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Seek, Suffer and Trust: Ese and Disese in Julian of Norwich

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> Illness strips you back to an authentic self, but not one you need to meet. Too much is claimed for authenticity. Painfully we learn to live in the world, and to be false. Then all our defences are knocked down in one sweep. In sickness we can't avoid knowing about our body and what it does, its animal aspect, its demands.
> Hilary Mantel[1]

> Illness makes us disinclined for the long campaigns that prose exacts…In illness words seem to possess a mystic quality. We grasp what is beyond their surface meaning, gather instinctively this, that, and the other— a sound, a colour, here a stress, there a pause— which the poet, knowing words to be meagre in comparison with ideas, has strewn about his page to evoke, when collected, a state of mind which neither words can express nor the reason explain. Incomprehensibility has an enormous power over us in illness, more legitimately perhaps than the upright will allow. In health meaning has encroached upon sound. Our intelligence domineers over our senses. But in illness, with the police off duty, we creep beneath some obscure poem by Mallarmé or Donne, some phrase in Latin or Greek, and the words give out their scent and distil their flavour, and then, if at last we grasp the meaning, it is all the richer for having come to us sensually first, by way of the palate and the nostrils, like some queer odour.
> Virginia Woolf[2]

I
The Poetics of Abject Liminality

> And when I was thirty yers old and halfe God sent me a bodely sekeness in which I lay iii dayes and iii nights; and on the fourth night I tooke all my rites of holy church and wened not a levyd till day.[3]

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[1] *London Review of Books Diary*, 4 November 2010, pp. 41-2.

[2] *On Being Ill* (London: Hogarth Press, 1930), pp. xxxx. This is a revised version of the essay first published in *The New Criterion*, January 1926.

[3] Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), cap. 3, p. 4. Unless otherwise noticed, all quotation from Julian's Long Text (hereafter LT) will be taken from this edition, which uses the text in London, British Library MS Sloane 2499, dating from the mid-seventeenth-century. Other editions, such as *A Book of Showings to the Anchoress Julian of Norwich*, ed. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Studies and Texts, 35, 2 vols (Toronto, 1978), and *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park, PA, 2006), prefer the Paris manuscript (Paris, Bibl. Nat. MS fonds Anglais 40), written in an ornamental form of fere textura by an English hand in the third quarter of the sixteenth century. For an assessment of the textual problems and a good account of some aspects of Sloane's superiority, see Marion Glasscoe, 'Visions and Revisions: A Further Look at the Manuscripts of Julian of Norwich', *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989), 103-20. See also the valuable but neglected discussion in Marion Glasscoe, 'Means of Showing: An Approach to Reading Julian of Norwich', *Analecta Cartusiana* 106.1 (1983), 155-77. Colledge and Walsh give an account of their editorial method and the reasons for their preference for Paris at I. 1-28; Watson and Jenkins discuss their textual choices at pp24-43.

Julian of Norwich's description of the onset of her life-threatening illness in May 1373 is the point of departure for the most remarkable rumination on the process of dying in Middle English. Her text is transfused not only with extraordinary honesty about her responses to the process but also with her remarkable ability to use language to construct for her readers performative simulacra of those death-bed experiences and the dialogue and revelations from God that accompany them, and to track and transcribe her growing understanding and acceptance of the nature and meaning of her showings in all their existential tension and theological complexity.[4]

Julian's writing exists in a complex, polyphonic, and intertextual relationship with many other works of catechesis and penitential theology, devotion, Passion meditation, contemplation, and eschatology.[5] I have previously sketched out what seems to me to be a persistent strategy of parody, pastiche, and ventriloquism in the shifting and multi-layered textures of Julian's text.[6] We are only just beginning to explore the ways that Julian's showings interact with texts like Heinrich Suso's *Horologium sapientiae* (composed 1334-

[4] Cf. James T. McIlwain, 'The "Bodelye syeknes" of Julian of Norwich', Journal of Medieval History, 10 (1984), 167-80; Marleen Cre, 'The Literary Significance of Illness in Julian of Norwich's *A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman*', in *Convergence/Divergence*: *The Politics of Late Medieval English Devotional and Medical Discourses*, ed. Denis Renevey and Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, *Poetica* 72 (Special Issue) (Tokyo: Yushodo Press, 2009), pp. 43-57. Naoe Kukita Yoshikawa, ed., *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, *Gender in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015) contains several essays referring to Julian's illness. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

[5] For useful discussion of this important and contentious issue, see Anna Maria Reynolds, 'Some Literary Influences in the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich', *Leeds University Studies in Language and Literature* 7-8 (1952), 18-28; Lynn Staley Johnson, 'The Trope of the Scribe and the Question of Literary Authority in the Works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe', *Speculum* 66 (1991), 820-38; Denise Nowakowski Baker, 'Julian of Norwich and Anchoritic Literature', *Mystics Quarterly* 19 (1993), 148-60; Denise Nowakowski Baker, *Julian of Norwich's Showings: From Vision to Book* (Princeton, 1994); Felicity Riddy, ''Women talking about the things of God': a late-medieval sub-culture', in *Women and Literature in Britain 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 104-27; Felicity Riddy, 'Julian of Norwich and Self-Textualization', in *Editing Women*, ed. Ann M. Hutchison (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 101-24; Christopher Abbott, *Julian of Norwich: Autobiography and Theology* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1999), pp. 47-60; Felicity Riddy, 'Text and Self in *The Book of Margery Kempe*', in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 435-53.

[6] See, for example, 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. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 192-207. This collection of essays offers a valuable starting point for critical orientation on Julian's text.

37) and its vernacular translations, which contain a chillingly influential *ars moriendi*. These textual and subtextual interactions are even more extensive, I think, with the various, incrementally developing versions of the *Remedies Against Tribulation* of William Flete (d. after 1380), not to mention the late thirteenth-century Latin *Stimulus amoris* or its late fourteenth-century Middle English version *The Prickinge of Love*.[7] With reference to Julian's deathbed experiences, Amy Appleford has recently explored the ways in which, especially in the Short Text, Julian's description of the stages of her illness and the attendance by clergy and members of her family, closely echoes the admonitions in the *visitacio infirmorum* and *ars moriendi* tradition and in the sacramental rituals associated with the ceremonies of the Last Rites.[8] But I want to argue that Julian goes much further than Appleford allows, and transforms the deathbed repertoire through her revelatory encounters with Christ. Julian's trajectory through the experience of learning how to die is revelatory as well as exemplary.

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[7] A recognition of this vernacular intertextuality is a particular strength of the annotations in Nicholas Watson, and Jacqueline Jenkins, eds., *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman and a Revelation of Love*, Brepols Medieval Women Series (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 2006). The Latin *De remediis contra temptationes* was written by William Flete probably between 1352 and 1358. The text had considerable circulation in Latin and English, undergoing at least three recensions and elaborations of the vernacular text along the way. On Flete, see M.B. Hackett, 'William Flete and the *De Remediis Contra Temptaciones*', in *Medieval Studies Presented to Aubrey Gwynn S.J.*, ed. by J. A. Watt, J. B. Morrall and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Three Candles, 1961), pp. 330-48; Benedict Hackett, Eric Colledge, and Noel Chadwick, 'William Flete's "De Remediis Contra Temptaciones" In Its Latin and English Recensions: The Growth of a Text', *Mediaeval Studies*, 26 (1964), 210-30; Edmund Colledge, and Noel Chadwick, '"Remedies against Temptations": The Third English Version of William Flete', *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pieta* 5(1968), 203-40. On the vernacular *Stimulus Amoris*, see Harold Kane, ed., *The Prickynge of Love*. 2 vols, *Salzburg Studies in English Literature* (Salzburg, 1983).

[8] Carl Horstmann, ed., *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole, an English Father of the Church, and His Followers*. 2 vols (London: S. Sonnenschein & Co., 1895-6), I. 107-8. For the Latin *De visitatione infirmorum* attributed to Baudri de Bourgeuil, which attributes a curative function to looking at a crucifix, see *PL* 40.1147-58. On the texts and their cultural impact and work, see the important recent work by Amy Appleford, 'The "Commene Course of Prayers": Julian of Norwich and Late Medieval Death Culture', *JEGP*, 107 (2008), 190-214; Amy Appleford, 'The Dance of Death in London: John Carpenter, John Lydgate, and the *Daunce of Poulys*', *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38 (2008), 285-314; and the development of the argument in her *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 24-25, 31-32, 36; and Amy Appleford, 'The Sea Ground and the London Street: The Ascetic Self in Julian of Norwich and Thomas Hoccleve', *The Chaucer Review*, 51 (2016), 49-67. I have learned much from her work. For older accounts, see Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well. The Development of the Ars Moriendi.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942); T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages: Mortality, Judgment and Remembrance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972); Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the 'Ars Moriendi' in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996); Caroline Walker Bynum, and Paul H. Freedman, *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

Not noticed by Appleford is that the age at which Julian's bodily sickness arrives has clear textual echoes of the age of the dying man in Heinrich Suso's *ars moriendi,* included as chapter 5 in the early fifteenth-century Middle English *Seven Points of True Wisdom* and variously translated as a stand-alone guide by Thomas Hoccleve and others. The young man, who laments to the disciple that death has unexpectedly come upon him and found him unprepared, comments that 'Loo alle my dayes ben passed, thritty ȝeere of myne age ben passed and loste and wrechedly perysched.'[9] Suso's speaker hauntingly describes himself as 'the liknesse of a man diynge and þerwith spekynge with the', a characterization rendered even more powerfully in Hoccleve as:

> Beholde now the liknesse and figure
> Of a man dyynge and talkyng with thee.[10]

Julian and Suso's young man are entering into the *selva oscura* of their death agonies at exactly the same point in the middle of their life journeys (and at the age when Christ was traditionally thought to have begun his public ministry). Appleford plausibly argues that Julian's recurrent concern that her experiences and her showings should be of spiritual benefit to those at her bedside and, later, in the Long Text, to all her *even cristen,* suggests that Julian has configured her teaching persona in the *Showings* quite deliberately as a version of Suso's 'man dyynge and talkyng with thee'.

By evoking the conventional texts of deathbed preparation, as well as the more sophisticated and spiritually ambitious agenda of Suso's exploration of the *mors imprevisa* or

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[9] Carl Horstmann, *'Orologium Sapientiae or the Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom, Aus Ms Douce 114', Anglia,* 10 (1888), 323-89, p. 360. For the Latin text of the *Orologium Sapientiae,* see Pius Künzle, ed., *Heinrich Seuses Horologium Sapientiae* (Freiburg/Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1977). On the vernacular English reception, see Roger Lovatt, 'Henry Suso and Medieval Mystical Tradition in England', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England II: Dartington, 1982*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1982), pp. 47-62; Stephen Rozenski, 'Authority and Exemplarity in Henry Suso and Richard Rolle', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VIII*, ed. by E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 93-108; Sarah James, 'Rereading Henry Suso and Eucharistic Theology in Fifteenth-Century England', *Review of English Studies,* 63 (2012), 732-42.

[10] *Orologium Sapientiae*, ed. Horstmann, p. 358; 'Ars vtillissima sciendi mori' in Thomas Hoccleve, *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems*, ed. by Roger Ellis (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), ll. 85-86. For recent discussion of this version, see Stephen Rozenski, "Your Ensaumple and Your Mirour": Hoccleve's Amplification of the Imagery and Intimacy of Henry Suso's *Ars Moriendi*', *Parergon,* 25 (2008), 1-16.

unforeseen and unprepared for death, Julian constructs a protagonist who shares with Suso's dying man the same liminality, poised on the threshold of leaving life and approaching death. Hoccleve's Suso captures this powerless liminality in his chiastic line: 'Thyn eende is comen: comen is thyn eende.'[11] The dying man who speaks is a profoundly paradoxical double signifier; a synapse of meaning forged from the hyperactive stasis of the critical moment before life is extinguished. He represents what the Middle English Suso, the *Seven Points of True Wisdom*, calls a 'felable ensaumple'.[12] He functions like the atemporal passion image of The Man of Sorrows who speaks from a non-linear and non-chronological 'nowhere'.[13] Similarly Julian's comment to those around her bed that 'it is today doomsday with me' dresses her in a little brief authority, endowing her with the same sense of liminality.[14] There is something Beckettian about these deathbed voices, speaking from the lip of the grave, living but in some sense already dead; already dead but in some sense still living.[15]

Julian blends elements of the *ars moriendi* tradition (well described by Appleford) with aspects of the narrative velocity offered by other literary genres, such as Visions of the Otherworld.[16] She restlessly looks to move beyond the bland and passive submissiveness of

[11] 'Ars vtillissima sciendi mori' in '*My Compleinte'*, l. 134.
[12] *Orologium Sapientiae*, ed. C. Horstmann, p. 358.
[13] On the static image Man of Sorrows, see now Catherine R. Puglisi, and William L. Barcham, eds., *New Perspectives on the Man of Sorrows*. Vol. 1, *Studies in Iconography* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 213).
[14] Long Text, cap. 8, p. 13. It also stresses her sense of being an exemplar to her *euen-cristen*, and her engagement with a wider emotional community: see, for example, Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 2006), chapter 2 'Confronting Death'; Jill Sirko, 'Making "Penance Profitable": Julian of Norwich and the Sacrament of Penance', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 41 (2015), 163-86.
[15] For more on this liminality in Middle English literature, see Vincent Gillespie, 'Dead Still/Still Dead', *The Mediaeval Journal*, 1 (2011), 53-78; Jane Gilbert, *Living Death in Medieval French and English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Robert Mills, *Suspended Animation: Pain, Pleasure and Punishment in Medieval Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2005).
[16] On this class of texts, see Robert Easting, *Visions of the Other World in Middle English* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997); Mary Erler, '"A Revelation of Purgatory" (1422): Reform and the Politics of Female Visions', *Viator*, 38 (2007), 321-47; Takami Matsuda, *Death and Purgatory in Middle English Didactic Poetry* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997) is a useful compendium of vernacular motifs and imagery in death narratives. The popular account of the visionary Monk of Eynsham on his deathbed, with visions linked to the *triduum* of Easter (Holy Thursday to Easter Saturday), bears interesting comparison with the nature and duration of Julian's visions: Robert Easting, ed., *The Revelation of the Monk of Eynsham*, EETS, O.S. 318 (2002), pp. 22-3, 29ff. The text closely observes the changing colours of the face of the dying monk, and a bleeding crucifix and bright lights beside the cross also feature. Appleford, "Comene Course", p. 209, notes that the

the Uses of Tribulation tradition. In particular, she makes one important change to tradition: she largely avoids the extensive narrative scripts of purgatory and hell commonly found in such texts (or rather uses them only in a highly tactical and local manner in describing her temptation by demons), because the focus for her is always already on the transformative powers of the transfigured bleeding head of Christ.

The curtains of blood that close off the face of Christ in the second revelation mark her desire to move her showings away from conventional passion meditations and the affective and cognitive scripts of devotional aspirations to feel compassion with the suffering Christ. These conventional scripts are initially embodied and exemplified in the three spiritual gifts and wounds that she requests at the start of her Long Text (cap. 2). She asks for mindfulness of the Passion (including a 'bodily sight' of the Crucifixion); bodily sickness at the age of thirty; and three inner wounds of contrition, compassion, and willful longing for God. But she finds them and her being transfigured onto a different plain of perception and understanding by the force of her showings and the affective crucible of her responses to them:

> And one time I saw how halfe the face, begyning at the ere, overrede with drie blode til it beclosid to the mid face, and after that, tuther halfe beclosyd on the same wise, and therewhiles in this party even as it came. This saw I bodily, swemely and derkely, and I desired more bodily sight to have sene mor clerely. And I was answered in my reason: 'If God wil shew thee more, he shal be thy light. Thee nedith none but him.' For I saw him [and sought hym]; for we arn now so blynd and so unwise that we never sekyn God til he of his godenes shewith him to us; and we ought se of him graciously, than arn we sterid by the same grace to sekyn with gret desire to se him more blisfully; and thus I saw him and sowte him, and I had him and I wantid hym. And this is, and should be, our comon werkeyng in this, as to my sight.[17]

The apophatic curtains of blood veil the scene of human suffering, denying bodily sight, and shifting the focus onto the light of divine revelation to reveal instead the kenotic drama of the

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Sermon of Dead Men, roughly contemporary with Julian, also ruminates on the changing appearance of the dying man: *Lollard Sermons*, ed. by Gloria Cigman, EETS, O.S. 294 (1989), pp. 207-40, 207.

[17] Long Text, cap. 10, pp. 14-15.

soteriological act.[18] This is emphatically not what Julian thought she was signing up for when she makes her initial requests:

> Methought I would have beene that time with Mary Magdalen and with other that were Crists lovers, and therefore I desired a bodily sight wherein I might have more knowledge of the bodily peynes of our saviour, and of the compassion [of] our lady and of all his trew lovers that seene that time his peynes, for I would be one of them and suffer with him.[19]

Indeed her request in chapter 10 for more bodily sight is entirely consistent with her initial desire to 'see' the 'bodily peynes' and to have compassion comparable to that enjoyed by Mary Magdalen and those at the foot of the cross.[20] In her opening requests in the Short Text, she asks for all the experiences that she would have 'if I shulde die': it is never more than an 'as if', a hypothetical scenario, a theatrical engagement.[21] What she gets is very different. The apparent imminence of her own death transposes her engagement with the death of Christ onto a different plane. The interpretative and imaginative matrix that these changed

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[18] See further Vincent Gillespie, and Maggie Ross, 'The Apophatic Image: The Poetics of Effacement in Julian of Norwich', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England V*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), pp. 53-77; Vincent Gillespie, 'Postcards from the Edge: Interpreting the Ineffable in the Middle English Mystics', in *Interpretation Medieval and Modern: The J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures: Perugia 1992*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), pp. 137-65. Both are reprinted, with other essays, in Vincent Gillespie, *Looking in Holy Books: Essays on Late Medieval Religious Writing in England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

[19] Long Text, cap. 2, p.3.

[20] For discussion of Julian's perceptual triad of bodily sight, ghostly sight, and 'word formed in the understanding', see Nicholas Watson, 'The Trinitarian Hermeneutic in Julian of Norwich's *Revelation of Love*', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium V*, ed. by Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge, 1992), 79-100; Barbara Newman, 'What Did It Mean to Say "I Saw"?: The Clash between Theory and Practice in Medieval Visionary Culture', *Speculum*, 80 (2005), 1-43, provides a helpful overview of the reception and development of the Augustinian theories. Marion Glasscoe, 'Means of Showing: An Approach to Reading Julian of Norwich', *Analecta Cartusiana*, 106 (1983), 155-77 is still a wise reflection on this subject. It is striking that the borrowings in *The Chastising of God's Children* from Alphonse of Pecia's *Epistola solitarii ad reges*, a key text in the development and popularisation of techniques *discretio spirituum* , use Augustine and Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* to explore similar modalities of visionary reception: *The Chastising of God's Children and the Treatise of Perfection of the Sons of God*, ed. by Joyce Bazire and Eric Colledge (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), to which should be added the newly purchased copy in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Don. C. 287, previously unprovenanced. For recent discussions, see Annie Sutherland, '*The Chastising of God's Children*: A Neglected Text', in *Text and Controversy from Wyclif to Bale: Essays in Honour of Anne Hudson*, ed. by Helen Barr and Ann M. Hutchison (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), pp. 353-73; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 247-323; Marlen Cre, 'Contexts and Comments : *The Chastising of God's Children* and Marguerite Porète's *Mirour of Simple Souls* in Oxford, MS Bodley 505', in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Graham Caie and Denis Renevey (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 122-35. On *discretio spirituum* generally in the context of Julian of Norwich, see Rosalynn Voaden, *God's Words, Women's Voices: The Discernment of Spirits in the Writing of Late-Medieval Women Visionaries* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1999).

[21] Short Text, sec. 1, p. 63.

circumstances generates is far more radical, profound, and non-linear than the usual passion mediation scenarios.[22] Her desire to see the bodily pains of Christ is not the same as the vivid reality of her sharing in death's agony. The actual position of fear and abjection she finds herself in is a very different experience for her and for us from looking at the passion of Christ from the psycho-affectively generated and directed compassionate responses taught by the devotional tradition.[23]

Real, serious, life-threatening illness entails a radical simplification of the self, focussing inwards, perhaps making the barriers between the conscious and unconscious mind a little more permeable. The abject man or woman, reduced to their bare humanity, can achieve a focussed attentiveness to matters of life and death, and potentially to matters of spiritual significance.[24] Yet Suso's young man dying laments that his fear of death has removed from him the power to think and prepare spiritually for his end. He is mesmerised

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[22] On this break with the linearity of Passion meditation, see James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk: Ghemmert, 1979); Henk W. van Os, *The Art of Devotion in the Late Middle Ages in Europe, 1300-1500* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Jeffrey F. Hamburger, and Anne-Marie Bouche, eds., *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006). Aspects of this are discussed in Vincent Gillespie, '*Luking in Haly Bukes: Lectio* in Some Late Medieval Spiritual Miscellanies', in *Spätmittelalterliche Geistliche Literatur in der Nationalsprache*, ed. by James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1984), pp. 1-27; 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* (Salzburg: Insitut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1987), pp. 111-59. Both are reprinted in Gillespie, *Looking in Holy Books*. For recent work on that other static icon, the vernicle, referred to by Julian, see Lisa H. Cooper, and Andrea Denny-Brown, eds., *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture: With a Critical Edition of 'O Vernicle'* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

[23] On which see, for example, the recent studies by Jennifer Bryan, *Looking Inward: Devotional Reading and the Private Self in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

[24] Mikhail Bakhtin comments that 'events of the grotesque sphere are always developed on the boundary of dividing one body from the other and, as it were, at their points of intersection', *Rabelais and His World*, tr. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 322, quoted by Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, *Julian of Norwich and the Mystical Body Politic of Christ* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), p. 73, whose chapter 3, pp.63-123 contains many helpful insights; Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), p. 147, notes that pain is resistant to language and indeed requires a 'shattering of language'. Jeffrey Butcher, '*Absolute Essence* of the Suffering Mystic: The Visions of Elizabeth of Schonau', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 40 (2014), 173-91. See also Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, tr. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), and *Living Up to Death*, tr. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), which have powerful reflections on suffering and wisdom.

by his own mortality and by an unavoidable awareness of his pain and imminent death: nothing can get through or past that fear. This is one of the great risks of dying unprepared. Illness can turn you inwards, can create self-fuelling and solipsistic loops of fear and paralysing anxiety. Julian describes this as being 'turnyd and left to myselfe in hevynes and werines of my life and irkenes of myselfe that onethis I coude have patience to leve', and she spends a lot of her text performing and counselling a move away from the futility of what she calls this 'beholding of selfe' towards a beholding of God: 'for in the beholding of God we fall not, in the beholding of selfe we stond not'.[25] But Julian dramatises that these states do not exist in clean and clear opposition to each other: instead the abject liminality of serious illness precipitates a restless and troubling oscillation between them:

> And than the peyne shewid ageyn to my feling, and than the ioy and the lekyng, and now that one, and now that other, dyvers times—I suppose aboute xx tymes. And in the same tyme of ioy I migte have seid with Seynt Paul: 'Nothing shal depart me fro the charite of Criste'. And in the peyne I migte have seid with Peter: 'Lord, save me, I perish'.[26]

Julian is keen to teach that the 'comon werkyng' of mankind ought to be to seek out God in the hope that he will show himself to us. Julian becomes abject through her illness, but in her abjection she realises that she has always been the object of the unwavering beholding of Christ and enfolded in his transformative love.[27] This is one of her key remedies or mitigations for pain and suffering: seeking the loving beholding of Christ leads her understanding into wider metaphysical perspectives, and raises the mind and soul up from the grinding pain and solipsistic terror of mortal illness:

> And this vision was a lernyng to myn vnderstondyng that the continual sekyng of the soul 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

[25] Long Text, cap. 15, p. 23; cap. 82, p. 131.
[26] Long Text, cap. 15, p. 23.
[27] Cf. Long Text, cap. 48: 'And grace werkyth oure sorowfull dyeng in to holy, blyssyd life'. I am indebted to Annie Sutherland for this cross-reference. For recent reflections on Julian's poetics of enclosure, see Laura Saetveit Miles, 'Space and Enclosure in Julian of Norwich's *a Revelation of Love*', in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 154-65. This is linked to her use of images of spiritual and physical pregnancy: see note 52.

> fyndyng is of his special grace whan it is his will. The sekyng 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 vnderstondyng that **sekyng is as good as beholdyng for the tyme that he will suffer the soule to be in travel**. **It is God wille that we seke him to the beholdyng of him**, for be that he shall shew us himselfe of his special grace whan he wil. And how a soule shall have him in his beholdyng he shal teche himselfe; and that is most worshipp to him and profitt to thyselfe, and most receivith of mekenes and vertues with the grace and ledyng of the Holy Goste; for a soule that only festinith on to God with very troste, either be sekyng or in beholdyng, it is the most worshipp that he may don to him, as to my sight.[28]

Julian tells us that it is the lot of mankind to 'sekyn, suffrin and trosten', which she immediately glosses as seek, abide and trust. Initially at least this is pretty much a standard deployment of tribulation material for local, tactical purposes: you have to put up with your lot and hope for better in the next life.[29] William Flete says that one of the uses of tribulation is that we should learn to 'suffren mekely and abyden pacyently', while the hugely popular *Twelve Uses of Tribulation* asserts in a very Julianish way that 'more mede is in desirande and sekande god þen likande in hym'.[30] The Middle English Suso exhorts 'be perseuerant askynge, knokkynge & sechynge tille þou haue þi askynge'.[31]

But Julian's development of these stock ideas is endlessly synthetic and inventive, balancing the aspiration of the human soul against the sole agency of the Trinity in bringing about such changes. Through the course of her Long Text, she deepens and widens her understanding of the therapeutic utility of this perichoretic Trinity of 'sekyn, suffrin and trosten'. By this means she takes her audience on a journey away from programmatic and conventional responses towards something more radical and complex. Unlike Suso's dying

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[28] Long Text, cap. 10, pp. 16-17; emphasis my own. The Paris text reads here: 'It is gods will that **we seke into the beholdyng** of hym', but this turns the process away from kenotic travelling hopefully into into one of theological examination and interrogation, and probably reflects a Counter-Reformation ideology at work on this copy.

[29] Watson and Jenkins, p. 212, and Colledge and Walsh, p. 37 argue for *The Chastising of God's Children* as an analogue to much of this tribulation language. But similar sentiments are common in anchoritic texts such as *Ancrene Wisse*, and develop incrementally in vernacular versions from the early thirteenth-century onwards.

[30] Colledge and Chadwick, "'Remedies Against Temptations", p. 221; *The XII Profits of Tribulation* is often pseudonymously associated with Peter of Blois or Gerard of Liège; this version printed in Horstmann, ed., *Yorkshire Writers*, II. 57-60; another version at II. 391-406.The same sentiment is expressed in *The Book of Tribulation,* ed. by Alexandra Barratt, Middle English Texts 8 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1983), p.108: 'it is a gretter merit to seche the delityng in God and to abide it, than it is to delite in him'.

[31] *Orologium Sapientiae*, ed. C. Horstmann, p. 341.

young man, who has misspent his thirty years in revelry and the pleasures of the world, Julian's years of service to God (for which Christ thanks her explicitly in Revelation 6 (cap. 14), in a way that also alludes to Flete and Suso), her own willed and sustained liminality in a paradoxical state of 'wilful abiding', and her patient ruminations on her showings have all allowed to her to develop a modality for blending these archetypal teachings on preparation for death with a profound theology of love and salvation:

> And how a soule shall have him in his beholdyng he shal teche himselfe; and that is most worshipp to him and profitt to thyselfe, and most receivith of mekenes and vertues with the grace and ledyng of the Holy Goste; for a soule that only festinith on to God with very troste, either be sekyng or in beholdyng, it is the most worshipp that he may don to him, as to my sight. These arn two werkyng that mown be seene in this vision: that on is sekyng, the other is beholdyng. The sekyng is common; that, every soule may have with his grace, and owith to have that discretion and techyng of the holy church. It is God wil that we have thre things in our sekyng: the first is that we **sekyn wilfully and bisily**, withouten slauth, as it may be throw his grace, gladly and merili withoute onskilful hevynes and veyne sorow; the second is that we **abide him stedfastly** for his love, withoute gruching and striveing ageyns him, in our lives end, for it shall lesten but awhile; the thred that we **trosten in him mightily of fulsekird feith**, for it is his wil. We knowen he shall appere sodenly and blisfully to al his lovers; for his werkyng is privy, and he wil be perceivid, and his appering shal be swith sodeyn, and he wil be trowid, for he is full hend and homley—blissid mot he ben![32]

Julian's exposition of the 'seek, suffer and trust' triad is noteworthy. Seeking and trusting are theologically pretty straightforward, but suffering is, in every respect, harder. The literature on the uses of tribulation always stresses the importance of patience, typified by William Flete's exhoration to 'suffren mekely and abyden pacyently'.[33] As Flete says 'a man þat stondeþ in disese, he is holden to seken alle þe wyes he may comforte hym self.'[34] Julian wants to engage with common experience and common teachings, but aspires to drive them into deeper taxonomies and syntheses of understanding. 'Suffer' is glossed by Julian as

[32] Long Text, cap. 10, pp. 16-17; emphasis my own.
[33] There are also underlying references to the two kenotic Beatitudes 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' and 'Blessed are the poor in spirit for the kingdom of heaven is theirs'. Julian not only inhabits the theological parameters of the beatitudes but also creates a multidimensional environment within which its meanings can be explored and, somatically at least, experienced by the imaginative force of her presentation of the showings. The patient will conquer (*pacientes vincunt*): the potential application of this to radical illness and tribulation is obvious: see, for example, *The Triumph of Patience: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. by G. J. Schiffhorst (University Presses of Florida: Orlando, 1978).
[34] Colledge and Chadwick, "'Remedies Against Temptations", p. 226.

meaning to 'abide him stedfastly... withoute gruching and striveing ageyns him, in our lives end, for it shall lesten but awhile.'[35] Julian is characteristically and forcefully impacting several lexical layers into each other with this formulation. 'Suffer' means to wait for or abide, of course, but, in the context of her own illness and of the bleeding head of Christ, it also by this date already carries unmistakeable lexical overtones of pain and tribulation.[36] And the gloss reads equally well as referring to the patience of those with a serious or terminal illness, who wait without complaint for the passing pain to cease, as it does to the more abstract theological patience of those waiting for the grace of God to manifest itself at the end of time or at the end of human life.[37]

This kind of performative twinning of ideas is typical of the ways in which Julian uses language and syntax to complicate and collocate theological ideas. Julian's punning and playful linguistic explorations of the ways in which *sickness* can give way to *sekirnes* (or security) by way of *seeking*; or the ways that *disease* can lead to discovery of where true *ease* can be found; or the ways in which being able to *trow* can lead to *troste* and then to *Truth*. Such word knots are all examples of her exploration of a holistic view of life and death. Indeed her ideas of wholeness play tirelessly with notions of physical wellness and wholesomeness (*hole* and *hele*) and are underpinned by her sense that the whole of her showings are a teaching about spiritual health and wholeness, which will eventually allow the crutch of referential and metaphorical language to fall away, for 'the godenes of God is ever hole, and more nere to us withoute any likenes.'[38] But her linguistic journey to such ideas of health and wholeness will take her through a renegotiation of the core terms and images of

[35] Long Text, cap. 10, p. 17.
[36] *MED*, s.v.
[37] On the eschatological subversion of human time in suffering and transfiguration, see Long Text, cap 64: 'And in thys worde, Sodeynly thou shalte be taken, I saw that God rewardyd man of the pacience that he hath in abydyng Goddys wylle and of hys tyme.'
[38] Long Text, cap. 6, p. 9, in an explicit denial of similitude or analogy. On Julian's word-knots, see further Gillespie and Ross, 'The Apophatic Image', and Gillespie, 'Postcards from the Edge'. Annie Sutherland points out to me that the oscillation between dying/drying in Long text, cap. 16 represents another word knot.

the Passion tradition, represented through the filter of the *ars moriendi*. By the end of it her own role as a version of Suso's 'man dyying and speking to us' will stand not as the main focal point of the text but as a *myse en abyme* of a much more radical teaching modality. Julian's text traces the trajectory 'fro the peyne that we felen into the bliss that we trosten' but it does so in no glib or superficial fashion.[39]

II

'In this sodenly': Transfiguring *Sekenes* into *Sekirnes*

> When a ryghtful man labore3 in the laste seknes to dye, the gud aungel, [his] kepar, come3 wyth multitude of angeles and take3 vp hys soule fro the preson of body and lede3 hym to the heuenly paleyse in-to gostly paradyse wyth song of gretteste and swetest melodye, wyth gret lyght and sottest sauour and odour.[40]

According to the popular pastoral handbook, the *Speculum Christiani*, composed on the cusp of the fifteenth century, but using vernacular and Latin materials from the fourteenth century, the death of a good man will be marked by an apotheosis of his or her senses, and he will pass over enfolded in light, harmony and sweet smells. His passing is not to be lamented because, according to Jerome, 'deth es the gate be whych the frendes of god fle fro the handys of enmyes vnto mercy and glorie.'[41] His good deeds will follow him and will speak in his defence at his particular judgment. Freed from the miseries of human existence, at the last

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[39] Long Text, cap. 81, p. 130. On therapeutic uses of vernacular literature in this period, see. For example, Daniel McCann, 'Heaven and Health: Middle English Devotion to Christ in Its Therapeutic Contexts', in *Devotional Culture in Late Medieval England and Europe: Diverse Imaginations of Christ's Life*, ed. by Stephen Kelly and Ryan Perry (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 335-62; Daniel McCann, 'Medicine of Words: Purgative Reading in Richard Rolle's *Meditation on the Passion A*', *The Mediaeval Journal*, 5 (2015), 53-83.

[40] *Speculum Christiani: A Middle English Religious Treatise of the 14th Century*, ed. by Gustaf Holmstedt, EETS O.S. 182 (1933), p. 48.

[41] *Speculum Christiani*, ed. Holmstedt, p. 50. For the date (at least 25 years later than that posited by Holmstedt), see Vincent Gillespie, 'The Evolution of the *Speculum Christiani*', in *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. by Alastair J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 39-62; Vincent Gillespie, 'Chapter and Worse: An Episode in the Regional Transmission of the *Speculum Christiani*', *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, 14 (2008), 86-111. This popular pastoral manual, surviving in over fifty copies, also contains pertinent sections on the nature of prayer, tribulation, temptation and penance, and was designed to assist parochial clergy in their pastoral, catechetic and homiletic duties. For the suggestion that Julian's advice to Margery Kempe on the subject of tears uses patristic quotations found in *Speculum Christiani*, see Colledge and Walsh, p. 38, reporting Hope Emily Allen. On the medieval sensorium, see now Richard Newhauser, ed., *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages, 500-1450* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Stephen G. Nichols, Andreas Kablitz, and Alison Calhoun, eds., *Rethinking the Medieval Senses: Heritage, Fascinations, Frames* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008)

judgment, the resurrected bodies of the saved will be perfected and transfigured, shining as if they were sunbeams, with golden hair, noble bearing and perfect proportions and stature. Compared to their last days and hours in their death agonies, all shall quickly be sweetness and light for them,

> Al men dyen feble, freel, ful of passions; bot aftyr this lyfe the chosen creaturs schal a-rise and be stronge, stable, ȝonge, fayre, and immortalle. Such es the chaunge of the gudnes and power of god.[42]

Once across the threshold of death, their stability or impassability will mark them out as freed from the turbulent passions of human existence, and the relentless changes and challenges that life and death on earth require. Their resurrected attributes will make them immune to fear, decay, loss and disease. Indeed, as the Maiden in *Pearl* shows, the resurrected body will manifest physical perfection, traditionally at the age of Christ's adult mission, which is also, tellingly, the age of Suso's dying man and of Julian when she suffers her life-threatening illness. The perfected body will also display an impassible ease of mind and heart which will be a counterpart to the *claritas* and *agilitas* of their new being with God.[43] None of this is something they can achieve for themselves, because, as the *Speculum Christiani* stresses, 'such es the chaunge of the gudnes and power of god.' The transformation from disease to ease will be at the will and subject to the power of God's benevolence. This is the idea behind St Paul's teaching in his first letter to the Corinthians:

> Ecce mysterium vobis dico: Omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur. In momento, in ictu oculi, in novissima tuba: canet enim tuba, et mortui resurgent incorrupti: et nos immutabimur. [1]
>
> Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and we shall be changed.[44]

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[42] *Speculum Christiani*, ed. G. Holmstedt, p. 50. The translation of the Latin sections of the text into the vernacular was produced c. 1450 and survives in a single copy.
[43] Cf., for example, Kevin Marti, 'Traditional Characteristics of the Resurrected Body in *Pearl*', *Viator* 24 (1993), 311-35.
[44] 15: 51-2. All Bible quotations come from *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. by Albertus Colunga and Laurentius Turrado (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1965). Translations are from *The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version* (Baltimore ML, John Murphy, 1899). Annie Sutherland, ''Our feyth is groundyd in

The sudden transformation promised by Paul is always part of the divine covenant in Scripture: Paul's comments echo Isaiah's 'Præcipitabit mortem in sempiternum: et auferet Dominus Deus lacrymam ab omni facie.' (He shall cast death down headlong for ever: and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from every face.) and both are later echoed in the Book of Revelation: 'et absterget Deus omnem lacrymam ab oculis eorum: et mors ultra non erit, neque luctus, neque clamor, neque dolor erit ultra, quia prima abierunt' (And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away).[45]

These resonant clichés of the literature of Christian consolation lie at the heart of Julian of Norwich's great meditation on death in her eighth and ninth revelations. Julian's text is a profoundly, indeed restlessly complex and subtle working through of the ontology and teleology of human suffering and death. Sudden change is central to the eddying whirlpool of images, laconic and enigmatic spoken and unspoken words uttered by Christ, and flashingly intuited or carefully articulated ideas that constitute her revelations and their unfolding exposition. But Paul's promised sudden change from disease to ease, from darkness and pain to light and joy, from *tod* to *verklarung*, has a problematic glibness that provides little comfort and only thin justification for the existential dread and pain of the end of a human life.[46] It is hardly surprising that *timor mortis conturbat nos*. Everyone facing their own illness and likely death has to steer a perilous psychological route avoiding despair and presumption, servile fear, and debilitating dread. For this final escape from time and causality, from change and decay, cannot be assumed to be securely available for all. Only one of the thieves was saved: to be on the wrong side of the division into sheep and goats is a

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goddes worde' – Julian of Norwich and the Bible', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England VII*, ed. E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 1-20; Annie Sutherland, 'Julian of Norwich and the Liturgy', in *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*, ed. by McAvoy, pp. 88-98.

[45] 25: 8, 21: 4.

[46] Cf. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*; Esther December Cohen, *The Modulated Scream: Pain in Late Medieval Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

literally dreadful fate, as the *Speculum Christiani* also makes clear:

> When the wycked man lyth in hys laste ende to dye, deueles cluster togyders, comen wyth greteste noyse, horrible of syght, ferdful of apperynge and doynge, that casten out a-noon the synful soule fro the body wyth grete turmentes and cruelly drawen it to the cloystre of helle...The soule es departede fro the body with gret drede, wyth gret dolours; for the horrible places shal appere than sodenly of peynes, the cloude gret and derke, the blac shadow of derknes, the gastfulnes of wrechednes and of confusion, the tremlynge of anguysch, the drede of tribulacion, the sorwe of ferde-ful vysion, the feer of quauerynge dwellynge, wheyr that schal be weylynge of wepynge creaturs, grystynge of teeth, fretynge of wormys venemose, clamour of sorwynge, wepynge of sorwynge men, and voyce of creatures clamerynge and criynge: Wo, wo, wo to vs, moste wreches, chyldren of Eue! Then al hys werkes, as it were spekynge, schal sey to hym: Thou hast wroght vs; we ben thi werkes; we schal go wyth the to the doom.[47]

Whereas the good man's death is transfigured by the power and goodness of God, the death of the wicked man triggers diabolic actions and an assault on the senses, enacted by iterative and obsessive variations of terms for fear and dread, and a performative stridency in description of the torments of the damned. This is well represented in the Middle English translator's lexical choices and variations on a small repertoire of terms from noun to adjective via recurrent present participles, but is perhaps even more mordantly iterative and relentless in the original Latin:

> Tunc enim subito apparebunt horribilia loca penarum, chaos & caligo tenebrarum, horror miserie & confusionis, tremor angustie, timor tribulacionis, dolor horrende visionis, terror tremende mansionis, ubi luctus flencium, stridor dencium, morsus vermium, clamor dolencium, fletus gemencium & vox clamancium.[48]

The process of separation between soul and body is painful and traumatic (one popular account describes the process as like a tree with its roots deep in man's lungs being

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[47] *Speculum Christiani*, ed. Holmstedt, pp. 50/52. Cf. Long Text, cap. 76, p. 123, where Julian redeploys this self-castigating penitential register, and puts it in the mouth of the devil as part of his temptation to the soul to wallow in self-hatred and despair. Colledge and Walsh's suggested analogue from book 2 chapter 12 of Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* (p. 687) is unpersuasive. Similar play of voices is found in the Middle English version of the pseudo-Augustine (Paulinus of Aquilea) *Epistola ad Julianum vel Henricum Comitem* (*Liber exhortationis*), ed. S. L. Fristedt, *The Wycliffe Bible*, II: *The Origin of the First Revision as presented in* De Salutaribus Documentis, Stockholm Studies in English 21 (1969). The use of the Penitential Psalms in times of tribulation, suffering, and hardship will also have been in the textual mix of Julian's reflections on such moments: see Lynn Staley, 'The Penitential Psalms: Conversion and the Limits of Lordship', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 37 (2007), 221-69, esp. pp. 237-44; Clare Costley King'oo, *Miserere Mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

[48] *Speculum Christiani*, ed. Holmstedt, p. 51.

violently and protractedly dragged out of the mouth and entrails).[49] The unfortunate soul is delivered to a place of darkness, noise and torment, with a stress on multiple voices crying out; the voices of the man's evil deeds, of the demons, and the voices of the suffering and damned. The noisiness of these conventional accounts of the process of dying, with its cacophony of clashing and conflicting voices, is an important basis for comparison with Julian's own visionary experiences, where darkness, disembodied voices, and clamour form an important part of the sensory world into which she finds herself thrust in the course of the revelations. The *Speculum Christiani*'s account of the demonic torments of the dying man is reflected not only in the rhetorical patterning that Julian deploys in her accounts of her own demonic temptations, but also in her highly ornate and patterned account of the dying moments of Christ on the cross.

As *ex post facto* readers of her revelations, we accept her assurance, hard won over many years of reflection, that 'I conceived treuly and mightily that it was himselfe shewed it me without ony mene' (Long Text, cap, 4), but on the face of it her early experiences are poised as uncertainly on the threshold between the divine and diabolic as she is poised on the threshold between life and death.[50] Indeed her first experience of the sort of sudden change often referred to in homiletic and pastoral descriptions of the process of dying leaves her literally uneasy at the sudden change from disease to ease:

> All that was beside the cross was uggely to me as if it had be mekil occupyed with the fends. After this the other party of my body began to dyen so ferforth that onethys I had ony feleing, with shortness of onde. And than I went sothly to have passid. And, **in this sodenly** all my peyne was taken fro me and I was as hele, and namely in the other party of my body, as ever I was aforn. I mervalid at **this soden change** for methought it was a privy workeing of God and not of kinde. And yet by the feleing of this ease I trusted never the more to levyn; ne the feleing of this ease was no full ease

[49] See, for example, the *Sermon for Dead Men*, in *Lollard Sermons*, ed. Cigman, p. 215; discussed in Appleford, "Comene Course", pp. 208-9. The image also occurs somewhat earlier, in the hugely popular *Prick of Conscience*, as part of a lengthy rumination on death and dying that deploys most of the standard *topoi* of the *ars moriendi* tradition: Ralph Hanna, and Sarah Wood, eds., *Richard Morris's Prick of Conscience*, EETS, O.S. 342 (2013), ll. 1900-1925; see ll.1665-2689 for the full meditation on death.

[50] Long Text, cap. 4, p. 5.

to me, for methought I had lever a be deliveryd of this world.[51]

The liminality of Julian's state of mind mirrors the abject liminality of her physical health, breathlessly poised on the point of dissolution. She expects and longs for delivery from the world, but, like the pregnancy metaphors that see her conceiving Christ without any *mene* or intermediary, she needs to understand deliverance in a new way.[52] This delivery will, like most pregnancies, be the result of much labour, pain, anxiety and uncertainty, and sorrow suddenly gives way to joy. Julian's text shows that the sudden change is not just a magical transformation, as it can sometimes appear to be in Scripture. Rather it is about radically transfiguring sickness into *sekirnes* and about learning how to transform the clichés of tribulation literature or at least to inhabit them with new force.[53]

III

Christus Medicus and Christus Moriens

In chapter 66, on the verge of the final showing, this force is brutally demonstrated. Her ease and relief from physical pain and suffering which has lasted for the duration of her first fifteen showings is suddenly removed and she is thrown back into the maelstrom of illness and spiritual desolation:

> I have seid in the begynnyng 'And in this al my peine was sodenly taken from me'; of which ipeyne I had no grefe, no disese, as long as the xv shewings lestid 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 aforn, and I was as baren and drye as I never had comfort but litil. And as a wretch I moned and hevyed

[51] Long Text, cap. 3, p. 5.

[52] On pregnancy imagery in Julian , see 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), pp. 17-37, esp. pp. 33-4; Maud Birnett McInerney, "'In the Meydens Womb": Julian of Norwich and the Poetics of Enclosure", in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler and John Carmi Parsons (New York: Garland, 1996), pp. 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. See also note 27 on enclosure imagery.

[53] Pertinent here is Allan F. Westphall, 'Walter Hilton's the Prickynge of Love and the Construction of Vernacular 'Sikernesee'', in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition*, ed. by Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall (Turnhout: Brepols 2013), pp. 457-502;

for felyng of my bodily pey[n]es and for fayling of comfort, gostly and bodily.[54]

Sekirnes has given way once more to sickness. Her loss of ghostly comfort is linked to her dryness, a spiritual as well as physiological desiccation.[55] But rather than making the physical pain a metaphor for spiritual desiccation and disease, Julian has been steadily working since the early revelations to separate the two and to avoid facile linkage. This stage in her developing understanding is typically enacted in long chains of reflection and observation that need to be quoted at length to give the full flavour of her unfolding wisdom. In chapter 15, for example, despite having had her pain and paralysis lifted, she experiences a fluctuating sense of the presence of God and his comfort. This feeling is linked to her understanding of the theology of fear: throughout her text she oscillates between 'peynful drede' (*timor servilis*, a self-regarding and self-serving existential dread and fear of punishment) and 'reverent drede' (a state of awe and respect for the power and grace of God that yields the initiative to him).[56] She seeks, and suffers, but fails to be able to trust:

> I was fulfillid of the everlesting sekirnes migtily susteinid withoute any peynful drede. This felyng was so gladd and so gostly that I was in al peace and in reste that there was nothing in erth that should a grevid me. This lestinid but a while and I was turnyd and left to myselfe in hevynes and werines of my life and irkenes of myselfe that onethis I coude have patience to leve. There was no comfort nor none ease to me but feith, hope and charite, and these I had in truthe, but litil in feling. And anone, after this, our blissid lord gave me ageyne the comfort and the rest in soule, in likyng and sekirnes so blisful and so mycti that no drede, no sorow, ne peyne bodily that might be suffrid should have desesid me. And than the peyne shewid ageyn to my feling, and than the ioy and the lekyng, and now that one, and now that other, dyvers times—I suppose aboute xx tymes. And in the same tyme of ioy I migte have seid with Seynt Paul: 'Nothing shal depart me fro the charite of Criste'. And in the peyne I migte have seid with Peter: 'Lord, save me, I perish'. This vision was shewid me, after myn vndestondyng, that it is spedeful to some soulis to fele on this wise, somtime to be in comfort, and somtyme to faile and to be left to hemselfe. […] But frely our lord gevyth whan he wille, and suffrith us in wo sumtyme. And both is one love; for it is

[54] Long Text, cap. 66, pp. 107-108. On creative aspects of loss, absence, and dread in late-medieval theological contexts, see the recent discussion by Simon D. Podmore, '*Mysterium Horrendum*: Mystical Theology and the Negative Numinous', in Louise Nelstrop, and Simon D. Podmore, eds., *Contemporary Theological Explorations in Christian Mysticism: Opening to the Mystical* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 93-116.
[55] Cf. the cognate account of Christ's agonising and protracted 'dry dying' in Long text caps. 16-17.
[56] The theology of fear, with its divisions into *timor initialis*, *timor servilis* and *timor filialis* is a patristic commonplace discussed in Peter Lombard, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas. More often is pastoral contexts there is a distinction drawn between obedience to God driven by *timor* and *amor*. For vernacular uses, see Rosemary Woolf, *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), pp. 72-3.

> Godds wil we hold us in comfort with al our migte, for blisse is lestinge withoute ende, and peyne is passand and shal be browte to nougte to hem that shall be savyd. And therefore it is not Godds wil that we folow the felyng of peyne in sorow and mornyng for hem, but sodenly passing over and holden us in endless likyng.[57]

Yet it soon emerges that it is indeed trust that is the key to deliverance from pain and illness. Julian's mature response to the age-old moral problem of evil and suffering is to see pain not as a state to be escaped from but a condition of our humanity, deeply equated in her thinking with the corrosive and corrupting force of sin in the world.[58] Pain is transient; bliss is eternal. After death, man will be eternally removed from the region of pain, and this is a sounder solution than the transient relief achieved by pain being taken from man in this life. By this stage of her progress, Julian shows that one fruit of her 'wilful abiding' is that simple answers reveal that one is asking the wrong question.

> It is ful blisfull, man to be taken fro peyne, mor than peyne to be taken fro man; for if peyn be taken fro us it may commen agen. Therfore it is a severen comfort and blissfull beholdyng in a lovand soule [that] we shal be taken fro peyne; for in this behest I saw a mervelous compassion that our lord hath in us for our wo, and a curtes behoting of clene deliverance; for he will that we be comforted in the overpassing; and that he shewid in these words: 'And thou shalt come up aboven; and thou shal have me to thi mede; and thou shall be fulfillid of ioye and bliss.' It is God will that we setten the poynte of our thowte in this blisfull beholdyng as often as we may, and as long tyme kepen us therin with his grace; for this is a blissid contemplation to the soule that is led of God, and ful mekil to his worship for the time that it lestith. And we falyn ageyn to our hevynes and gostly blyndhede and felyng of peyens gostly and bodily be our frelte, it is God will that we knowen that he hath not forgetten us. And so menith he in thes words and seith for comfort: 'And thou shall never more have peyne, no manner sekenes, no manner mislekyng, non wanting of his will, but over ioy and bliss withouten ende.[59]

The echoes of Isaiah and Revelation in Christ's words at the end of this passage are surely not accidental. This is the true consolation that Christ offers Julian: not an earth-bound escape from pain and suffering, from disease and sickness, but rather a guarantee of overpassing bliss and an assurance that passing pain in our sensuality or humanity will not quell or

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[57] Long Text, cap. 15, pp. 23-24.
[58] On this, see especially Grace Jantzen, *Julian of Norwich: Mystic and Theologian*. New ed. (London: SPCK, 2000), esp. part 4 'Wounds into Honours'.
[59] Long Text, cap. 64, p. 105. Cf. the usefully schematic account in Anna Minore, 'Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena: Pain and the Way of Salvation', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 40 (2014), 44-74.

suppress the true life of the substance of man, which is united to God in its essence and nature. And it is achieved primarily by her education in the true meaning of the Passion of Christ, a meaning that transcends the affective banalities of most meditations and narrative accounts. Suso's Wisdom advises the disciple:

> My passioun putte eek twixt my doom and thee,
> Lest, more than neede is, adrad thow be.[60]

If the role of the *moriens* in the *ars moriendi* tradition is to serve as a *memento mori* for those present at the deathbed or reading such texts for personal devotion, Appleford's important argument that Julian fulfils the same function in her own text ultimately gives an incomplete account of what she is doing in the showings. After all, Julian recovers her health and lives to write another day. The only person who actually dies in her book is Christ. This is the true genius of her showings: in the core revelations, Julian goes well beyond her own role as the liminal *moriens*, the double signifier poised on the brink and instructing her *euencristen* how to die. For, in a stroke of powerful imaginative synergy, she presents to us Christ the man of sorrows as the ultimate 'felable ensaumple' of 'a man dying and speaking to us'. Christ, God and man, is of course already the ultimate double signifier, a theological synapse of powerful liminality, who is simultaneously the way, the truth and the light. But, crucially, whereas Suso's dying man was trapped in the stasis of his own inactivity and his previous dissolute life and spiritual sloth, Julian's man dying and speaking to us, the *Christus moriens*, offers to Julian the symbolic and spiritual answer to the existential fear of pain and death.

Nearly all the Passion showings take place within the first 'sodeynly' of her earliest revelation (cap. 4: 'In this sodenly I saw'): in that respect they participate in the sudden changing that Scriptural tradition had asserted. But while the powerful and protracted account of Christ's lingering death in revelation eight (esp. caps. 16-17), with its dry dying and

[60] Hoccleve,'Ars vtillissima sciendi mori' in *'My Compleinte'*, ll. 832-3

languorous teetering on the edge of dissolution fulfils her earlier request to see the sufferings of Christ and to have compassion with him, it goes well beyond it in the intensity of its staging. Verbally marked by the traditional signs of death from lyric and medical literature (and also found in Suso's man dying and speaking), it takes place in a dystopian non-landscape of muted dark colours, like the non-representational backgrounds of Man of Sorrows iconography, an eschatological setting swept by an unnaturally cold and drying wind.[61] This is a place out of time where the changes wrought by Christ's death are both feared and desired by the observer: feared because they mark the apparent death of God, and desired because they mark the end of suffering:

> After this Criste shewid a partie of his passion nere his deyeng. I saw his swete face as it was drye and blodeles with pale deyeng; and sithen more pale, dede, langoring, and than turnid more dede into blew, and sithen more brown blew, as the flesh turnyd more depe dede; […]This was a swemful chonge to sene this depe deyeng, and also the nose clange and dryed, to my sigte, and the swete body was brown and blak, al turnyd oute of faire lifely colowr of hymselfe onto drye deyeng; for that eche tyme that our lord and blissid savior deyid upon the rode it was a dry, harre wynde and wond colde, as to my sigte; and what tyme the preitous blode was blede oute of the swete body that migte pass therfro, yet there dwellid a moysture in the swete flesh of Criste, as it was shewyd. Blodelshede and peyne dryden within and blowyng of wynde and cold commyng fro withouten metten togeder in the swete body of Criste. […] And thow this peyne was bitter and sharpe, it was full long lestyng, as to my sighte, and peynfully dreyden up all the lively spirits of Crists fleshe. Thus I saw the swete fleshe dey, in semyng be party after party, dryande with mervelous peynys. And as longe as any spirit had life in Crists fleshe, so longe sufferid he peyne. This longe pynyng semyd to me as if he had bene seven night ded, deyand, at the poynt of out passing away, sufferand the last peyne.[62]

The 'swemful change' creates a looping existential dread, where Julian's language enacts a self-perpetuating and self-fuelling combination of acute anxiety and chronic *ennui* that is painfully familiar to anyone who has watched at a death bed or has experienced life-threatening illness themselves.

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[61] On Julian's subtle and dynamic use of light and colour, see Vincent Gillespie, 'The Colours of Contemplation: Less Light on Julian of Norwich', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VIII*, ed. by E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 7-28; Elizabeth Robertson, 'Julian of Norwich's Unmediated Vision', in *Medieval and Early Modern Devotional Objects in Global Perspective: Translations of the Sacred*, ed. by E. Roberston and J. Jahner (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), pp. 97-114.
[62] Long Text, cap. 16, pp. 24-25.

But because it is Christ himself who is the *moriens*, a man dying slowly, interminably, and horribly and speaking to Julian, his words do not teach the conventional perils of unexpected death. Despite the fact that the language she uses borrows rhetorical velocity from the sorts of transit narratives found in the *Speculum Christiani*, Christ's death is willed and planned and wholeheartedly embraced: he embodies and personifies the wonderful but hidden 'great deed' that God has done and will do. He is a different kind of exemplar, a model of *kenosis* and love that gives an answer to the stasis and debilitating fear expressed by the traditional *moriens* (and indeed initially by Julian herself).[63] His sudden change of cheer will unexpectedly and transformatively disrupt this seemingly ineluctable linear trajectory to dissolution and despair (the repeated 'ands' in this passage convey something of the radical anaphoric causality of her suddenly changing perspective):

> And I loked after the departing with al my myght and [wende] have seen the body al ded, but I saw hym not so. 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. Than browte our lord merily to my mynde: 'Where is now ony poynte of the peyne or of thin agreefe?' And I was full merry. 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 shal chonge his chere to us, and we shal be with hym in hevyn.[64]

Julian's Christ refuses to play by the script; tearing up the rules of illness and suffering, refusing the logic of lingering death, and frustrating the narrative and medical expectations

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[63] See further Gillespie and Ross, 'The Apophatic Image'. In recent years, *kenosis*, *apophasis*, and issues surrounding the ineffability of God have become much more central to and familiar in discussions of English contemplative writing. See, for example, Nicholas Watson, 'Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God', *New Medieval Literatures* 1(1997), 85-124; Cynthia Masson, 'The Point of Coincidence: Rhetoric and the Apophatic in Julian of Norwich's *Showings*', in Julian of Norwich: A Book of Essays, ed. By Sandra J. McEntire (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 153-81; . For useful recent accounts of the broader theological and philosophical background, see *Letting Go: Rethinking Kenosis*, ed. Onno Zijstra (Bern, 2002); C. Stephen Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Oxford, 2006); William Franke, *On What Cannot be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts*, 2 vols. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); *Mystics: Presence and Aporia*, ed. Michael Kessler and Christian Sheppard (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[64] Long Text, cap. 21, pp. 30-31. On the text of this showing, see Marion Glasscoe, 'Changing Chere and Changing Text in the Eighth Revelation of Julian of Norwich', *Medium Aevum*, 66 (1997), 115-21.

that 'the shewyng of the end behovyd nedis to be'. Julian's compassion with the suffering Christ is transformed instead into a celebration of Christ's compassion with our sufferings. Julian comes to realise that it is not a matter of us being in pain because he is in pain, the traditional sense of compassion. Rather, she stresses that 'when we were in pain he was in pain.' He has love and compassion with us: he is the supreme exemplar of affective compassion. It is a transactional and profoundly therapeutic reversal of expectation and of normal devotional strategy. It brings about sudden changes of perspective and expectation.[65]

In the endless present participles of these chapters on the dying Christ, Julian dramatises waves of fear, grief, anxiety, despair, and creates a paradoxical and powerful hybridity between physical and spiritual states. She creates disease, suffering and discomfort in the ways that she refashions the Christ of the passion mediation tradition as the speaking dead man of the Suso *ars moriendi*. But whereas Suso's dying man had no hope and no answers and was beyond consolation or reprieve, Christ shows that he holds the answers for her. He has been there, done that and got, if not the tee-shirt, then at least the vernicle. The Word made Flesh is the lexical synapse that can turn sickness into *sekirnes*. Suso talks about the work of the Passion as:

> for to make þe feyre & semely þorhe his abieccione and vnsemelynessse...Wherfore hit foloweþ opunlye þat þe abieccione and vnsemelynesses of the vttere manne, þat he toke of þe bitternese of passione, is raþer chewynge and profe of loue þanne mater of reprefe.[66]

This is the transformational paradox of Philippians 2: 5-9, one of the strikingly few scripture passages explicitly cited by Julian at precisely this point in the Short Text:

> Swilke paines I sawe that alle es to litelle that I can telle or saye, for it maye nought

[65] I am grateful to Dr James Hanvey SJ for his helpful comments on this section of the paper: "Is it too much to think that here in this experience of joy Julian is also expressing an eschatology, but one that is lived now, in this present, a sort of magnificat? Much more then than your usual mystical experience but something that is for every Christian life in the circumstances of its real existence. The fear of death is removed not only because of future hope but because of a present reality of knowing (understanding and experiencing) now in this life something of the reality and promise of heaven. At the deepest level, this is because the dynamic *ekstasis/kenosis* in and through the cross and death of Christ is a genuine eucharistic moment; not out of the world but in it" (personal communication, 17th March 2016).

[66] *Orologium Sapientiae*, ed. C. Horstmann, p. 338.

> be tolde. Botte ilke saule, after the sayinge of Sainte Paule, shulde "feele in him that in Criste Jhesu"
>
> Hoc enim sentite in vobis, quod et in Christo Jesu: qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo: sed semetipsum exinanivit, formam servi accipiens, in similitudinem hominum factus, et habitu inventus ut homo. Humiliavit semetipsum factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum, et donavit illi nomen, quod est super omne nomen.
>
> For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above all names.[67]

Exaltation follows abjection; obedience leads to freedom, humility to eternal reward, suffering and pain to joy and bliss. The logic of the world is torn up.

The exhortation to 'Seek, suffer and trust' is reworked in Julian's later chapters into polyphonic variations on a theme, with Christ speaking directly to her soul: 'But take it, leve it, and kepe the therin and comfort the therwith and trost thou therto; and thou shalt not be overcome.'[68] This allows her to summarise that 'therfore in what manner he techith us, he will we perceivyn him wisely, receivyn him swetely, and kepin us in hym feithfully'.[69] As the therapeutic triads overlay each other semantically and lexically, so her ability to "wilfully abide" the sufferings and tribulations of life and of death appear to be enhanced by her confidence that they will quickly and permanently pass over. She has learned that the abjection of human sickness can be suddenly changed into a willed *kenosis* of love. [70] In this

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[67] Short Text, sec. 10, as edited in 'A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman', *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins, Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), p. 83; Philippians 2:5-9. Both Brant Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich*, Salzburg Studies in English Literature, 92:4 (Salzburg, 1982), p. 261, and Colledge and Walsh (p. 97) discuss the influence of this passage on Julian. Neither sees it as fundamental to her overall textual strategy. Colledge and Walsh (p. 97) argue, for example, that the whole eighth revelation, on Christ's lingering death and double dryness, is an extended mediation on Philippians 2.

[68] LT cap. 68, p. 111.

[69] LT cap. 70, p. 113.

[70] This is in keeping with the kenotic thrust of Julian's thought: noughting of self leads to oneing with God in the mathematical paradox beloved of contemplative theologians. Hilton comments that: 'he may not lyven to God fulli, until he die first unto the world. This dyynge to the world is this myrkenesse, and it is the gate of

way, Julian's vividly performative account of the Passion of Christ provides a transferrable model for her own behaviour in the face of sickness and death, which in turn becomes a model for all her *euen cristen*. Just as her friends and family watched round her own deathbed at the start of the showings, so she watches for the death of Christ. Her text is a repetitious *mise en abyme* of Suso's man dying and speaking to us, a spiritual fractal endlessly reflecting and conforming to a paradigm of goodness that originates in Christ's Passion.

If love was indeed Christ's meaning, then Julian performs in her text not only the injunction of Paul in Philippians 2, but also the linked injunctions in the first epistle of St John. 4. 18-21:

> Timor non est in caritate: sed perfecta caritas foras mittit timorem, quoniam timor poenam habet: qui autem timet, non est perfectus in caritate. Nos ergo diligamus Deum, quoniam Deus prior dilexit nos.
>
> Fear is not in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath pain. And he that feareth, is not perfected in love. Let us therefore love God, because God first hath loved us.

Julian develops this in her own way:

> And therefore he will that we redily entenden to his gracious touching, more enioying in his hole love than sorowand in our often fallings; ... And therefore he will that we setten our herts in the overpassing: that is to sey, fro the peyne that we felen into the bliss that we trosten.[71]

Touching leads to wholeness: this is *Christus medicus* at work in the guise of *Christus moriens*.[72] The phrase 'redily attenden' implies a focussed attentiveness (a powerful combination of attention and intention) which allows our hearts to aspire to an overpassing of

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contemplacioun and to reformynge in feelynge, and noon othir than this...But he that can brynge himsilf firste to nought thorugh grace of mekenesse and dien on this maner, he is in the gate, for he is deed to the world and he lyveth to God.' *Scale of Perfection*, 2.27 as printed by Thomas H. Bestul, ed., *The Scale of Perfection*, *Teams Middle English Texts* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000). This recalls Jerome's aphorism 'Nudis Christum nudum sequi', a popular Patrisitc theme. For discussion of this theme, see Karl Heinz Steinmetz, "Thiself a Cros to Thiself": Christ as *Signum Impressum* in the *Cloud*-Texts against the Background of Expressionistic Christology in Late Medieval Devotional Theology', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium VII*, ed. by E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 132-48.

[71] Long Text, cap. 81, p. 130.

[72] The image of *Christus medicus* derives ultimately from Matthew 9:12, and is widely used by Augustine in his *Ennarationes in psalmos*; Rudolfph Arbesmann, 'The Concept of *Christus medicus* in St Augustine', *Traditio* 10 (1954), 1-28; Reinhard von Bendemann: *Christus medicus* (Neukirchener: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2009).

pain and grief.

In one of the most powerful formulations of her entire book, Julian explains pain and suffering from the divine perspective, but she is only able to do so because she has learned how to 'behold with avisement', a special kind of agenda-less and non-analytical attention that allows her to see things in a metaphysical context and allows God to take the spiritual and indeed the semantic initiative.[73] A proper 'beholding' of the loving face of Christ triggers a transformation in outlook, a response to his gracious touching and a performative passover from dread to love, distracting from fear and pain by radically remodelling the parameters of human attentiveness from the linear and physical (illness leads to pain and then death) to the *sodeynly* atemporal and metaphysical. Suso's man dying warns of the paralysis of pain and fear; Julian's *Christus moriens* liberates from it. Julian does nothing to minimize pain, illness, disease. But by placing them in a wider and deeper perspectival setting she perhaps breaks the spiritual stasis and frozen, existential dread that *timor mortis* can assert over the frailty of our living:

> 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 afornseid, 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. He seid not 'Thou shalt not be tempesteid, thou shalt not be travelled, thou shalt not be disesid', but he seid: 'Thou shalt not be overcome.'[74]

Tribulations will come, but they will also be overcome. Despite tempest, travail and disease, she asserts that her *euencristen* will not be overcome, provided they learn how to seek, suffer

[73] On the particular importance of *beholding* as a key concept in Julian's theology, see now Martha Reeves, 'Behold Not the Cloud of Experience', in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium Viii*, ed. by E. A. Jones (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), pp. 29-50; Vincent Gillespie, and Maggie Ross, "With Mekenes Aske Perseverantly': On Reading Julian of Norwich', *Mystics Quarterly*, 30 (2004), 125-40. For a more cautious interpretation, see Brant Pelphrey, *Love Was His Meaning: The Theology and Mysticism of Julian of Norwich*, *Salzburg Studies in English Literature. Elizabethan & Renaissance Studies* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1982), pp. 229-47; Roland Maisonneuve, *L'univers Visionnaire de Julian of Norwich* (Paris: OEIL, 1987), pp. 125-53.

[74] Long Text, cap. 68, p. 111.

and trust. For Julian, a central understanding of her showings seems to be that the radical liminality of sickness places the *euencristen* into the synapse of potential spiritual efflorescence from the shackles of fear, pain, and existential terror:

> 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. And sone after al was close and I sow no more.[75]

The tight verbal patterning here enacts the enfolding and enclosing love of God that Julian feels to be at the heart of her showings: strength, security, might, delight, wele and woe lead to love and liking or likening. The result of this for Julian is a 'sekir troste' in the existential guarantee offered by *Christus medicus et moriens* whose painfully realistic death has surrealistically destroyed death and the fear of death. T. S. Eliot, a profoundly perceptive reader of Julian's text, captures the point perfectly

> The wounded surgeon plies the steel
> That questions the distempered part;
> Beneath the bleeding hands we feel
> The sharp compassion of the healer's art
> Resolving the enigma of the fever chart.
>
> Our only health is the disease
> If we obey the dying nurse.[76]

If Christ is indeed the word uttered by God, then, for Julian, when properly attended to, he is also truly the medicine of words: a man dying and speaking to you.

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[75] Long Text, cap. 68, p.111.
[76] T.S. Eliot, 'East Coker' IV, *Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 29: cf. '...to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.'