al that nyte" (Chapter 69).

⁵⁴⁰ On this concept, see Jay Gilchrist, "Unfolding Enfolding Love in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations*," *14th-Century English Mystics Newsletter* 9 (1983), 77-88; Judith Lang, "The 'Godly Wille' in Julian of Norwich," *Downside Review* 102 (1984), 165-73; Colledge and Walsh's annotations of the *Short* and *Long Text* in *Showings*, 254, footnote 9 and 443, footnote 15.

terms of the other, and to gain access to the divine plan of salvation through its very opposite.

With this contingency, the temptation abruptly ends, and the anchoress cultivates the suddenness of her deliverance as well as her tormentors' *nothingness* by tautology, recounting that her tempters "wer all gone, all passid" (Chapter 69). Rather than forcing her to succumb, the demons turn out to be "transitory" and "cease to exist,"⁵⁴¹ though the ramifications of her newly acquired understanding are irreversible. Therefore, the "stinke" that "lested still awhile" (Chapter 69) once more connects the visionary realm with her experiential reality, also illustrating the devil's disintegration in a world created by, and based on, *godenes*. Instead of focusing on the phenomenon of "stinke" itself, it is its vanishing that is critical.⁵⁴²

Aside from Julian's interpretation of the events textualised in Chapter 69 to "stirre [...] to despair," hopelessness never unfurls and remains a phantasmal spectre—just like the devilish manifestation. Whereas in a literal reading, her acknowledgment that the struggle during which "he occupyed me al that nyte, and on the morne till it was about prime day" refers to a prolonged spiritual combat, a soteriological interpretation concentrates on the abundance of grace that underpins her steadfastness.

The plan of action that Chapters 66 and 69 demand is the self-forgetful devotion in *sekir truste*, an imperative that the modal auxiliary in the phrase "thou shuldst not be taken of the enemy" stresses.⁵⁴³ This phrase already includes a double future perspective,⁵⁴⁴ as it assures Julian that she will not be overcome because of her determination,⁵⁴⁵ which is grounded in her divinely bestowed ability to emulate Christ's

⁵⁴¹ MED, *passen*, v., sense 7a.

⁵⁴² Conversely, see Ross on divine "phenomena" as "nuisance:" *Silence I*, 93-4.

⁵⁴³ The quotes from Julian's work in the rest of this chapter refer to Chapter 69 of the *Long Text* until specified otherwise.

⁵⁴⁴ MED, *shulen*, v. (1), senses listed under 3.

⁵⁴⁵ MED, *shulen*, v. (1), senses 6, 7, 10, 12, 14c, 16, 22.

triumph over temptation and death.⁵⁴⁶ Incrementally, she understands that withstanding the temptation is a secondary battle, whereas her primary concern should be to be *bysy* keeping herself “fro synne.” In its conditional form, the modal verb “woldst” in the phrase “woldst thou now for this time ever more be so bysy to kepe the fro synne” implies her “intention” to remain blameless,⁵⁴⁷ at once channelling the tightrope-walk between success and relapse that hinges on her will and its transfiguration.⁵⁴⁸

The complex apophatic engagement with the master-genre of tribulation in the chapters discussed depicts affliction as a permeable membrane that generates an intense apprehension of *godenes* via a personal (and deeply personalised) *imitatio Christi*. Therefore, Julian is able to form a conclusion that fuses the Passion’s salvific potency with her “godly” will: “And I scorynd him. And thus was I deliverd of hem be the vertue of Christ passion, for therwith is the fend overcome, as our lord Iesus Criste seid afor.” While the demons “scornyd bidding of beds,” the anchoress inverts their force once more, mirroring the nullifying divine “scorne” that triggered her *risus paschalis* in Chapter 13. By *overcoming* the fiend, characterised later as “all that is contrarious to love and to pece” (Chapter 77), she removes all harmful forms of dread within herself and creates a portal for the sapiential understanding of the depth of divine love.

⁵⁴⁶ MED, shulen, v. (1), sense 22, “ability.”

⁵⁴⁷ MED, willen, v. (1), sense 11.

⁵⁴⁸ The MED lists “attempt” and “endeavour” under “willen,” v. (1), sense 15.

The Theological Exegesis of the Devil as *Nothing*: An Excursus

Russell outlines the history of exegetical engagement with the devil from the early Middle Ages onwards as predicated on *nought*, a principle that originates with Aristotle and increasingly permeates subsequent Christian models of thought.⁵⁴⁹ In the early days of Christianity, when the Church Fathers were consolidating the central matters of faith and doctrine, Augustine of Hippo's double-concept of "nihil," pertaining to both the *creatio ex nihilo* and to evil as *nothingness*, forms the basis for three essential models of theological interpretation: (1) nothing pre-dates the creator or shares in his eternity, (2) the whole of creation is brought into being and upheld by God, and (3), since a world created by the divinity can only reflect (parts of) his benevolence, it has to be fundamentally good. Therefore, the ontology of evil has to be predicated on *nothingness*. According to Augustine, there is no place for the *malum* in this world, because it simply refers to a lack, an absence, or a "privation of good"—nothing can exist outside of God's almightiness.⁵⁵⁰ Hence, he writes:

But if they are deprived of all good, they will altogether not be [...]. Therefore, whatever is, is good. And that evil, whose source I was looking for, is not a substance; [...]. And for you, evil does not exist at all, and not only for you, but for the whole of your creation.⁵⁵¹

This reframing of evil as *nought* is successively elaborated on throughout the following centuries. In Pseudo-Dionysius' focus on the unknowable God as part of his *theologia negativa*, no space is allotted to anything contrary to the deity, because everything

⁵⁴⁹ The following is deeply indebted to his discussion and references in *Lucifer*.

⁵⁵⁰ Gavin Hyman, "Augustine on the 'Nihil': An Interrogation," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 9, no. 1 (2008): 38-39.

⁵⁵¹ "si autem omni bono privabuntur, omnino non erunt [...] ergo quaecumque sunt, bona sunt. Malumque illud, quod quaerebam unde esset, non est substantia; [...] Et tibi omnino non est malum, non solum tibi sed nec universae creaturae tuae [...]." Augustine, *Confessionum libri VIII*, in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi, opera omnia*, Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina 32, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Garnier, 1865), Liber Septimus, Capitula 12-13.

emanates from him only. According to the Dionysian analysis, evil is the opposite of advancement, intention, and life itself. It is an absence, a failure of strength, without cause, devoid of power, and a mistake. Because it is insubstantial, unspecified, and not real, it does not exist, and because it entirely lacks good, it is *nought*.⁵⁵²

The doctrine of evil as *nothing* is taken up again by the scholastics. In the eleventh century, Anselm of Canterbury harnesses its wide scope in many of his works to engage with the divinity and diminish the devil's standing.⁵⁵³ In his treatise *De Casu Diaboli*, he traces the argument as a dialogue between a master and his student, concluding, like Augustine, that sin and evil are a privation of good.⁵⁵⁴ With his characteristically scholastic emphasis on systematic reasoning and deduction, he contends that the interpretation of evil as opposed to good equates it with *nothingness* because the term *nothing* designates only through contradiction: it signifies and negates at once. Evil and the concept of *nought* interact in a similar way because the former references the positive forces it is trying to annihilate. Absolute evil, therefore, amounts to un-being, to a vacuum, and an absence.⁵⁵⁵

Yet, while Anselm expresses his profound disbelief in evil, he allocates it a place within language. Even though it is not an entity *per se*, it implies a deficiency, which brings about consequences in the world.⁵⁵⁶ In Anselm's interpretation of the cosmos, the devil can be utilised as a hermeneutical instrument to explain the causes

⁵⁵² Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names and The Mystical Theology*, trans. C.E. Rolt (London: SPCK, 1920), 127-8. See also Russell, *Lucifer*, 35.

⁵⁵³ Ben Novak, "Anselm on Nothing," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (September 2008): 305; Russell, *Lucifer*, 161-2.

⁵⁵⁴ Anselm of Canterbury, *De casu diaboli*, in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia. Ad fidem codicum recensuit Franciscus Selesius Schmitt*, vol. 1, ed. Franciscus Selesius Schmitt, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946), chapters 8, 11, 26. Henceforth *DCD* and referred to by chapter.

⁵⁵⁵ Novak, "Anselm on Nothing," 317.

⁵⁵⁶ Russell, *Lucifer*, 162-3; see also D.P. Henry, "Saint Anselm and Nothingness," *Philosophical Quarterly* 15 (1965): 243-246. According to S. Vanni Rovighi, the concepts of evil and sin as aberrances from God's love are coincident in Anselm's thought: "Il problema del male in Anselmo d'Aosta," *Analecta Anselmiana* 5 (1976): 179-188.

behind the existence of evil in a world created by an omnibenevolent God. The fiend causes duality because he refuses the gift of grace and perseverance: “he did not stay in [...] his original rectitude, in which he had been created,” which is his privileged position before the Fall.⁵⁵⁷ Because of original sin, the deity permits him to lead into temptation.⁵⁵⁸

Considering the implications of *nothingness*, Anselm nonetheless argues that the notions of *nothing* and *something* are not entirely contradictory. “Secundum rem,” (“according to the thing itself”) *nothing* has no frame of reference, but “secundum formam” (“according to its form and function”), it does carry meaning. While terms such as “nothing,” “not anything,” or “not something” factually refer to *nought*, there are other nouns, such as poverty, impotence, cowardice, and nakedness that denote absence “secundum formam.” Within this ambiguity, the question of the *malum* is resolved—evil and injustice only signify what they deny. Because the devil chooses to sin, wilfully ignoring the divine laws, the roots of sin do not lie with any part of God’s creation but are instead attributable to the devil:⁵⁵⁹ “Consequently, in this way, evil and nothing refer to something.”⁵⁶⁰

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas also incorporates the devil in his discussion of evil. According to his line of argument, creation partakes in the deity’s ontology, and therefore, *to be* and *to be good* are synonymous principles.⁵⁶¹ This is a reworking of the Augustinian dictum “because in as much as we are, we are good.”⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ “non stetit in originali [...] rectitudine in qua facta est” (Anselm, *DCD*, 9).

⁵⁵⁸ Russell, *Lucifer*, 165-8.

⁵⁵⁹ Novak, “Anselm on Nothing,” 316-18.

⁵⁶⁰ “Hoc igitur modo malum et nihil significant aliquid” (Anselm, *DCD*, 11).

⁵⁶¹ *Summa theologiae*, prima pars, quaestio 5, articulus 1: “bonum et ens sunt idem” (“Good and being are the same”). The *ST* will henceforth be quoted by part, question, and article. See also Jason A. Mitchell, “Aquinas on the Ontological and Theological Foundation of the Transcendentals,” *Alpha Omega* 16, no. 1 (2013): 39-78; Bernhard Blankenhorn, “Aquinas on the Transcendental One: An Overlooked Development in Doctrine,” *Angelicum* 81, no. 3 (2004): 628; Russell, *Lucifer*, 193.

⁵⁶² “Quod in quantum sumus, boni sumus.” *De doctrina christiana*, in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi, opera omnia*, Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina 34, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris: Petit Montrouge, 1861), chapter 32, 35.

Aquinas goes on to distinguish between “bonum” (“good”) and “ultima perfectio” (“final perfection”). Not having reached the latter, the created world and its beings cannot simply (“simpliciter”) be called good, but they are good to a degree, and with limitations.⁵⁶³ Since evil is the privation of good, it has no substance, and because humans naturally aspire to an ever-increasing closeness with the godhead, any move away from him would be a move towards the void—and *nothing*. Any other course of action would simply deprive them of goodness: “Evil is known through good.”⁵⁶⁴ By the same token, Aquinas dismisses pure evil: “there is no evil, except in as much as it is the privation of good,”⁵⁶⁵ and “evil as such can be seen, and this is not a thing but the privation of a particular good.”⁵⁶⁶ Furthermore, the omnipotent God curtails the devil in his utter *nothingness*. “All evil has a cause to some extent,”⁵⁶⁷ but in the deity’s point of view, good can spring from evil: “Whence evil never follows in effect, unless any other evil existed before in the agent or the matter.”⁵⁶⁸

Aquinas grounds his argument in paradox, starting his enquiry into evil in the *Summa theologiae* with the *quaestio* of whether the *malum*’s existence refutes God:

It seems that God does not exist, because if one of the contraries [meaning the divinity and the devil] were infinite, the other would be completely destroyed. But this is understood in this name *God*, namely that he is some infinite good. Therefore, if God existed, no evil would be found. But evil can be found in the world. Thus, God does not exist.”⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶³ Aquinas, *ST*, I, 5.1.

⁵⁶⁴ “Cognoscuntur mala per bona.” *Summa contra gentiles*, Part I, chapter 71, in *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Doctoris Angelici, opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, vol. 13 (Rome: Typis Riccardi Garroni, 1918). The *SCG* will henceforth be cited by part and chapter.

⁵⁶⁵ “Malum non [...] esse nisi in quantum est privatio boni” (Aquinas, *SCG*, I, 71).

⁵⁶⁶ “Potest intelligi ipsum malum, et hoc non est aliquid, sed est ipsa privatio alicuius particularis boni.” *Quaestiones disputatae de malo*, questio I, articulus 1 co, in *Sancti Thomae de Aquino, opera omnia, iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P.M. edita*, vol. 23 (Rome: Commissio Lenonina, 1982). Quoted henceforth as *DM*, and by reference to question and article. See also Russell, *Lucifer*, 193-5; Daniel M. Garland, Jr, “The Providence of God and the Cross of Christ,” *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* (Oct. 2013), <<https://www.hprweb.com/2013/10/the-providence-of-god-and-the-cross-of-christ/>>.

⁵⁶⁷ “Omne malum aequaliter causam habeat” (Aquinas, *ST*, I, 49.1).

⁵⁶⁸ “Unde numquam sequitur malum in effectu, nisi praeexistat aliquod aliud malum in agente vel materia” (Aquinas, *ST*, I, 49.1, ad 3). See also Russell, *Lucifer*, 195.

⁵⁶⁹ “Videtur quod Deus non sit. Quia si unum contrariorum fuerit infinitum totaliter destruetur aliud. Sed hoc intelligitur in hoc nomine *Deus*, scilicet quod sit quoddam bonum infinitum. Si ergo Deus esset,

However, Aquinas follows this argument precisely to affirm the divine presence vis-à-vis the *malum*'s incongruence and *nothingness*. Any argument for (the prominence of) evil would entail a view of the world as chaos, devoid of any ordering force. In this solipsistic form of reasoning, the human faculty to discriminate would be suspended, collapsing all models of good and evil. In contrast, a worldview starting from God's benevolence allows for sustained harmony.⁵⁷⁰ As a consequence, moral integrity guides the individual towards the godhead, and to the realisation of their personal potential, whereas sinfulness leads into the abyss.⁵⁷¹

Julian's carefully nuanced engagement with the *malum* as *nought* is thus part of a longstanding and pervasive theological tradition. In contrast to the deductive structure that characterises the treatises discussed above, her textual strategies and intended readerly modes of deconstructing the devil are, however, not only remarkably cryptic and condensed, but often concealed, revealed only through a meticulous and microscopic textual analysis. Whether, and to what degree, her composition was influenced by her predecessors' works is perhaps the wrong question to ask because no *definitive* answers can be attained from the body of source material. What we should be enquiring about instead are the distinct tones and textures of her argument, which would be lost in a comparison with works of a very different milieu, underpinning, and *telos*. Julian's devil is an apophatic signifier of existing *nought*, balanced on the cusp of his

nullum malum inveniretur. Invenitur autem malum in mundo. Ergo Deus non est" (Aquinas, *ST*, I, 2.3). Original emphasis. According to Antoine Coté, this notion derives from Aristotle and Averroes: *L'infinité divine dans la théologie médiévale, 1220-1255* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique Vrin, 2002), 208-9.

⁵⁷⁰ Errol E. Harris, *The Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1977), 4-5. Russell, *Lucifer*, 195.

⁵⁷¹ Aquinas, *DM*, 1.3-4; Russell, *Lucifer*, 199.

own annihilation but firmly situated within the topography of grace. Intratextual parallels to humanity, who is equally poised between life and death in their postlapsarian existence, are not accidental but seek to emancipate the individual from this narrative by establishing the divinity as the permeative focal point. Thus, the example of the deity *in carne*, who miraculously breaks the chains of death on the cross, concentrates all soteriological and eschatological energies on the inscrutable Other.

Instead of causing any forms of unsalutary dread that could lead to despair and perdition, or existing in and of himself, Julian's devil therefore confirms Peter Dinzelbacher's claim that:

In traditional Christianity, the Devil was the instance that alone made it possible to complete a theodicy, inasmuch as his activity from *Genesis* onward must serve as an explanation for the existence of evil in the world.⁵⁷²

The fiendish contrariness to the godhead's omniscience, omnipotence and omnibenevolence as well as the devil's incremental and multimodal (textual, theological, and ontological) annihilation serve as climactic *and* continuous inflection points that let all lines of perspective converge on the divinity. As a result, this beginning of apprehending the divine "ABC" (Chapter 80) of love, elevates the readership's understanding towards the *sensus mysticus* that Julian's work is seeking to invoke, instil, and pursue.

When Underhill thus argues for the contemplatives' requiring "a rigorous self-knowledge as an important part of purification; meaning by this knowledge not only of our sins, but of our possibilities,"⁵⁷³ she is right about Julian's trajectory—but only in part. The tribulations that have been imposed on her activate *and* clear her conscience,

⁵⁷² "Devil," in *The Brill Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Kocku von Stuckrad (Leiden: Brill, 2006), <https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-dictionary-of-religion/devil-COM_00116?s.num=11>.

⁵⁷³ Evelyn Underhill, *The Mystics of the Church* (London: James Clark, 1925), 82.

though the knowledge that her brief doubts were detrimental sets in before. While Underhill's emphasis on possibility is acutely congruent with the anchoress's apophatic linguistic creativity and the potential of operant grace, Julian makes the case for the divine and hence unknowable essence of the soul. This most profound part of confluence can never truly be known and may only be revealed transiently by illumination. Julian's creatural suffering unites the divine and human strands within herself, and she is consequently raised above such taxonomic certainties, or naively human categories, as certain, or "rigorous," (self)-knowledge. These concepts would limit any imaginative engagement with the divinity by merely focusing on the human part of the love-knot, whereas all her hermeneutical vectors gesture towards kenotic self-effacement, which goes hand in hand with the apprehension of the godhead's mystery.

Yet, by undergoing periods of suffering and patient endurance, she is provided with the spiritual tools that transfigure her fallen consciousness into the deity's viewpoint, which enables her to harness the powers of her will and then let go, endlessly melting into the divinity. This transfiguration of suffering and contrition into self-forgetful devotion acknowledges the *nought* of human existence while generating a route to the intuited understanding of the soul's divine ground.

The tension that the tribulations create between Julian's fallen infirmity and the *maximum absolutum* correlates her purgative, illuminative, and unitive strands, which are therefore never distinct processes but cohesive matrices that all have the deity as their midpoint.⁵⁷⁴ Undeniably, the infinite potential for spiritual maturation on the continuum of apprehension, which stretches from "a litill knoweing" to the "fullhede in

⁵⁷⁴ Rather than tracing a model of ascent according to the ladder of perfection, the previous discussion proves that *purgatio*, *illuminatio*, and *unio* intersect and coincide in Julian's work, an overlay that is both a precondition and an effect of their anagogical directionality. As a result, each phase is contingent on, and brought to fruition by, the other ones.

hevyn” (Chapter 80) pivots on the carefully calibrated—and yet intuitive/*kynde* theocentric *modi amandi et timendi*. Yet, while neither Julian, nor the reader, might be able to grasp any particulars of the deity, of postlapsarian life, or of their innermost souls, the self-conceptualisation as ultimate simplicity allows them to lose themselves in the divinity’s unfathomableness, which stretches far beyond the horizon of human understanding and reveals itself through and as “this lesson of love” (Chapter 6).

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